

# Pandemic Response Planning



A Guide for Alberta Municipalities

Pandemic Response Planning – A Guide for Alberta Municipalities

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# Preface

This guide is intended to assist in supplementing approved municipal emergency plans and programs required under the [Emergency Management Act](#) and [Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation](#). This guide assumes the municipality already has an approved municipal emergency plan in place. For further information on emergency management and pandemic planning, resources are included in [Appendix A](#) of this guide.

This document enhances existing municipal emergency plans and business continuity plans and assists local governments throughout the Province of Alberta to better prepare their communities for the impacts of a pandemic, reduce future risks and build greater disaster resilience. Unlike other hazards, a pandemic represents unique challenges that may not be addressed in a community's municipal emergency plan and business continuity plans, and may result in long-term community-changing impacts.

It may take between six and eighteen months to develop an effective vaccine once a pandemic is identified; therefore plans for coping with an illness, whether worldwide, provincial wide or localized, are crucial. Given that a pandemic may affect all communities in the province at the same time, community contingency plans for responding to this type of emergency are essential.

Municipalities may activate their respective Emergency Operations Center immediately when a potential pandemic event is identified, or following confirmation of a pandemic outbreak from the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health if deemed necessary to coordinate delivery of essential services and resources. The extent of the activation will be largely driven by the needs of the municipality. It is not required to declare a State of Local Emergency to activate an Emergency Operations Center.

## Pandemic Planning Considerations

Municipalities must be aware of the impact of a pandemic on their own capacity to provide services. **All** services delivered by municipal governments are likely to be affected by supply chain disruptions, staff absenteeism due to their own illness, to care for ill family members, or to otherwise support family members and children at home, and recommendations or Orders issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health

It is critical in developing pandemic specific plans that the municipality first have an approved municipal emergency plan and business continuity plans, as well as risk and hazard assessments, occupational health and safety hazard assessments, and where feasible pre-positioned stockpiles of materials, goods, and personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to withstand a public health emergency for the local municipality and any regional partners.

# Pandemic Planning Checklists

To supplement municipal emergency plans and business continuity plans, the purpose of the following checklists are to assist municipalities and their stakeholders with preparing pandemic response and post-pandemic recovery plans. The checklists provide ideas and suggestions for topics to be considered as part of the response and recovery plans relating to public health emergencies. They do not form a complete all-encompassing guide to every topic or subject individual municipalities may consider as part of their individual pandemic planning, but are meant to compliment planning and response guidance from public health officials. Also, not every topic or issue may be applicable to every municipality. These checklists are intended to provoke thought and discussion among emergency management agencies, committees, municipal councils, administration and the communities they serve in the preparation of pandemic response and post-pandemic recovery plans. It is important to recognize the strengths and limitations within your municipal organization to determine the critical elements required for your community's pandemic planning.

It is strongly recommended that maintaining communications with employees, residents, businesses, intermunicipal partners, and other community stakeholders be given a high priority in any pandemic specific response and post-pandemic recovery planning. Ensuring each group understands their roles and responsibilities during the response and recovery is essential to the successful implementation of the plan.

[Appendix B](#) to this guide provides a condensed checklist comprised of the most common items for consideration to assist small municipalities to quickly prepare pandemic specific plans.

[Appendix C](#) to this guide includes considerations and measures municipalities may take to help control the spread of infectious diseases. These measures are not only useful when dealing with a pandemic event, but may also assist municipalities in reducing day-to-day absenteeism due to the spread of seasonal cold and flu viruses.

## Mitigation

Mitigation is the period outside of a pandemic event and continues until such time a potential pandemic event is identified. The primary goal in the mitigation phase is to decrease the need for emergency response in the future.

During the mitigation phase, municipal councils can create or review their municipal emergency and continuity plans to ensure pandemic preparation is adequate for their municipality's needs, including any pandemic specific response plans.

The director of emergency management, along with members of the municipality's emergency management agency should conduct a thorough hazard and risk analysis to determine the effect of a pandemic event on municipal service delivery and other key sectors and critical services throughout the community.

As pandemics can occur in waves, the mitigation period may include pauses between successive response and recovery phases. These pauses allow municipalities to adapt their plans based on lessons learnt in prior waves.

MITIGATION PHASE			
Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Council approves the preparation of a response plan for a pandemic.			
Determine the roles and responsibilities for the plan's development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the municipal council;</li> <li>• of the Director of Emergency Management;</li> <li>• of the Emergency Management Agency;</li> <li>• of the regional health authority; and</li> <li>• of the planning group.</li> </ul>			
Develop or expand risk assessment, monitoring, and reporting strategies.			

## MITIGATION PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Integrate risk reduction strategies into major planning and policy decisions.			
Develop and approve stakeholder consultation and engagement strategies.			
Do an inventory of all municipal services, activities and equipment.			
Collaborate with local citizens and businesses to determine supports that the municipality may need to provide during a pandemic.			
Determine the essential municipal services, activities and equipment that will be required during a pandemic.			
Determine staff positions essential to maintaining essential services.			
Establish safety, health and wellness, and other policies for the workplace and work schedule.			
Council approves the pandemic specific response plan to be included in the municipal emergency plan.			

## Preparedness

Pandemic specific response plans should be part of local emergency management preparedness. Pre-planning should focus on service continuity and coordinating efforts with the health sector during a pandemic event.

Municipalities should also be monitoring international, national, and provincial viral surveillance activity. At the time a potential pandemic event arises, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and/or regional health offices will advise the public as necessary.

PREPAREDNESS PHASE			
Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Describe the roles and responsibilities of members of the emergency management committee and emergency management agency in a pandemic.			
Establish the list of decision-makers and any backups or alternates to secure the continuity of decision making processes.			
Train all employees on municipal emergency plan and the pandemic specific response plan.			
Practice responding to a public health emergency on a regular and ongoing basis and test planning assumptions made during practice events.			
Adjust prepared emergency plans as required based on results of practices.			
Ensure that all employees, key partners and stakeholders are informed of municipal planning for the maintenance of essential services and of its application in their respective departments and/or job duties.			



## PREPAREDNESS PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Develop social distancing workplace strategies, including work-from-home provisions, workplace modifications, access to personal protective equipment, limiting public access, etc.			
Designate and train back-up/replacement workers, identify contractors, and/or establish memorandums of understanding with regional partners for the maintenance of essential services.			
Prepare personnel redeployment scenarios for the maintenance of essential services, considering an absenteeism rate of at least 35%.			
Identify key resources, processes, and equipment required by employees to maintain essential services.			
Decide on labour relations policies for the organization of working conditions in a pandemic, considering factors such as illness of parents and children, difficulty in finding child care, etc.			
Maintain contacts and discussions with unions, and/or employees to achieve flexibility for working conditions in a pandemic, and develop agreements if necessary.			
Evaluate the state of preparedness of partners, suppliers, and subcontractors and develop alternative solutions in case they cannot maintain their activities.			

## PREPAREDNESS PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
<p>Establish policies for citizens and businesses regarding accessing municipal services, and paying municipal accounts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utility bills;</li> <li>• Property taxation;</li> <li>• Business licenses;</li> <li>• Development permits; and</li> <li>• Any other supports or programs applicable to the municipality.</li> </ul>			
<p>Establish internal and external communication strategies, and identify spokesperson(s) for the municipality.</p>			
<p>Develop information collection systems to help determine the community impacts of a pandemic event once it occurs.</p>			

## Response

As a pandemic event arises, in response, municipalities may choose to activate all or part of their municipal emergency plan, business continuity plan and pandemic specific plan. Local municipalities may choose to declare a state of local emergency and there may also be a declared state of public health emergency as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, or even a provincial state of emergency in effect. It is critical that municipalities understand the jurisdictional authorities they may be working under with respect to the different combinations of orders and emergencies that may be in effect.

During pandemic response, municipalities focus on maintaining essential service delivery and follow any recommendations or Orders issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This will help ensure municipal utility and essential service delivery is maintained and that citizens are able to access health care resources when required.

<b>RESPONSE PHASE</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Take necessary preventive measures to protect the health of employees.			
Apply labour standards with regard to employees in a public health emergency.			
Activate the municipal emergency plan, pandemic specific response plan, and any regional or collaborative plans as necessary.			
Track and monitor the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic on the municipality.			
Collaborate with local and regional partners, the health care system, and the Provincial Operations Centre.			

## RESPONSE PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Mobilize resources as outlined in the municipal plan for continuity of essential services.			
Implement measures specified for prevention and preparedness in the pandemic specific response plan, including communication strategies to keep the staff, public, and business community informed.			
Provide for access to an employee program of psychological assistance and support for those that request it or provide information on supports and resources they may access.			
Engage with suppliers and subcontractors required to maintain municipal operations to assess their operational abilities and capacities during the public health emergency.			
Activate support plans for citizens and businesses as required, including any alternate payment arrangements, waiver of late fees and penalties, business licenses, development permits and other services as required.			
Engage with community groups and organizations, especially those serving vulnerable populations, to ensure citizen supports are working to protect people in the community.			

## RESPONSE PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
<p>As outlined in the communication strategy, keep employees informed on the pandemic's evolution, and on the response itself through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• internal communications;</li> <li>• employee information service;</li> <li>• use of the telephone chain, if necessary;</li> <li>• municipal website; and</li> <li>• link to the government's site.</li> </ul>			
<p>Inform the public on the pandemic's evolution, on the response itself, and on related issues through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communications to the public;</li> <li>• providing information to the media; and</li> <li>• posting updates electronically (i.e., on your municipal website).</li> </ul>			
<p>Conduct ongoing risk surveillance and assessments to understand emerging issues and hazards in the community.</p>			
<p>Plan regular dissemination of information to citizens on measures the municipality is taking to maintain essential services and protect their functioning.</p>			
<p>Evaluate the response, and adjust plans as required.</p>			
<p>Examine local business needs, and determine appropriate supports to business continuity and recovery during and after the pandemic.</p>			

## RESPONSE PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Prepare long-term community recovery plans to support the citizens and businesses after the pandemic ends (See the <a href="#">Recovery Planning</a> section of this guide to assist with preparing recovery plans).			

## Recovery

Recovery consists of measures and actions taken to restore communities following an emergency event. Typically, recovery focuses on the physical and psychological effects that result in an emergency; however, in a pandemic, the primary impact will be on people, not infrastructure and will therefore need to be heavily structured to deal with the economic and social impacts.

During the recovery period, municipalities must ensure that ongoing orders and recommendations provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health are observed and followed.

As part of the recovery process, the municipality should also review their pandemic specific response plan to determine the effectiveness of the municipality's response, and adjust the pandemic specific response plan as required.

<b>RECOVERY PHASE</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Communicate with citizens, businesses, and stakeholders of the recovery efforts undertaken, as well as upcoming recovery plans and programs.			
Facilitate opportunities for community members to safely and productively participate in their own recovery and community rebuilding.			
Implement measures to return to normal functioning for personnel who have participated in the response.			
Restore or adapt municipal operations to normal service and program levels or acceptable service levels where appropriate.			

## RECOVERY PHASE

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Manage the ongoing community recovery plan, providing supports to businesses and individuals as required and/or planned.			
Provide access to psychological consulting and support services for employees, or information regarding counselling and support services available.			
Hold sessions or debriefings to evaluate operations with various stakeholders and organizations that were involved.			
Analyze the results of the evaluation sessions in order to identify corrective actions or improvements to be made in the management of the pandemic's risk or other risks.			
Track the progress of recovery efforts, making adjustments to recovery plans as required.			
Determine the financial impacts of the pandemic response and recovery.			
Draw up a report on the pandemic assessing the results of the municipal response, and communicate those results to the community.			



# Community Relaunch Planning

Returning a community to a new normal by relaunching social and economic activity during a pandemic requires extensive planning, monitoring, and adaptation to addressing ongoing and emerging issues. Municipal emergency management organizations normally conduct exercises to practice managing an emergency event and the functions of the municipality's emergency operations center; however, planning and practicing for the recovery phase of an emergency is often overlooked.

Depending on the severity of the pandemic or public health emergency, the post-pandemic relaunch process may take months or years. While provincial and federal governments can bring significant resources to support the management and recovery from a crisis, the local municipality is best suited to understand their own community composition and community needs. Community and business leaders are also the most invested in the long-term recovery for an affected municipality.

Planning for the community's relaunch, both between and after the pandemic waves, will help speed the return to normal, reduce community stress, and reduce costs for the community's recovery.

A relaunch plan should be based on four primary pillars – economic recovery, social recovery, infrastructure/operational recovery, and environmental recovery. The relaunch plan should address topics such as:

- Establishment of stakeholder committee(s) to work towards a return to normal;
- Processes to manage the donations of funds, goods, and services, and their distribution on the community;
- Resumption of municipal services cancelled or reduced during the emergency event;
- Cooperation with government and non-government organizations and programs in the recovery effort;
- Community needs assessments to focus on businesses and individuals/groups most affected and least able to cope financially or emotionally;
- Coordination of recovery activities, including economic stimulus, social services, and specific relief services such as counselling services and food banks; and
- Keeping the public and community stakeholders informed through the media, internet, published documents and/or community meetings.

# Community Relaunch Planning Checklist

COMMUNITY RELAUNCH PLANNING			
Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
<p>Identify key stakeholders inside and outside the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic (local business leaders, chamber of commerce, industry bodies, insurance, banking and financial, employment and training services, agricultural producers, food processing, logistics);</li> <li>• Social (response agencies, provincial and federal departments, housing authorities, senior facilities, schools, non-profits, service clubs);</li> <li>• Infrastructure (road and rail authorities and operators, public transit, energy suppliers, professional bodies, waste and debris); and</li> <li>• Environmental (provincial agencies, environmental groups, natural heritage, local history).</li> </ul>			
<p>Establish recovery coordination structures, including key stakeholders from economic, social, infrastructure, and environmental segments.</p>			
<p>Develop communications plans to inform industry, business, and citizens of recovery plans and recovery activities as they happen.</p>			
<p>Collect information regarding the economic, social, infrastructure, and environmental impacts of the pandemic on the community.</p>			

## COMMUNITY RELAUNCH PLANNING

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Share information gathered from various stakeholders with each other and the community at large regarding the impact of the pandemic on the municipality.			
Begin preparing recovery assessments to help guide community needs in the recovery process.			
Conduct meetings of any emergency response recovery teams to develop a post-pandemic recovery plan.			
Build an emergency response recovery team, including key community stakeholders.			

## Relaunch Goals to Consider

The following tables provide some areas for discussion and common issues municipalities may wish to consider when preparing goals of the municipality's relaunch plan.

Goals put into place in recovery plans should be SMART:

- Specific;
- Measurable;
- Achievable;
- Realistic; and
- Timely.

Relaunch goals may be unique to the local community's needs, and may be based upon the conditions and issues faced by the municipality during the public health emergency.

### Economic Goals

#### Measures

Consider supports to local businesses to re-establishing themselves post disaster. Give special consideration to any businesses which may be critical to the re-establishment of the community.

Provide opportunities for individuals, industry and business to repay any outstanding taxes, utility charges, licenses, fees or other charges to support business re-establishment.

Identify opportunities to retain existing employment within the community for residents, and improve new job opportunities within the community.

Support local businesses in attracting customers back to local businesses and services.

Implement business attraction and retention programs to re-develop the local economy.

## Social Goals

### Measures

Maintain public order, protection of citizens and property.

Support local residents looking for personal support and/or counselling services.

Identify opportunities for citizens to assist in the recovery process and re-connect with their community.

Provide timely information to citizens about post-emergency circumstances and recovery activities.

Assist with the coordination and distribution of material relief (supplies, food, distribution of cash donations, etc) to those affected by the emergency.

Help reduce risks to public health.

Build trust with council, emergency management teams, and emergency recovery plans.

Identify emerging social issues specific to the emergency.

## Infrastructure Goals

### Measures

Minimize risks to the public, and ensure public roads, lands, and facilities are safe for emergency services, agencies, citizens and businesses.

Return to operation any community facilities closed or disrupted during the emergency.

Return to operation any community services impacted by the pandemic.

Consider disaster resilience plans for facilities, operations, and sites negatively impacted by the pandemic.

## Environmental Goals

### Measures

Address remediation and clean-up of municipal sites which may not have received regular maintenance during the emergency event.

Address air, water, and/or soil contamination issues.

Re-establish and rehabilitate natural areas, including the protection or preservation of heritage or cultural sites.

Identify emerging environmental issues.

# Appendix A - Resources

Alberta Relaunch Strategy

<https://www.alberta.ca/RelaunchStrategy>

Alberta BizConnect

<https://www.alberta.ca/bizconnect>

Guidance on Outdoor Activities

<https://www.alberta.ca/guidance-on-outdoor-activities.aspx>

Alberta Pandemic Influenza Plan

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-s-pandemic-influenza-plan>

Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)

<https://www.alberta.ca/emergency-disaster-preparedness.aspx>

Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders

[https://open.alberta.ca/dataset?q=&sort=title\\_string+desc&tags=CMOH+orders](https://open.alberta.ca/dataset?q=&sort=title_string+desc&tags=CMOH+orders)

Alberta Health Services – Outbreak Management

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6421.aspx>

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)

<https://auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/emergency-management-and-disaster-response>

Government of Canada – Emergency Management

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/mrgnc-mngmnt/index-en.aspx>

## Appendix B – Condensed Checklist

MITIGATION PHASE			
Measures - Condensed	Completed	In progress	Not started
Do an inventory of all municipal services, activities and equipment.			
Collaborate with local citizens and businesses to determine supports that the municipality may need to provide during a pandemic.			
Determine the essential municipal services, activities and equipment that will be required during a pandemic.			
Determine staff positions essential to maintaining essential services.			
Establish safety, health and wellness, and other policies for the workplace and work schedule.			



<b>PREPAREDNESS PHASE</b>			
<b>Measures - Condensed</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Train all employees on municipal emergency plan and the pandemic specific response plan.			
Practice responding to a public health emergency on a regular and ongoing basis and test planning assumptions made during practice events.			
Adjust prepared emergency plans as required based on results of practices.			
Evaluate the state of preparedness of partners, suppliers, and subcontractors and develop alternative solutions in case they cannot maintain their activities.			
Establish internal and external communication strategies, and identify spokesperson(s) for the municipality.			
<p>Establish policies for citizens and businesses regarding accessing municipal services, and paying municipal accounts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utility bills;</li> <li>• Property taxation;</li> <li>• Business licenses;</li> <li>• Development permits; and</li> <li>• Any other supports or programs applicable to the municipality.</li> </ul>			

<b>RESPONSE PHASE</b>			
<b>Measures - Condensed</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Activate the municipal emergency plan, pandemic specific response plan, and any regional or collaborative plans as necessary.			
Inform the public on the pandemic's evolution, on the response itself, and on related issues through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communications to the public;</li> <li>• providing information to the media; and</li> <li>• posting updates electronically (i.e., on your municipal website).</li> </ul>			
Prepare long-term community recovery plans to support the citizens and businesses after the pandemic ends.			

## POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY PHASE

Measures - Condensed	Completed	In progress	Not started
Restore or adapt municipal operations to normal service and program levels or acceptable service levels where appropriate.			
Manage the ongoing community recovery plan, providing supports to municipal staff, businesses and individuals as required and/or planned.			
Determine the financial impacts of the pandemic response and recovery.			

# Appendix C - Preventative Measures to Control Infectious Spread

<b>HELP CONTROL THE SPREAD</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Not started</b>
Obtain information on the pandemic, vaccination, hygiene measures and pandemic response plans from local and regional health and social services agencies.			
<p>Educate employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to basic measures of personal hygiene: hand washing; and</li> <li>respiratory etiquette (i.e., cough and sneeze in the fold of the elbow or in tissue paper, throw the tissue in the garbage and use alcohol-based hand wash, or wash the hands.)</li> </ul>			
Provide employees with personal protective equipment, if required, and make sure they know how to use it.			
<p>See that the workplace is adequately cleaned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>common spaces;</li> <li>sanitary facilities; and</li> <li>personal workstations; etc.</li> </ul>			
Issue instructions modifying the frequency and type of meetings among employees (i.e., participation in meetings, modification of offices, shared workstations) and between employees and citizens.			

## HELP CONTROL THE SPREAD

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
Develop instructions for travel limitations, and establish work from home policies and procedures.			
Develop instructions to avoid the propagation of the virus in the workplace and make sure that employees understand the directive.			
Buy products necessary for the implementation of basic hygiene precautions, such as soap, paper towels, garbage cans, fast-drying antiseptic hand wash, tissue paper, garbage cans, garbage bags, etc.			
Buy products necessary for keeping the workplace clean, such as cleaning products, domestic bleach, etc.			
Develop a process to transmit the relevant information to employees on the various aspects of the pandemic and on measures to protect their health.			
Distribute Alberta government brochures and posters on hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to employees when they are available.			
Inform employees on the appropriate time to stay at home if they have symptoms or if they are sick, and encourage them to observe the directives.			

## HELP CONTROL THE SPREAD

Measures	Completed	In progress	Not started
On the municipal website, make accessible regular information addressed to citizens on the various aspects of pandemic and on measures to protect their health.			