



For Immediate Release (July 6, 2021):

Thank you all for your patience while we have sorted through incoming information and confirmed facts about the state of our Village. In the days ahead, we will be releasing information to residents and the media on a more regular basis as we are able and new facts come to light.

This is what we can tell you. Village staff were alerted when someone banged on the office windows after hours. Staff immediately contacted the Mayor, Jan Polderman, and the Lytton Volunteer Fire Department Fire Hall and found our firefighters were already battling fires.

The Mayor quickly reached out to several contacts to attempt to confirm the severity of the fire. He also called 911 and was informed that the local RCMP were already evacuating residents on Fraser Street. The Mayor immediately contacted the Thompson-Nicola Regional District (“TNRD”) to let them know that he was ordering a full evacuation.

Due to drought conditions for several months, everything was extremely dry and a very brisk wind was blowing at the time. These conditions allowed the fire to tear rapidly into and then through our Village. Once it was established in the area of town closest to the river and homes there were burning, it spread east across the streets with ferocious speed.

A few buildings survived in town but nearly every home in the centre of the Village is gone. Where many buildings stood is now simply charred earth; it is going to take in-person assessments to determine the actual state the damage. Fortunately, some homes east across the highway were spared but are currently without electricity, sewer or water.

There have been several injuries and two confirmed fatalities. Out of respect to the families of our lost, we will not discuss their tragedy. We want

everyone to know that their bravery was incredible in the face of this unimaginable horror.

Much of the information we have received has been in general terms and we hope to clarify the exact state of things soon. This will depend on the Incident Management Team Commander's decision on the safety of the site.

There are no services at this time. Hydro, water and sewer are not available; though we have been fortunate that our sewage treatment building did not burn, it is non-functional at this time. We are trying to ascertain if our watershed has been contaminated by retardant and what sort of physical state it is in. This will require testing and an in-depth on-site assessment.

Infrastructure has been destroyed. What has not been melted, incinerated or damaged beyond repair has been compromised to the point of being unsafe. For those looking at heartbreaking pictures of our Village, please understand that if a wall is standing, it does not mean there is anything on the other side of it.

For those like myself who lived within the Village, the TNRD has graciously offered to arrange buses to take residents through town to see the extent of the damage for ourselves. This will not happen until BC Wildfire is sure no danger from fire/smouldering elements, toxic chemical exposure or hazardous objects remains. We will follow their guidance in this to the letter. Our people have suffered enough, and we do not want to expose them to any further harm. We are working with Disaster Psychosocial Services ("DPS") to provide trauma and grief counseling for our residents and are looking to have DPS volunteers on the buses to assist with the shock people are going to experience upon actually seeing the devastation.

We are now coordinating with the RCMP in regards to recovery. If you know someone who was living in or was visiting Lytton on June 30, 2021 and you have not heard from them since, we are asking that you contact the RCMP and report that person as missing. Please be sure to give the RCMP as much information about them as you can including a detailed description of the person you are reporting.

As of July 4, 2021, we are allowing BC Hydro and Telus to enter the Village for damage assessment and to cap services where they are a hazard to first responders. Telus has brought in another larger COW (“Communication On Wheels”) tower to improve cell service in the area for our first responders.

CN Rail and CP Rail will have no access to the Village with the following specific exceptions:

- CP Rail may conduct critical fire suppression response and critical repairs to their infrastructure only on their right-of-way, from rail-based vehicles, throughout their track through the fire area.
- CN Rail may conduct critical fire suppression response on their right-of-way, from rail-based vehicles, from Spences Bridge to Jade Springs only but no further.
- This fire suppression is in relation to railway ties which are still burning and need to be put out to avoid triggering further fires.

All access will be tightly controlled and under the supervision of BC Wildfire’s Incident Management Team. Government agencies participating in the response and private companies or non-governmental organizations retained by the government for early stage cleanup will be granted access based on need. These are the only agencies who have been granted access. All other requests will be processed through the BC Wildfire Incident Management Team and reviewed by the Village Council. There will be no video or photography allowed by any staff of these organizations except where it is deemed necessary to assess damages.

Please understand that all of our Emergency Operations Center equipment was destroyed in the Village Office building. We have begun replacing all of our technology as well as basic office supplies. In the interim, we have set up our EOC in an office in the TNRD building and are currently trying to operate it from a couple of laptops, an iPad and our cell phones.

Going forward, Council’s immediate priorities are:

- 1) Locating and supporting our residents;

2) Working with stakeholders to secure funding and supports to assist with all of the many stages that come next: clean up, re-establishing some services, repair or re-build of critical infrastructure etc.

So many people have offered their kindness and support in varying ways and we thank all of you from the bottom of our hearts. You have shown the true greatness that humanity can offer. We are a small community that has been devastated and we are all still reeling from the destruction of our homes, the tragic loss of life and the enormous impact this will have on us, both personally and financially, for years to come. In the coming days, weeks, months and years our hearts will break again and again as that trauma and loss is replayed in our minds and our souls. But we are Lytton, we are strong and we will rebuild our homes and businesses, rekindle our friendships and community, stronger and more enduring than ever.