



## REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN

### INFORMATION RELEASE

February 15, 2020

#### EOC Update: Attention Property Owners | Freshet Outlook & Sandbagging Information

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The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is advising property owners to be aware of the possibility of localized flooding due to freshet, in the coming months. As of February 1<sup>st</sup>, the snowpack across the South Okanagan was 129% of average values for this time of year. As a result, there remains a risk of flooding due to rainfall events. Residents living in areas impacted by flooding in recent years should have a preparedness plan in place.

The RDOS and provincial staff will continue to monitor snow conditions and lake levels. The Province will respond as necessary to manage lake and river levels through winter and spring. The Province has noted higher than average snowpack and staff have initiated higher flows out of Okanagan Lake. This is being done to lower the lake level in advance of the spring snowmelt period and to reduce potential flood risks.

Snowpack levels are only one indicator of spring freshet flood risks. Key drivers also include spring weather including widespread heavy rain, or periods of warmer weather causing rapid melt.

#### **“Property Owners are responsible for protecting their property.”**

In British Columbia, property owners are responsible for taking the necessary steps on their property to protect their home and property from flooding, while government emergency programs focus on broader flood response measures. The RDOS will provide sand and sandbags for property owners as needed, in addition to information about sandbag placement.

Flooding on private property will typically occur as a result of high stream flow, pooling or slow rising water from a body of water. The following should be considered for protecting your property from flooding:

**Assess** - Determine potential sources of flooding that may impact your property.

**Act early** - Preparing flood protection takes time and requires manual labour.

**Focus your efforts** – Work on the most effective methods to protect your property for the type of flood risk; to protect the most important areas such as your home or areas where the greatest damage may occur.

**Be Safe** – Avoid working alone around flowing water, use proper safety equipment and techniques to avoid injury.

**Get Help** – Sandbagging is labour intensive and physically demanding work.

**Communicate** - Work with your neighbours; coordinating work with adjacent properties may provide more effective flood defences.

**Invest** – Properties with routine flooding may wish to invest in improved flood defences that can be quickly deployed and are less labour intensive to put in place than sandbags.



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**Streams and flowing water** - Create sandbag walls or other barrier type flood defences alongside the stream; contain the stream or re-direct the flow away from your home and other critical areas of your property; be aware that backing up of flow may cause water to rise or backflow into unprotected areas.

**Pooling or slow rising water from a body of water** - Create sandbag walls with heavy duty poly or plastic sheeting incorporated to completely surround a structure; have pumps on hand to remove seepage of water from within the protected area; be aware that power may be out or disconnected; have a generator on hand if needed.

**Sandbagging Information Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thZwVWyXjMQ&feature=youtu.be>

**Important Notes:**

Sand and sandbag locations will be listed on the RDOS Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) website: <https://emergency.rdos.bc.ca/>

If you require assistance with sandbagging, please connect with friends, family or volunteer organizations.

The RDOS does not deliver sand or sandbags to private residences or businesses.

Filled sandbags are not available from the RDOS.

**Emergency Notification**

Sign up for CivicReady® Mass Notification System: <https://emergency.rdos.bc.ca/civic-ready/>

**Emergency Preparedness Awareness**

Emergency management staff will be at the 2020 Penticton Home and Reno Show March 7-8 at the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre. Volunteers with Emergency Support Services (ESS) and Animal Lifeline Emergency Response Team (ALERT) will also be present. Stop by the RDOS EOC booth to learn more about preparing for floods, wildfires and other emergencies.

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**For further information, please contact the RDOS EOC: 250-490-4225**