



2023 Klondike River Flooding

Preparedness, Response, and Recovery After-Action Review

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Prepared by: Stantec Consulting LTD

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2023 KLONDIKE RIVER FLOODING: AFTER-ACTION REVIEW



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Design with community in mind


2023 KLONDIKE RIVER FLOODING: AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

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2023 KLONDIKE RIVER FLOODING: AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

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Prepared by:  Digitally signed by Alyssa Pepper
Date: 2024.03.28 16:21:36 -06'00'

Signature
Alyssa Pepper, MPA
Emergency Management Specialist


Prepared by:  Signature
Jenna Bell, B.Sc.
Social Scientist, Project Engagement Support

Reviewed by: _____
Signature
Zoë Morrison, MCIP, RPP
Senior Associate, Planner,
Project Engagement Lead

Reviewed by: _____
Signature
Zane Beall, MPA
Associate, Senior Planner

Reviewed by: **Cabott, Lesley**  Digitally signed by Cabott, Lesley
Date: 2024.03.28 15:32:22 -06'00'

Signature
Lesley Cabott, (PIBC, SPPI, APPI) FCIP MA ICD D
Principal, Planning Lead,
Northern Canada

Approved by:  Digitally signed by Jeff Muirhead
Date: 2024.03.28 12:58:47 -07'00'

Signature
Jeff Muirhead, M.ASc., P.Eng.
Hydrotechnical Engineer, Project Manager



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Executive Summary

Overview

This After-Action Review (AAR) provides a detailed description of the 2023 ice jam and flooding event that impacted Dawson City, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH), and unincorporated areas of the Klondike Valley. Unincorporated areas refer to regions that are not governed by a local municipal corporation. The AAR provides a summary of the actions taken over the course of the 8-week incident by the Government of Yukon (YG), associated partners, municipal and First Nation government. The AAR also identifies preparedness, response, and recovery strengths and outlines a plan for improvement. This executive summary is intended to provide a summary of the broader AAR that follows.



Figure 1 ECC in Whitehorse, YT

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The observed strengths associated with the incident are detailed in the table below. Additional details can be found in Section 4.1.



Table 1 Observed Strengths

Core Capability	Description
Operational Coordination	The Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) effectively responded to multiple incidents at the same time over the 8-week Klondike ice jam/flooding incident. With limited staff, the ECC was able to maintain effective communication and support response activities throughout the incident, in part due to their ability to be in the same room. Additionally, the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) was able to rotate through the planning team to provide a 24/7 Duty Officer. The ECC maintained communication with the Dawson City Incident Management Team (IMT). Wildland Fire Management (WFM) assisted in implementing the Incident Command System (ICS) and slotting personnel into appropriate roles as well as completing incident documentation.
Operational Coordination	WFM personnel quickly responded upon request. WFM stepped in to take over as the Incident Commander (IC), assisted in implementing ICS, made sure personnel were assigned to appropriate roles, and ensured incident documentation was completed and shared to coordinating agencies. With WFM being part of the IMT, the ECC was able to maintain communication with the IMT.
Public Information and Awareness	YG has taken steps to provide preparedness tools to increase hazard awareness to the community. Such steps include strategic cameras along the river, the use of Flood Atlas to detail advisories, flood conditions, weather forecasts, and forecasted water levels. YG has produced pamphlets to prepare for a flood while WFM will go door to door to hand out notifications and set up a mobile repeater that loops information.



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Table 2 Areas for Improvement

Core Capability	Description
Emergency Evacuation and Transportation	Residents noted varying levels of damage to their properties. People were also concerned that the bridge over the Klondike River and Bonanza Road were the only way out of town. Many people felt stranded in their homes when the bridge or road were inundated.
EM Planning	YG’s most current Emergency Coordination Plan was published in December 2011. This plan does not mention the ECC, nor the differing activation levels that were used during the Klondike response. The plan does not allow YG to give an evacuation order to an unincorporated area without declaring a state of emergency for the entire territory. Additionally, the language used throughout the Emergency Coordination Plan is inconsistent with the terminology YG used during the 2023 Klondike flood event.
Emergency Public Alerting	While YG noted they used a variety of services to deliver emergency notifications, the timeliness of emergency notifications often did not allow impacted individuals to prepare for or respond to the alert. In several instances, an alert was sent hours after the flooding had occurred. In one instance, the ECC was only told about the evacuation the following morning and then a tactical evacuation alert was delivered. Other times, people did not receive notification updates as they were often posted to the official Facebook Page and many residents did not have access to cellular service or Wi-Fi.
Intelligence Information Sharing	It was acknowledged by both YG, local response agencies, and residents that flood hazard maps do not exist for Klondike Valley and Dawson City.
Operational Coordination	According to local interviewees, there was a lack of YG presence during the initial flood response. There was a significant delay in activating the ECC and WFM was not asked to assist in the response until several days into the event. With a lack of on-the-ground presence of YG first responders, local response agencies coordinated their own response. TH interviewees reported receiving little support from YG throughout the emergency. TH, HPW, WFM and local fire departments expressed that there was a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities.
Operational Coordination	There is not currently a territorial plan or strategy to address and support flood response from the territorial level down to the municipal governments and unincorporated areas. There has been little progress from EMO to support the development of emergency plans in municipalities, First Nation communities and unincorporated areas. Currently, an Evacuation Order can only be enforced if a State of Emergency is pre-declared by the Mayor and Council or the Chief and Council. Without a municipal or First Nation government, unincorporated areas cannot declare a State of Emergency unless EMO declares one for the entire Yukon Territory.
Property Resilience	YG launched the 2023 Klondike Valley Flood Recovery Funding Program to provide financial assistance to those impacted by uninsured damages to their property and possessions. However, the majority of survey responses found the recovery support provided by YG as disorganized and untimely.
Training and Education	Several parties pointed to the lack of training and the need to practice emergency procedures. While some people were prepared to respond to the flooding due to their past experiences of serving in the ECC, there was a steep learning curve for those new employees expected to fill important roles in the ECC with little to no experience or training. There is a gap in technical training specific to ice jams and ice jam response.



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Table 3 Summary of Improvement Plan and Next Steps

The following table identifies the recommended actions to address areas for improvement associated with the incident. Additional detail can be found in Section 5.0.

No.	Core Capability	Recommendation
1	Emergency Public Alerting	Create a mechanism to send targeted alerts to people in unincorporated areas without the need to make a Yukon-wide disaster declarations.
2	EM Planning	Update the Yukon Government Emergency Coordination Plan to better define the roles of YG, local governments, and local response agencies. Coordinate and encourage coordinated updates with local governments to ensure alignment. During updates, review roles and responsibilities with all parties to ensure buy-in.
3	Operational Coordination	Work with YG departments (including Water Resources Branch (WRB), EMO, Infrastructure and Developments Branch (IDB), HPW, and Yukon Energy Corporation (YEC)) and relevant technical experts to determine emergency response actions and the thresholds for their initiation. These should acknowledge the specific flood processes at play (e.g., ice jam vs. open water) and the specific hazards they pose.
4	EM Planning	Define and socialize steps to request an emergency alert or an evacuation.
5	EM Planning	Create ECC Manual to socialize ECC procedures and expectations for new YG personnel.
6	EM Planning	Create a standing ECC roster of trained YG personnel. In the roster, establish a Resources Unit, Procurement Unit, and Flood Unit under the roster to sustain ECC operations and better coordinate with local response agencies.
7	Emergency Logistics	Create incident specific resource lists, including a list of personnel that are ready to deploy as EMO liaisons in preparation for procurement and deployment of resources (pumps, trained personnel, vehicles, etc.).
8	Intelligence Information Sharing	Create flood hazard maps for the Klondike Valley and conduct transportation impact analysis to improve risk awareness to critical infrastructure and property.
9	Operational Coordination	Maintain Contact List in the ECC detailing Points of Contact for all incorporated and unincorporated areas.
10	Property Resilience	Develop a communications and engagement plan to keep residents aware of the recovery funding process and to provide ongoing updates.
11	Training and Education	Establish a training schedule with TH and municipal government to educate and exercise YG emergency plans, conduct emergency notification drills, educate on flood and wildfire preparedness, and build relationships with the communities. The training should also incorporate technical training unique to ice jam response.



Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
CCCL	Canadian Core Capabilities List
DFD	City of Dawson Fire Department
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre
ECP	Emergency Coordination Plan
EM	Emergency Management
EMO	Emergency Measures Organization
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
ERT	Emergency Response Team
ESS	Emergency Support Services
HEOC	Health Emergency Operations Center
HPW	Department of Highways and Public Works
IC	Incident Commander
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICS	Incident Command System
IDB	Infrastructure and Developments Branch
IMT	Incident Management Team
KVFD	Klondike Valley Fire Department
SitReps	Situation Reports
TH	Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
WFM	Wildland Fire Management
WRB	Water Resources Branch
YEC	Yukon Energy Corporation
YG	Government of Yukon



1.0 INTRODUCTION

In May 2023, ice jamming on the Klondike River prompted emergency responses and evacuations in downstream communities. Community governments, including Dawson City and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH), responded and were supported by the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC). Active response to the incident occurred May 7th through June 13th with recovery ongoing as of March 2024. This After-Action Review (AAR) is primarily focused on the responsibilities of the Government of Yukon (YG) but may also present findings that identify recommendations to residents, community governments, and other partners. The findings identified in this AAR largely relied upon observations shared by residents, TH staff, YG staff, and Dawson City staff.

1.1 AFTER-ACTION REVIEW PROCESS

The AAR process allows for consistent and timely review of emergency operations to understand what happened and, to the extent possible, the response that occurred. The review also ensures that lessons learned are captured while still fresh in the minds of those involved. YG hired Stantec Consulting Services LTD in October 2023 to conduct the AAR process and identify strengths and areas for improvement that inform recommended actions to improve the capacity to respond to, and recover from, emergencies. This AAR process included the following:

1. **Public Engagement.** A public meeting was held at the TH Community Hall in Dawson City on January 23, 2024, and was attended by 8 residents in-person, and 22 residents online. Web-based surveys were distributed on January 17, 2024, through the YG's website, social media and directly via email to stakeholders. 56 responses were submitted to the Resident Survey.
2. **Government of Yukon and Community Government Engagement.** 18 individuals were interviewed from organizations involved in the response including YG, TH, Wildland Fire Management (WFM), Dawson City Fire Department (DFD), and Klondike Valley Fire Department (KVFD). 22 responses were submitted to the EMO Survey, and no responses were submitted to the Community Government Survey.
3. **Incident Documentation and Existing Plans and Procedures.** Incident documentation was provided by YG and included: ECC Situation Reports (SitReps), official resource requests, Incident Management Team (IMT) emails, organization chart, incident action plans, photos, breakup forecasts, and online articles.

1.2 AFTER-ACTION REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

An AAR serves as the formal documentation of the incident and includes an Improvement Plan which recommends corrective actions, resourcing, and timeframes. This AAR includes:

- An overview of the incident.
- A summary of observations presented to identify strengths to be maintained and areas for improvement.
- A list of recommended actions designed to address the identified areas for improvement.



1.3 USING THIS AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

This AAR will be used to support ongoing emergency preparedness activities and inform the update of plans, procedures, and processes; and while the AAR is a static document that documents lessons learned from the incident's response activities, the actions included in the Improvement Plan should be carried forward by relevant partners. All actions will be assigned to the specific departments of YG by the YG Project Manager. This AAR can also be used to support consistent messaging regarding lessons learned and to inform future capacity-building activities.



2.0 INCIDENT RESPONSE BY PHASE

The phases below align with the incident as described in the SitReps written by the ECC.

Ice Jam Incident Begins and Deteriorates: May 7th – May 8th, 2023

The first Flood Warning for the Klondike River was issued on May 7th. Interviews with local emergency respondents revealed that the KVFD, DFD, TH and Highways and Public Works (HPW) responded right away when the flooding began on May 7th in the afternoon, despite not having any official call-out for response. On May 8th, the ECC was activated to Level 1, to position the EMO to monitor the situation and begin SitReps. The Yukon Coordination Plan details five levels:

- Level 1 – Monitoring incident and maintaining situational awareness.
- Level 2 – Minimal support and expenditures needed.
- Level 3 – Moderate commitment of YG resources and event has significant complexity or risk. Lead ECC positions are activated.
- Level 4 – Significant commitment of YG resources and YG may declare a disaster. ECC activated 24/7.
- Level 5 – YG resources are fully committed, and mutual aid has been requested.

While the five levels are documented, the ECC utilized a three-level system:

- Level 1 – Monitoring
- Level 2 – Partial Activation
- Level 3 – Full Activation



Figure 2 Incident Status Timeline



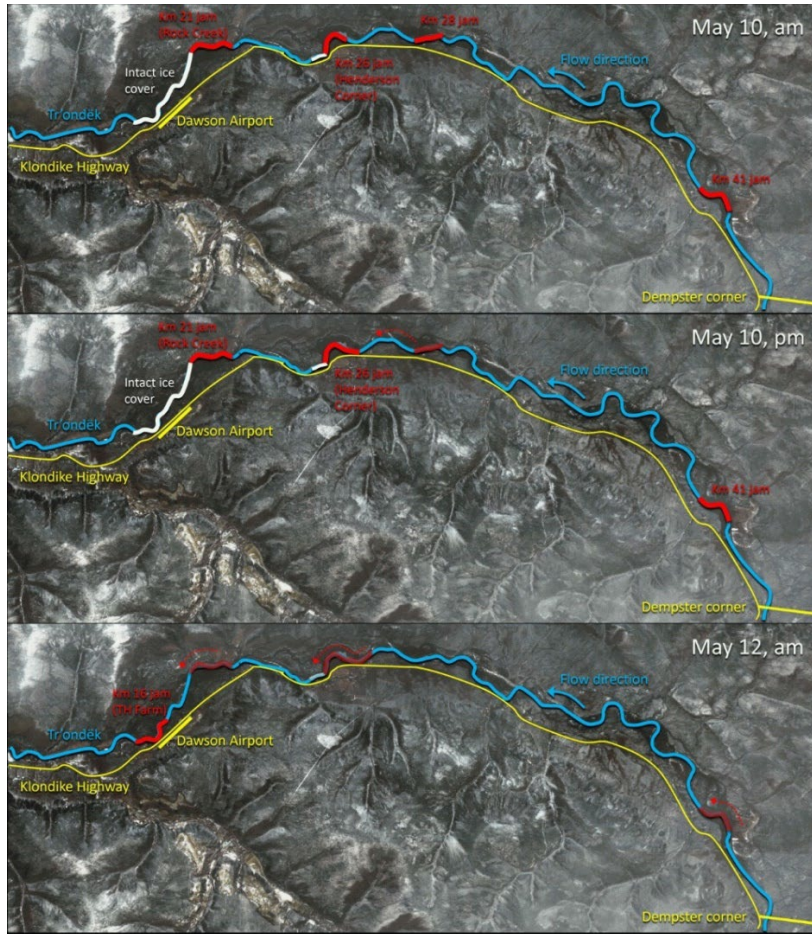
The ECC recommended Dawson City and TH make one unified IMT, but an IMT was not stood up in Dawson City at the beginning of the incident. A Flood Watch was issued to the Dawson region, and a tactical evacuation was issued via AlertReady for Rock Creek subdivision. The ECC maintained 12-hour day shifts and a 24/7 Duty Officer. The alert was sent to Dawson City, Moosehide, and unincorporated Yukon areas. The ECC anticipated 20 properties would evacuate. A Flood Watch was issued for the Dawson Region of the Lower Yukon River. Due to flooding, Yukon Energy disconnected power to Rock Creek and Henderson Corner subdivisions. The Dawson Airport began using 6" pumps to move water off the runway. During an interview with YG aviation staff, it was explained that finding an available and suitable pump to use at the airport was difficult. The airport staff had to source their own pump through personal connections with a nearby placer miner.

Deteriorating: May 9th – May 10th, 2023

A Flood Warning was issued for Rock Creek/Klondike Valley. The Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC) was activated to a Level 1 and provided hotel accommodations in Dawson for a few evacuees and first responders. There were reports of ditches and culverts being very full in Henderson Corner, Rock Creek, and at the Dawson Airport. Medivac flights could not be executed due to flooding at the airport. Cleanup kits were provided to residents returning home post evacuation.

On May 10th, a tactical evacuation was issued for Henderson Corner. An ice jam on the Yukon River broke upstream and was pushing ice past Dawson. The ice jam near Henderson Corner caused localized flooding with water levels fluctuating on Rock Creek Road. TH tactically evacuated ten TH citizen households from Henderson Corner. Seven households that were evacuated from Rock Creek received Emergency Support Services (ESS). Even with the flooding, Yukon Energy reconnected power to Rock Creek and Henderson Corner subdivisions and the airport was fully operational. An article on the Klondike River Floods, posted by Dr. Benoit Turcotte of Yukon University, includes a depiction of the ice jam and floods in relation to the impacted communities, shown in Figure 3.





SOURCE: Turcotte (2023)

Figure 3 Breakup Sequence

Stabilizing: May 11th, 2023

Rock Creek ice jam dropped, and irrigation and earthen berms were made along North Klondike Highway at Henderson Corner to minimize property damage.

Second Evacuation: May 12th, 2023

The ECC escalated to an Activation Level 2 and the IMT was stood up as the ice jam at Henderson Corner released and jammed near TH farm. Water backed up to TH farm and Rock Creek Subdivision again. Yukon Energy turned off power to Rock Creek. Another Tactical Evacuation was issued for Rock Creek Subdivision through AlertReady to Dawson City, Moosehide, and unincorporated Yukon.

HEOC deployed their Rapid Response Team to support evacuees, to integrate into local Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) and Incident Command Posts (ICP) and conduct advanced planning activities for group lodging. YG's IMT set up their ICP at the Air Tanker base at the Dawson Airport.

Improving: May 13th, 2023



The ice jam near TH farm broke causing ice and flood waters to enter TH Farm. North Klondike Highway between Dempster Corner and Dawson City closed to repair section eroded from water and ice (see Figure 4).

Improving: May 14th, 2023

ECC was downgraded to Level 1 as the Klondike River stabilized. Goldfield Loop, including Bonanza, Upper Bonanza, Eldorado and Hunker Creek Roads, was closed due to washouts, but the North Klondike Highway opened. Yukon Energy turned power back on at Rock Creek and Henderson Corner.



SOURCE: MacIntyre (CBC) (2023)

Figure 4 Flooding at TH Camp

Improving: May 15th, 2023

ECC was upgraded to a Level 2 as a Flood Watch was issued for Rock Creek and Klondike Valley. The remaining ice was melting rapidly, and the Klondike River peaked. Waters receded from Rock Creek and Henderson Corner allowing response to begin shifting to recovery and residents to return home.

Improving: May 16th, 2023

The initial Flood Warning was downgraded to High Stream Flood Advisory for Rock Creek/Klondike Valley. The ESS in Dawson demobilized their reception centre for group lodging in Dawson City. The Dawson City IMT began superficial damage assessments and demobilization efforts, such as taking down berms.

Improving: May 17th – 19th, 2023

The Dawson City IMT was stood down. Tributary waters receded from Rock Creek and Henderson Corner so residents could return home with caution. The ECC was downgraded to a Level 1 on the 18th as the river was high but relatively stable.

No Update: May 20th – May 22nd, 2023

No SitReps were delivered.

Flood Incident Begins - Deteriorating: May 23rd, 2023

Due to significant precipitation, a Flood Watch was issued for Rock Creek and the Klondike Valley.





SOURCE: MacIntyre (CBC) (2023)

Figure 5 Ice and Flood Waters

Third Evacuation: May 24th, 2023

The ECC was escalated to Activation Level 2. As water levels rose above those of ice jam flooding, a Flood Warning was issued and the IMT was reactivated (see Figure 5).

Public sandbagging stations were set up in Dawson at C4 Subdivision, Mammoth, and the Confluence. Another Tactical Evacuation was issued for Rock Creek subdivision and Dredge Pond area. Yukon Energy cut power to the Rock Creek Subdivision. HEOC deployed a rapid response team, to arrive on May 25th, to support evacuees.

Stabilizing: May 25th – May 30th, 2023

Due to the flooding's strain on the wastewater treatment plant, Dawson City residents were asked to limit water usage. To help protect properties, 24 pallets of sandbags were made available in Rock Creek. The Dawson City IMT was actively working to demobilize and transition to recovery activities.

Improving: May 31st – June 9th, 2023

Advisory downgraded to High Stream Flow on May 31st. Between June 1st and June 9th, SitReps only detailed water level and airport draining updates. The Dawson City IMT was stood down for a second time on June 2nd.

Incident Closed: June 13th, 2023

The incident was closed June 13th, though ESS stayed until to June 30th to provide supports for evacuees still displaced from the flooding.



2.1 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PARTNERS

The entities involved in preparedness and response and their respective roles are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4 Partner Roles

Entity	Responsibilities Carried Out During Flood	Responsibilities Outlined in EM Plans and YG Resources
City of Dawson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stood up IMT • Published routine incident updates • Dawson Fire Chief served as the Incident Commander (IC) for part of the event • Fire Department assembled and distributed sandbags • Fire Department assisted with evacuations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and implement emergency plans • Protects life, property, and infrastructure • Assists with delivering evacuation advisories • Participates in response efforts as necessary (e.g., rescue, medical response, casualty collection)
YG Department of Health and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported evacuation services through its HEOC • Aided residents and monitored phone 24 hours a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides trained personnel, assets and resources for an effective emergency response • Protects vital statistics and other personal information • Manages and distributes medical supplies and equipment
Canadian Red Cross - Emergency Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuee registration • Distributed resources to evacuees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates reception centres for people to access services including shelter, food and clothing (Canadian Red Cross, 2024).
YG EMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activated the ECC • Supported resource request needs • Distributed information to the public through information officer • Issued evacuation orders and flood warnings • Coordinated highway patrols • Organized recovery • Distributed notifications and updates to the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses the emergency situation with local agencies and authorities • Coordinates resources to support emergency response • Coordinates recovery efforts • Appoints local Yukon EMO Coordinator for unincorporated communities (Government of Yukon, 2024b)
YG Department of Environment, Water Resources Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted flood forecasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs regional water quality monitoring • Provides flood forecasts and assessments • Evaluates, coordinates, and make recommendations for mitigation/rehabilitation of environmental damage to critical environments associated with emergencies and disasters
YG Highways and Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repaired Rock Creek Road • Managed airport flooding • Directed traffic • Distributed sand, gravel and sandbags • Assisted in berm construction • Requested equipment and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares and places sandbags where needed to protect property • Acts as the purchasing agent for assets and resources as required • Maintains and coordinates the re-establishment of YG's critical infrastructure



Entity	Responsibilities Carried Out During Flood	Responsibilities Outlined in EM Plans and YG Resources
Dawson City Incident Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activated mid-way through the incident Coordinated incident through TH, WFM and YG Communicated regularly with EMO to provide updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides on-site incident management Ensures that front-line responders are briefed on communications protocols and know how to respond if approached by the media or public Communicates with EMO to ensure they have the latest information from the emergency site Establishes the boundaries of the incident site in coordination with EOC
Klondike Valley Fire Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted with evacuations Supported distribution of sandbags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects life, property, and infrastructure Assists with delivering evacuation advisories Participates in response efforts as necessary (e.g. rescue, medical response, casualty collection)
Public Safety Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring flooding of airport and evacuations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides emergency management training Leads in establishing a common approach in developing emergency management plans Oversees National Public Alerting System (NPAS) to provide EMOs with alerting capabilities Manages request from other provinces and territories
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributed sandbags at Henderson Corner Assisted with evacuations Coordinated their own emergency response for TH citizens Worked collaboratively with the IMT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-govern to the extent agreed upon by TH and YG
YG Wildland Fire Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took over IC role from Dawson Fire Department Sourced equipment and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects life, property, and infrastructure Assists with delivering evacuation advisories Participates in response efforts as necessary (e.g. rescue, medical response, casualty collection)

2.2 EVACUATION SERVICES AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

Evacuation services and resource support were provided throughout the incident by ESS. To receive support services, evacuees could register for support housing using a phone number provided through social media and the AlertReady notification. The Department of Health and Social Services also supported evacuation via its HEOC. When possible, evacuees were placed in hotels, but there was also group lodging available at the Robert Service School. While the numbers of citizens registered for evacuation support fluctuated throughout the incident, at its peak, 82 citizens were registered for evacuation support with ESS on May 28th.



Additionally, resources provided by YG, or that YG assisted in provided included:

- 60 pallets of sandbags staged around Klondike Valley, including 24 pallets of sandbags at Rock Creek.
- Two 6-inch pumps and 2,300 sandbags delivered to the airport by HPW.
- FM simplex repeater was sent to Dawson City via Air North from WFM.
- Rotorwing (helicopter) was by the Regional Protection Officer on May 24th to perform flyover assessments.
- 40 home clean up kits were shipped to Dawson City by ESS.
- Dumpster was procured through a contract and placed at Rock Creek and Henderson for cleanup and debris drop off.



SOURCE: MacIntyre (CBC) (2023)

Figure 6 Sandbags to Mitigate Flood Waters

The ECC requested the following resources for its operations:

- Incident Commander
- Logistics Section Chief
- Information Assistant
- Finance Section Chief
- Planning Section Chief
- Operations Section Chief
- Five WFM Personnel
- WFM Officer
- Maintenance
- Volunteer Management
- Communications Officer
- Cell phones/chargers for each ECC section,
- Snacks and water for ECC staff
- Dyson fans/sunshade for window outside of ECC

2.3 RECOVERY

As the ECC transitioned to recovery, it distributed a Flood Recovery Plan and disseminated the plan to the EMO, all members of the ECC, the Dawson IMT, HEOC, ESS, Environmental Health, Community Affairs, Department of Community Services, and Public Safety Canada. Additional recovery efforts included:

- Distributing of information for people returning home
- Supporting of community led efforts and meetings to talk about their experiences and discuss their future recovery needs
- Providing financial support to impacted residents



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- Demobilizing response materials and resources
- Planned shelter for residents that needed services beyond the incident closure date

YG launched the 2023 Klondike Valley Flood Recovery Funding Program to provide financial assistance to those impacted by uninsured damages to their property and possessions. Table 5 describes the recovery funding program. The program received more than 30 applications for more than \$1.5 million in claims (Hatherly, 2024).

Table 5 Recovery Funding Program Eligible Participants

Eligible Participants	Description
Residents	Housing financial assistance for eligible damage and losses up to a maximum of \$250,000.
Farmers	Agriculture Financial assistance for eligible damage costs up to a maximum of \$500,000.
Small Business Owners	Financial assistance for eligible damage costs up to a maximum of \$500,000.
SOURCE: Government of Canada (2022)	



3.0 STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following provides a summary of the findings from the incident preparedness and response process, including observed strengths and areas for improvement. The observations captured in this AAR are not intended to serve as an exhaustive narrative of the incident's preparedness and response actions. Rather, they offer highlights of interactions or feedback that provide context which, in turn, inform the recommendations that have been included in the Improvement Plan presented in *Section 4.0. Improvement Plan*.

3.1 OBSERVED STRENGTHS

The observed strengths are detailed in Table 6 below in alphabetical order.



Table 6 Observed Strengths

Core Capability	Topic	Description
Operational Coordination	ECC Operations	<p>Description: Once established, the ECC balanced multiple incidents at once throughout the eight-week duration of the incident. Though staffing redundancy was low, the ECC was able to maintain good communication and support response efforts throughout the incident, in part due to their ability to be in the same room. Additionally, the EMO retained use of its 24/7 Duty Officer. The ECC maintained communication with the Dawson City IMT. WFM assisted in implementing ICS and slotting personnel into appropriate roles as well as completing incident documentation (Government of Yukon, 2024a).</p> <p>Analysis: Through surveys and interviews, it was noted that internal communications and operations of the ECC went smoothly due to existing relationships and willingness to bring all issues up for discussion. The ongoing EMO meetings were deemed as helpful for situational awareness by over 62% of attendees.</p>
Operational Coordination	Mobilization	<p>Description: When requested, WFM personnel quickly stepped in to support Dawson City and Klondike Valley. WFM took over as IC, assisted in implementing ICS, made sure personnel were assigned to appropriate roles, and aided in ensuring incident documentation was completed and shared to coordinating emergency agencies.</p> <p>Analysis: Multiple sources mentioned the local emergency response went relatively smoothly and was coordinated well. Lots of praise has been given to WFM and HPW for their impressive and organized support during the event. Interviewees said the IMT worked well because of existing positive relationships between team members and the broader community.</p>
Public Information and Awareness	Preparedness	<p>Description: Prior to the event, YG had preparedness tools in place to increase hazard awareness to the community. Such steps include strategic cameras along river, the use of Flood Atlas to detail advisories, flood conditions, weather forecasts, and forecasted water levels. YG produced informational pamphlets to prepare for a flood while WFM went door to door to hand out notifications and set up a mobile repeater that loops information.</p> <p>Analysis: 74% of the resident survey respondents prepared for a potential evacuation through either an assembled emergency kit, go-bag, food and water, an established evacuation plan, or transportation arrangements.</p>



3.2 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The observed areas for improvement are detailed in Table 7 below in alphabetical order.



Table 7 Areas for Improvement

Core Capability	Topic	Description
Emergency Evacuation and Transportation	Redundant Evacuation Routes	<p>Description: The closure of the Klondike Highway and the airport, along with threats to the bridge over the Klondike River, meant that access was limited for residents of Henderson Corner, Rock Creek and the surrounding area. Culverts were too small to support the drainage needed to redirect water away from properties and roads, inundating the only ground access out of the valley.</p> <p>Analysis: The resident survey results noted varying reports of damage from the flood. Many comments were made regarding the lack of redundant infrastructure as the bridge over the Klondike River and Bonanza Road were the only way out of the area. Multiple people felt stranded in their homes when the bridge near Henderson Corner and Rock Creek was impacted, and the roads were inundated. Flood defense for the roads and infrastructure, like sand bagging and building berms, executed reactively rather than in preparation of the potential flooding. <i>See Recommendation No. 7.</i></p>
EM Planning	Emergency Plans and Preparedness	<p>Description: The most current Yukon Government Emergency Coordination Plan was published in December 2011. There is currently no plan or process for issuing a state of emergency for unincorporated areas. The lack of a formal emergency guidance document contributed to the confusion of roles and responsibilities and jurisdictions in response, resources available to request, and evacuation processes. There is a perception amongst the local governments that there is a lack of shared framework and approach to preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies.</p> <p>Analysis: 86% of resident respondents felt that the municipal government was either somewhat or not at all prepared for the flood. Over 53% of residents felt that municipal government and the impacted communities within Klondike Valley did not conduct appropriate mitigation activities and would like to see pre-filled sandbags at strategic storage points. 60% of respondents were either somewhat aware or not aware of the flood risk to their community/property prior to the 2023 flood. <i>See Recommendation No. 1.</i></p>



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Core Capability	Topic	Description
Emergency Public Alerting	Emergency Notifications	<p>Description: While YG reported using a variety of services to deliver emergency notifications, the timeliness of emergency notifications often did not allow impacted individuals to prepare for or respond to the alert. In several instances, an alert was sent hours after the flooding had occurred. In one instance, ECC was only told about the evacuation the following morning and then a tactical evacuation alert was delivered. Other times, people did not receive notification updates as they were often posted to the official Facebook Page, and many residents did not have cellular service or WiFi. Expedited notifications and communications are important as ice jam breakups may happen abruptly.</p> <p>Analysis: For emergency notifications and evacuation updates, YG used AlertReady which delivers alerts through television, radio, and LTE-connected cellular devices. EMO updates were sent using the EMO.Yukon@yukon.ca email. Additionally, updates were posted to a variety of sources, detailed in Appendix B. YG acknowledged that the SitRep stated there was a tactical evacuation during which the residents of Rock Creek evacuated overnight with help from local agencies. Many of the survey comments related to communications emphasized the mix messaging received, the lack of official notifications, and YG's reliance on social media to send out alerts. This was an issue for people without access to WiFi. Along with the mixed messaging, false narratives were spread around including the message that drinking water was impacted by the flood. Residents hoped for a more robust warning system and door-to-door notifications. Only 15% of respondents felt that YG provided them with information needed during the flood. <i>See Recommendation No. 4.</i></p>
Intelligence Information Sharing	Hazard Maps and Risk Awareness	<p>Description: It was acknowledged by both YG, local response agencies, and residents that flood hazard maps do not currently exist for Klondike Valley and Dawson.</p> <p>Analysis: Without an accurate assessment of what properties are at risk, it is challenging for both YG and property owners to properly prepare for a flooding incident if they are unaware of the risk. <i>See Recommendation No. 8.</i></p>
Operational Coordination	Staffing	<p>Description: According to local interviewees, there was a lack of YG presence during response beyond the coordination with the IMT and HPW clearing and repairing roads. There was no YG EMO Coordinator deployed to Rock Creek. TH interviewees reported not seeing any YG personnel or receiving supports from YG. With a lack of on-the-ground presence of YG first responders, local agencies coordinated their own response. TH set up its own Emergency Response Team (ERT) and supported its own evacuations.</p> <p>Analysis: The ECC does not have a deep bench of trained personnel and resources to support a prolonged incident, such as the ice jam and ensuing flood. Therefore, YG departments were not able to commit personnel to staffing the ECC for the duration of the flooding and did not promptly deploy EMO personnel to the site. YG had limited available and trained staff at the ECC, and several staff had only recently started their employment. <i>See Recommendation No. 6.</i></p>



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Core Capability	Topic	Description
Operational Coordination	External Partners	<p>Description: There is not currently a territorial plan or strategy to address and support flood response from the territorial level down to the municipal governments, First Nation governments and unincorporated areas. There has been little progress from EMO to support the development of emergency plans in municipal communities and unincorporated areas. Currently, an Evacuation Order can only be enforced if a State of Emergency is pre-declared by the Mayor and Council or the Chief and Council. Without a council, the unincorporated areas cannot declare a State of Emergency without the EMO declaring a state of Emergency for the entire Yukon Territory.</p> <p>Analysis: Through interviews, it was identified that establishing specific procedures for much of the territories is hard as unincorporated communities do not have a representative or council to speak or act on their behalf. YG faces challenges to define processes to better plan for and coordinate flood response without councils to work with. <i>See Recommendation No. 3.</i></p>
Property Resilience	Recovery	<p>Description: YG launched the 2023 Klondike Valley Flood Recovery Funding Program to provide financial assistance to those impacted by uninsured damages to their property and possessions. However, the majority of survey responses found the recovery support provided by YG to be disorganized and untimely. There is a gap in communicating and executing recovery efforts.</p> <p>Analysis: Many individuals noted that all recovery-related efforts need to be improved. Many residents commented that damage assessments, compensation and funding for repairs need to be better and timelier. Nearly 65% of residents surveyed felt that damage assessments should be coordinated by YG, while 53% of residents felt that the residents should be responsible for coordinating repairs. Additionally, residents who attended the public meeting on January 23, 2024 felt that the Recovery Funding Program was not tailored to meet local needs, as financial assistance was only available for use at one store. It was expressed that in Dawson it is difficult to get food and supplies from only one store. <i>See Recommendation No. 10.</i></p>
Training and Education	Training and Exercise	<p>Description: The lack of training and exercise of any emergency preparedness plan or procedure was heard several times during the interviews. While some people were prepared to respond to the flooding due to their past experiences of serving in the ECC, there was a steep learning curve for those new employees expected to fill impactful roles in the ECC with little to no experience or training.</p> <p>Analysis: When given the option of “not at all prepared”, “somewhat prepared”, “mostly prepared”, or “fully prepared”, 63% of EMO respondents answered they only felt “somewhat prepared” for the flood. There was confusion from EMO on specific roles and responsibilities during response, specifically concerning interagency coordination and collaboration.</p> <p><i>See Recommendation No. 11.</i></p>



4.0 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The following Improvement Plan presents a set of recommended actions based on the observations outlined in this AAR (see Table 8). Recommendations align with the Canadian Core Capabilities List (CCL) to support the initiatives which enhance the *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada: Toward a Resilient 2030*. The recommendations are organized within Table 8. Recommendations under the following headers:

- **No.** – Numerical identification of each AAR recommendation for tracking and accountability.
- **Core Capability** – Identifies the core capability that the recommended improvement is designed to address.
- **Recommendation**– Describes the action being recommended.
- **Responsible Party** – Identifies the entity responsible for advancing the recommended improvement.
- **Timeframe** – Indicates the high-level timeline for the completion of each AAR recommendation.



Table 8 Recommendations

No.	Core Capability	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeframe
1	Emergency Public Alerting	Develop a mechanism to send targeted alerts and evacuation recommendations/orders to unincorporated areas who do not have councils or representation to declare a local emergency, and therefore cannot request an evacuation alert.	YG EMO, Protective Services Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June 2023 – Ongoing (with upcoming improvements from the National Alerting System).
2	EM Planning	Update the Yukon Government Emergency Coordination Plan to better define the roles of YG, municipal governments, First Nation governments and local response agencies. Coordinate and encourage coinciding updates with local governments to ensure alignment. During updates, facilitate roles and responsibilities mapping exercise with YG department heads to ensure buy-in of responsibilities during preparedness, response, and recovery.	Protective Services and all YG departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report improvements and next phases suggestions: October 2023 - February 2024. Implementation of the next phases: March 2024 - March 2025.
3	Operational Coordination	Work with YG departments and relevant technical experts (including Water Resources Branch (WRB), EMO, Infrastructure and Developments Branch (IDB), HPW, and Yukon Energy Corporation (YEC)) to determine triggers for emergency response. Identify thresholds for response actions for the specific flood processes at play (e.g., ice jam vs. open water) and the specific risks they pose.	WRB, EMO, WFM - flood response memorandum of understanding (MOU) Protectives Services and all YG Departments heads - YG Coordination Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood response MOU: November 2023: April 2024 (implementation of next steps). YG Emergency Coordination Plan (ECP): November 2023 - April 2024.
4	EM Planning	Define and socialize a process to request an emergency alert or an evacuation.	EMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2023 - April 2024 (ongoing).
5	EM Planning	Create ECC Manual to socialize ECC procedures and expectations for new YG personnel.	EMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YGLearn tabletops and ECC resources made available January 2024. ECC tabletops made available to YG staff January, February, March (2x), and April 2024. More digestible versions of the current ECC manuals: October 2023 - April 2024. The initiation of a YGLearn Emergency Management learning pathway: May 2024 – ongoing.



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No.	Core Capability	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeframe
6	EM Planning	Create a standing ECC roster of trained YG personnel. In the roster, establish a Resources Unit, Procurement Unit, and Food Unit to sustain ECC operations and better coordinate with local response agencies. Ensure ongoing maintenance of the ECC roster.	EMO, YG Human Resources (HR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft rostering sent out for 2024 season: April 2024. Human Resources Management (HRMT) rostering sent out: March 2024.
7	Emergency Logistics	Create incident specific resource lists, including a list of personnel that are ready to deploy as EMO liaisons, in preparation for procurement and deployment of resources such as pumps, trained personnel, and vehicles.	Protective Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be used in summer 2024 as per the suggestion in the ECP review.
8	Intelligence Information Sharing	Create flood hazard maps for the Klondike Valley and conduct transportation impact analysis to improve risk awareness to critical infrastructure and property.	IDB, WRB, HPW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood mitigation study - completed August 2023 (by Stantec for IDB). Flood hazard mapping - in process by WRB with projected completion in 2025. Airport improvements are currently underway by HPW with an undefined completion date.
9	Operational Coordination	Continue routine updates of Contact List in the ECC detailing Points of Contact for all incorporated and unincorporated areas.	EMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMO has a comprehensive contact list that is continually upkept with all EMO contacts since 2022.
10	Property Resilience	Develop a communications and engagement plan to keep residents aware of the recovery assistance process and to provide ongoing updates.	Community Services Policy, Yukon Housing, Agriculture Branch, Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to make the current disaster financial program permanent: May 2023-Fall 2024.
11	Training and Education	Update training schedule with the community governments to educate and exercise YG emergency plans, conduct emergency notification drills, educate on flood and wildfire preparedness, and build relationships with the communities.	EMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMO will continue to engage with communities through training and community plan review between October - April every year.



5.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix A CANADIAN CORE CAPABILITY LIST

Capability	CCCL Definition
Whole-of-Society Interoperability	To develop shared interoperable standards, guidelines and competencies for emergency management (EM) in Canada.
Whole-of-Society Governance	To establish and maintain a whole-of-society governance structure to advance the resilience of the emergency management system in Canada.
Whole-of-Society Collaboration	To jointly enhance resilience together with all sectors of society.
Indigenous Collaboration	To jointly enhance resilience with Indigenous peoples, built on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change.
Risk Assessments	To collect, process, assess potential threat, hazards, risks, resilience, vulnerability, capabilities and associated impact factors.
Intelligence Information Sharing	To share timely, accurate and actionable knowledge and information concerning threats or hazards among EM Partners as appropriate.
Hazard Monitoring and Early Warning	To provide hazard monitoring, prediction, forecasting, modeling and early warnings.
Public Information and Awareness	To deliver timely, current, and accurate public information and awareness to all sectors of society.
Critical Infrastructure Resilience	To take actions to increase resilience of critical infrastructure assets and networks.
Property Resilience	To take actions to increase resiliency of public and private property to effectively support the needs of all sectors of society.
Public Infrastructure Resilience	To take actions to increase resiliency of public and private property to effectively manage risk transference due to climate impacts and other factors.
EM Planning	To develop, validate, and maintain emergency management, continuity of government, and business continuity plans.
Security and Interdiction	To identify, discover, locate, halt, intercept, apprehend or secure critical threats to all sectors of society.
Structural Risk Reduction Measures	To adapt, eliminate or reduce the risk of disasters through structural mitigation measures (e.g., construction of floodways and dykes, fire break), taking into consideration best practices in design, and applying projected climate data where relevant.
Non-Structural Risk Reduction Measures	To adapt, eliminate or reduce the risk of disasters through non-structural mitigation measures (e.g., building codes, land-use planning, fire smart protocols), taking into consideration best practices in design, and applying projected climate data where relevant.
Natural Environment Risk Reduction Measures	To adapt, eliminate or reduce the risk of disasters through the use of naturally occurring resources or engineered use of natural resources (e.g., restoration/protection of wetlands, fuel management, urban forests), taking into consideration best practices in design, and applying projected climate data where relevant.
Emergency Public Alerting	To rapidly issue information regarding immediate threats or hazards to life safety, as well as the protective actions to be taken.



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Capability	CCCL Definition
Emergency Evacuation and Transportation	To provide transportation, including infrastructure access and accessible transportation services, for response priority objectives, including the evacuation of people and animals and the delivery of vital response personnel, equipment, and services into the affected areas.
Operational Safety and Security	To ensure a safe and secure operating environment for responders.
Specialized Response Resource - Disaster Search and Rescue	To support and or deliver and sustain search and rescue capability needs in impacted areas.
Specialized Response Resource – HAZMAT / CBRNE	To support and or deliver and sustain Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT)/ Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) capability needs in impacted areas.
Specialized Response Resource - Flooding	To support and or deliver and sustain water management capability needs in impacted areas.
Specialized Response Resource – Wildland Interface Fire	To support and or deliver and sustain wildland and interface fire capability needs in impacted areas.
Public Health and Emergency Medical Services	To provide rapid lifesaving medical services to reduce illness, injury and death.
Operational Coordination	To establish and maintain coordinated disaster management and operational structures that integrates all EM partners at all levels (e.g., emergency operations centres (EOC), emergency coordination centres (ECC), and site).
Operational Communications	To ensure the means and capacity for timely communication in support of operations among and between all EM partners.
Emergency Legal and Financial Advice	To provide legal and/or financial analysis and support to EM Partners as appropriate.
Emergency Logistics	To deliver essential commodities, equipment, and services in support of impacted communities (e.g., power, fuel, water, and basic food items).
Emergency Social Services	To provide short-term social services to the affected or displaced populations (e.g., emergency lodging, food, clothing, personal services, registration and inquiry, reception centre).
Fatality Management Service	Provide fatality identification management and reunification solutions for impacted communities.
Training and Education	To conduct training, certification, and education to improve the performance, knowledge and interoperability of relevant EM Partners.
Exercising	To validate plans and procedures through simulated scenarios to assess emergency activities of relevant EM Partners.
Critical Infrastructure Restoration	To stabilize and restore critical infrastructure functions, with an emphasis to reducing future risk.
Psychosocial Health	To provide crisis and behavioral health support for affected persons, with an emphasis to reducing future risk.
Environmental Restoration	To restore environmental resources in a way that is consistent with communities and cultural priorities in order to reduce future risk in compliance with relevant legislation.
Cultural Restoration	To restore cultural and historical resources in a way that is consistent with communities and cultural priorities in order to reduce future risk in compliance with relevant legislation.



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Capability	CCCL Definition
Economic Recovery	To return economic and business activities to an acceptable level of functioning, with an emphasis to reducing future risk.
Property Recovery	To implement public and private property to effectively support the needs of the whole community and contribute to its sustainability and reducing future risk.



Appendix B PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

Yukon Government Website	www.Yukon.ca/emergencies
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Website	www.trondek.ca
Facebook	City of Dawson, Yukon - Local Government , Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government , Yukon Protective Services
E-mail / E-News	www.cityofdawson.ca
Radio	CFYT 106.9 FM. During emergencies, a summary is broadcast on 105.5 FM in the Klondike Valley
Yukon Government's Flood Information Officer	867-334-4802
Highway Information	www.511yukon.ca or call 511
Emergency Preparedness	www.PreparedYukon.ca
Emergency Phone	9-1-1
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Citizens	867-993-3125
Dawson residents Contact (Dawson Fire Chief)	867-993-2934
Klondike Valley residents contact (Klondike Valley Fire Chief)	867-332-6928

