Chilliwack Fire Department: Community Risk Management

Q1: **What is a community risk assessment and how does it impact the way our fire department uses its resources?**

A1: Every community has unique hazards and risks, responds to a unique variety and volume of incidents, and has different resources available to prevent and reduce fire and non-fire risks. In Chilliwack, we have developed a comprehensive public fire protection plan for the City. This ongoing risk management planning has two key components: a **community risk assessment (CRA)** and **community risk reduction (CRR) strategies**.

The CRA is a comprehensive, continuous evaluation of our community's risks. This ongoing risk assessment is led by experienced CFD risk managers hired by the City as subject matter experts to assess and evaluate the community risks, understand the hazards, and develop strategies to reduce or eliminate these risks and hazards. These experts include the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chiefs, collectively known as the Chief Fire Officers (CFOs).

The CRA identifies and prioritizes our community's risks which include:

Demographics – we review the City's Official Community Plan (OCP), neighbourhood plans and relevant provincial and federal information, and work with City planning and engineering staff to determine future population growth and identify vulnerable population groups.

Geography – we work with the planning, building, and engineering departments to review our roads, water supply system, and other City infrastructure to identify challenges in City zoning and built-up areas and ensure our response times are adequate.

Building stock and occupancy classifications – we work with our building officials to assess new building projects and inspect and preplan existing building stock.

Hazards – we identify all local hazards such as fires, rescues, transportation incidents, seismic events, and severe weather events.

Economic conditions – we assess and mitigate hazards with the potential to impact local economic conditions and assess how our economic conditions impact our services.

Incident history & data analysis – we assess the frequency and severity of our incidents, including fire losses, and determine optimal resource allocation to prevent and mitigate future incidents and losses.

Critical infrastructure systems – working with the planning, engineering, and operations departments, we are aware of key infrastructure systems such as hydro and natural gas systems, water supply and wastewater management, telecommunications systems, dikes and roadways.

The CFOs work with CFD company officers, brigade chiefs, training and fire prevention staff, and all full-time and paid on-call (POC) firefighters to develop and implement strategies to manage these risks.

Q2: What is community risk reduction (CRR) and how does it relate to our fire department's goals and objectives?

A2: CRR is a process to help communities understand what their risks are and develop a plan to reduce or eliminate the highest priority risks. In Chilliwack, the CFD identifies and prioritizes local risks and ensures we have the programs and resources required to reduce or eliminate these risks. We develop innovative CRR strategies, goals, and objectives to reduce risk occurrence and impact.

Our administration, operations, training, fire prevention, and emergency preparedness division goals and objectives are then developed based on these CRR goals and objectives.

The CRR is broken down into five main areas of focus, known as **the 5 E's**, which include:

1. **Engineering** – Are there risk-reducing engineering or technological products and solutions that could be used, such as sprinklered buildings?
2. **Enforcement** – Do we adequately enforce our codes, bylaws, and regulations to gain compliance and proactively manage hazards and risks?
3. **Education** – What are the most effective and innovative public education methods available to us? Where should we focus public education activities within our community?
4. **Economic incentives** – Could economic incentives improve compliance and raise awareness about our community's fire problems, save lives, and reduce property damage? For example, how do sprinklered buildings facilitate increased density and provide benefits to developers and the City?
5. **Emergency response** – Do we have adequate resources to safely, effectively, and efficiently respond to and mitigate incidents?

Our full-time and paid on-call (POC) officers and their teams assist with the plan development and implementation. Collectively, these staff members are part of the emergency response team. Emergency response is an example of a CRR strategy.

We regularly update our CRA and CRR strategies, goals, and objectives to proactively plan for, and deliver, safe, effective, and efficient fire and life safety programs that meet the needs of our city.

Q3: How do we measure the effectiveness of our comprehensive fire protection plan?

A2: The purpose of our comprehensive fire protection plan is to use the CRA and the CRR strategies to reduce or eliminate our community's hazards and risks.

We use three (3) performance measurements to evaluate the effectiveness of our CRA and CRR strategies and to ensure our efforts contribute directly toward achieving our fire department goals and objectives. These performance measures include:

o **Safety** – this performance measure monitors injuries or deaths suffered by firefighters or members of the public.
o **Effectiveness** – these performance measures evaluate how the 5 E's (public **e**ducation, bylaw **e**nforcement, **e**conomic incentives, **e**ngineering, and **e**mergency response) impact fire loss frequency and severity.
o **Efficiency** – this performance measure examines our public fire protection cost per capita Note: based on population size, we are the most financially efficient department in BC.

The CFOs are responsible to analyze our performance measures data and are accountable for the evidence-based decisions they make to ensure the CFD has adequate staffing, equipment, and other resources to reduce (mitigate) or eliminate the risks identified and achieve our mission to protect lives, property, and the environment.