



Emergency Planning: Lessons from High River's 2013 Flood

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Video (Global TV coverage of 2013 Flood)



High River Flooding 2013 on Global Calgary



Video: 2013 Flood Model



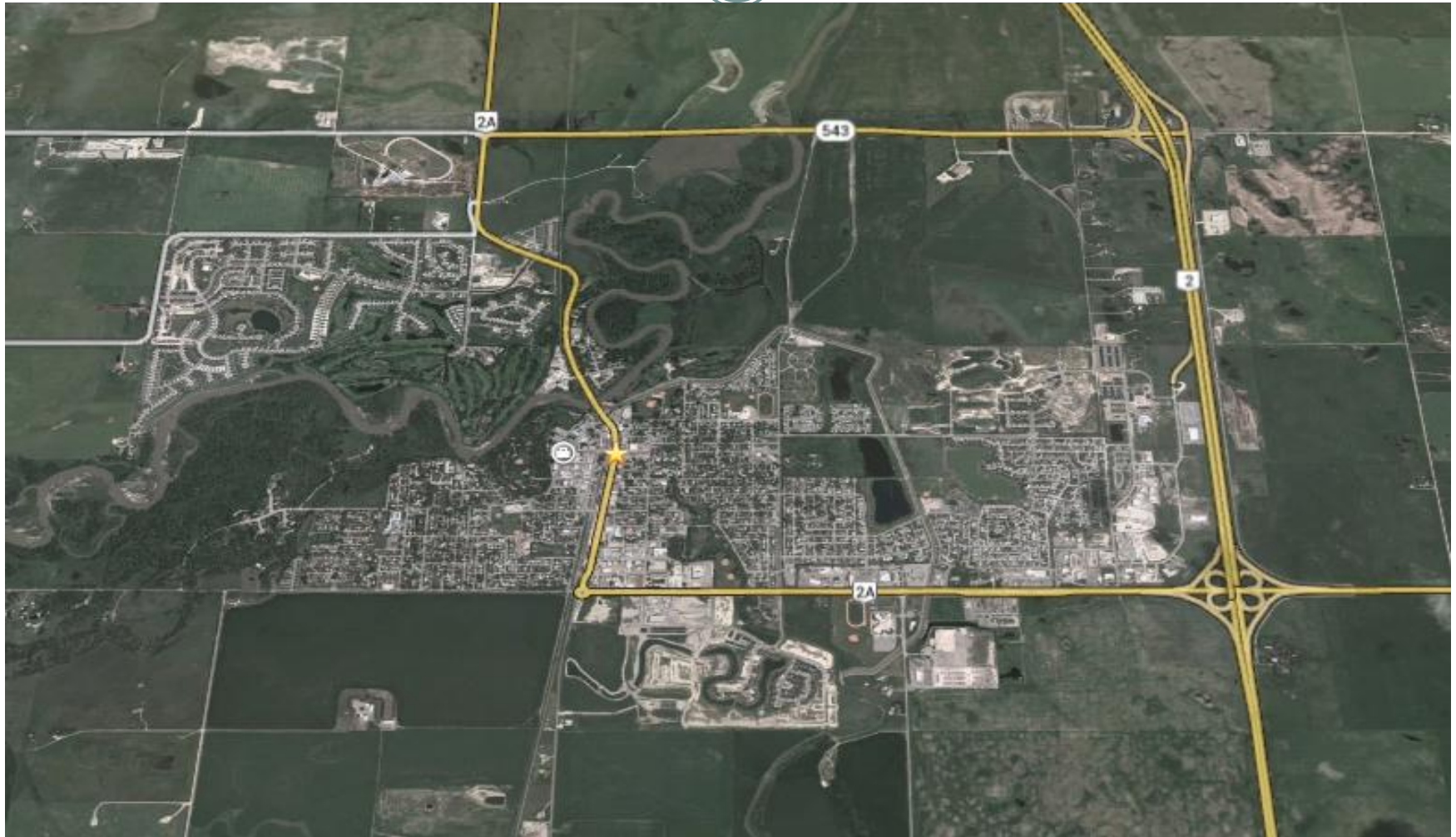
▶ PLAYLIST 25 / 49 Town of High River: 2013 Flood Model (Preliminary approximation of the 2013 event)



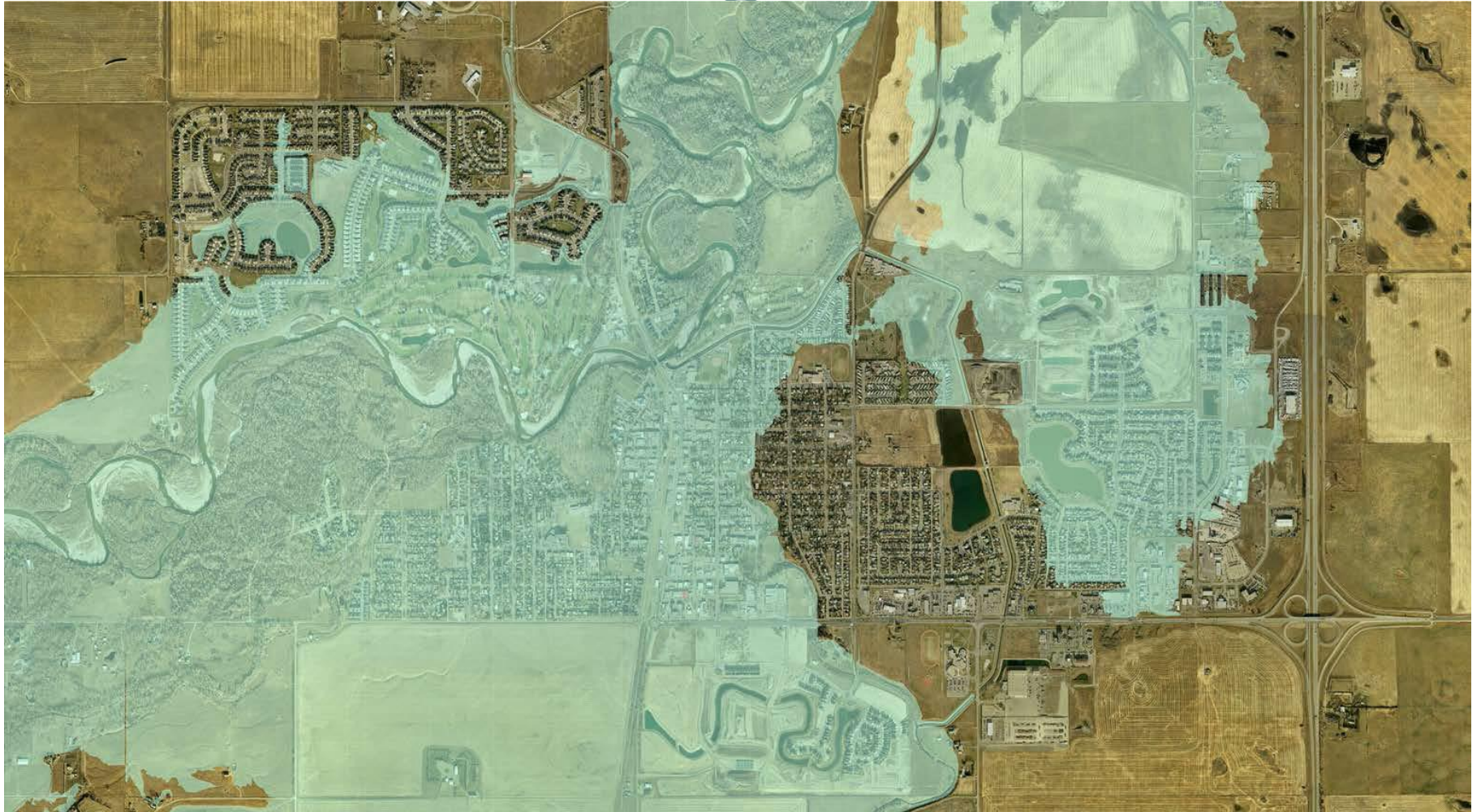
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High River: 2012 Aerial Photo



High River: Post-Flood Aerial Photo



High River wasn't ready...



- Community apathy
- Competing priorities for budget dollars
- We didn't think big enough



...are you?



1. Think Big

THINK BIGGER THAN YOUR COMMUNITY CAN HANDLE ALONE...HOW DO YOU PLAN FOR THAT?



Our experience



A community destroyed by flood waters



- 59% of the land in High River was inundated with water
- Approximately 70% of buildings were affected by water
- 11/12 lift stations were affected



- 50% of Communications infrastructure was damaged
- 4 Gas lines were broken
- 79 of 83 Town-owned buildings were damaged by water

An entire town evacuated



- Over 13,000 people were evacuated
- Over 5,000 homes were evacuated
- 10+ other communities billeted our residents
- 3 reception centres opened and operated for up to 18 days



Over a thousand pets rescued



- 400 plus pets fed and watered
- 1,143 pets rescued
- 75 animals were not claimed and adopted by new families
- Reunited 90% of pets with families



Over 40,000 tonnes of debris removed



- 40,000 tonnes of debris removed from 5,000 homes over 16 days
- Average removal per residence in one year about 1 tonne
- Each home removed approximately 8 tonnes of debris



Over 10,000 volunteers hosted



- Volunteers came from across North America
- Affiliated agencies had over 2,000 volunteers in the first 16 days
- Non-affiliated and spontaneous volunteers numbered over 8,000 in the first 16 days



What we learned...



a. We discovered our limitations



- Our town (150 full-time staff) can run our EOC for 3 days, with 2 shifts working 12 hours, for a Level 2 emergency
- Now, we have a plan to obtain support and resources from other places
 - Regional partnerships
 - Provincial resources
 - NGOs and community groups



b. Local knowledge matters



- Ratio of external support agencies to Town staff unbalanced
- Critical to keep our local staff involved:
 - Neighbourhood composition and character
 - Local business/community needs
 - Intricacies of infrastructure
 - Event continuity



c. Pre-existing partnerships are effective



- Even knowing a couple of faces in the EOC was hugely beneficial for us and those coming to support us
- Created and expanded our regional partnerships:
 - Regional Emergency Social Services network
 - Regional Crisis Communications Team
- Looked for existing resources:
 - Canada Task Force 2
 - ESSNA
 - CanVOST
 - Crisis Commons

2. People are your most important resource



Our experience



- Operations staff trapped in water treatment plant for 2 days
- IT staff worked 60-hour shifts to restore communications for EOC
- EOC staff were evacuated through flood water and still put in 18 to 24-hr shifts in wet, muddy clothing



Incredible impact on our employees



- Response and recovery is high-stress, mentally and physically exhausting work
- Some staff might be affected by the disaster
- Incredible strain on our employees and their families
- Burn-out and fatigue
- Long-lasting effects



Difficulty locating staff



- Chaotic evacuation of Town Hall
- Could not find staff who had lost phones, homes



What we learned...



a. Plan for Employee Care



- Before, during and after an event
- Policies and support for mental and physical health
- Promote family preparedness

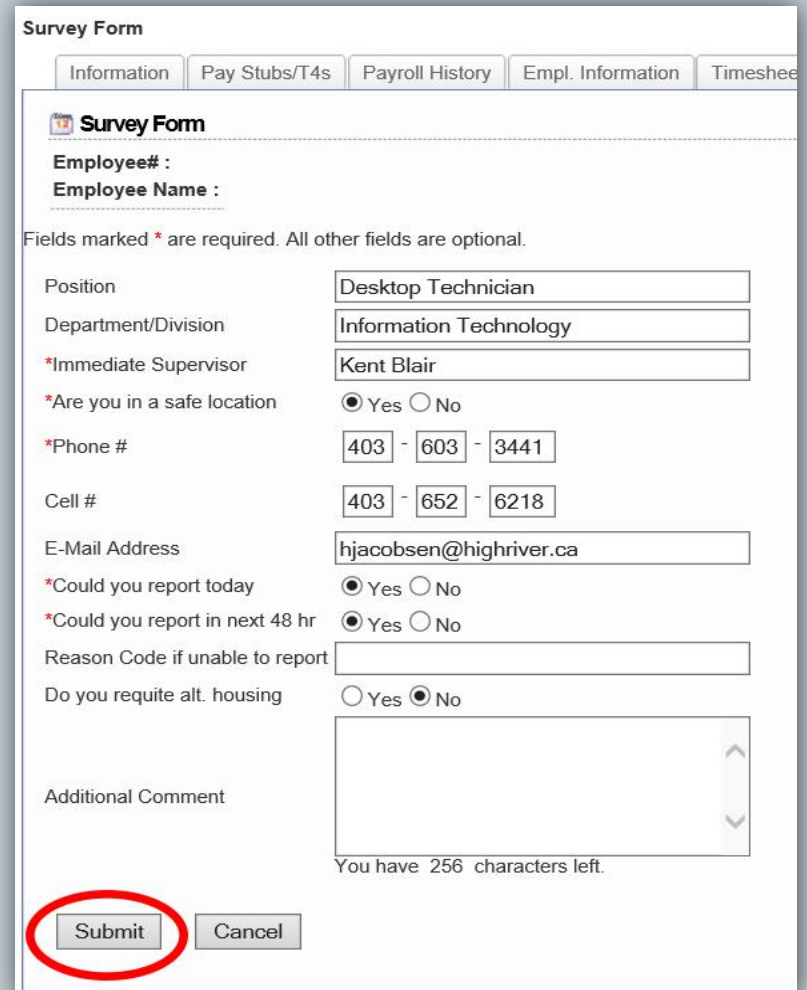


Employee Care Plan

**Supports the
Municipal Emergency Management Plan**

b. Have a robust Accountability Plan

- Shared responsibility: management and employees
- Multiple check in options
- Tie in to Business Impact Analysis



Survey Form

Information Pay Stubs/T4s Payroll History Empl. Information Timesheet

Survey Form

Employee# :
Employee Name :

Fields marked * are required. All other fields are optional.

Position Desktop Technician

Department/Division Information Technology

*Immediate Supervisor Kent Blair

*Are you in a safe location Yes No

*Phone # 403 - 603 - 3441

Cell # 403 - 652 - 6218

E-Mail Address hjacobsen@highriver.ca

*Could you report today Yes No

*Could you report in next 48 hr Yes No

Reason Code if unable to report

Do you require alt. housing Yes No

Additional Comment

You have 256 characters left.

Submit Cancel

3. Training Matters

TRAINING – NOT PLANS – IS WHAT PEOPLE FALL
BACK ON IN A DISASTER



Our experience



- Emergency plans stayed on the shelf
- Staff relied on previous experience – floods are not new
- Became a Town-wide effort



Training was insufficient



- Training focused on a core team
- Not big enough:
 - Complexity
 - Rapid Escalation
 - Cascading disasters
 - Back-up EOCs



Fragmented response



- Disaster outpaced our incident management system
- People will create their own system
- Extremely difficult to align multiple systems during a response



What we learned...



a. Plans need training components



- Plan development is just the beginning
- If a plan doesn't have a training component ...
... it won't be used in an emergency
- Training reinforces incident management processes

b. Benefits of mentorship



- Mentorship during training
- Cost-effective, increases participation
- Learn how to mentor in a tough situation



c. Find opportunities to practice



- Minor events
- Planned events
- Joint events



4. Don't Wait to Ask for Help

YOUR CHALLENGES ARE NOT UNIQUE



Our experience



- Mandate given by Council in January 2014:
 - New MEMP and Bylaw
 - New emergency plans
 - Build ESS and Business Continuity Programs
 - Train all staff to ICS 100; 80 staff to ICS 200
 - Exercise all three EOC shifts
- Deadline: May 15, 2014

What we learned...



- Other municipalities have tackled similar challenges
- There is a lot of expertise in Alberta
- Received amazing generosity and support

What we hope you will take away...





- It took 100 years to build High River
- It took 6 hours to destroy it
- It took 12 days for people to start returning home...and some are still waiting

So...



- Think Big
- Prepare Your People
- Practice, Practice, Practice
- Ask for Help



Questions?

