

ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

Program Area:	5.0	Resource Stewardship
Sub Program:	5.2	Implementing Consultation Processes for Resource Access and Management
Template:	5.2.3	Consultation/Emergency Response Planning (ERP) for Aboriginal Residents
Sponsor(s):	<i>Gecko Management Consultants (Emergency Response Planning Specialists)</i>	

1. Objective

To provide emergency response planning, including consultation, to companies operating in close proximity to Aboriginal residents and communities.

2. Description

Emergency response planning is an opportunity, and often a regulatory responsibility, for a resource company to build relationships with an Aboriginal community while obtaining input into emergency response planning and operations.

When Aboriginal residences or communities are close to or within the defined emergency planning zone (EPZ), consultation and emergency response planning requires unique strategic planning and implementation. A resource company may utilize the services of consultants with this specialized expertise, such as GECKO Management Consultants.

The development of a new emergency response plan (ERP) for wells or production facilities, or revisions to an existing ERP, provides an opportunity to:

- Open the lines of communications with the Aboriginal communities, emergency services and other operators in the area
- Arrange for a meeting with the chief and council members to discuss the project and the company's existing and proposed operations
- Clarify and discuss the nature and scope of the proposed project
- Communicate the potential public safety risks of the project, perceived risks, and how the company will address them
- Identify, clarify and work to address any concerns - building trust
- Identify and support the maintenance of reliable emergency response resources in the area with other resource company operators and the Aboriginal community
- Meet one-on-one with individual Aboriginal residents, explaining the project, the safety precautions and emergency procedures. This is also a time where confidential resident, information would be gathered for the ERP as wells as geographic, logistical and other

relevant information for the emergency response plan.

3. Implementation

Some of the key elements for implementation and management of this program are:

Make initial contacts with Aboriginal community and the consultation process

Contact with the Aboriginal residences and community leaders should take place at the initial stages of planning as well as throughout the development and testing of emergency response plans.

Prepare an information package for each residence that:

- Describes the operation and its risk (including characteristics and details on hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) hazards)
- Outlines detailed procedures the company will use to ensure safety during operations
- Explains how residents' safety will be protected (evacuated or sheltered) during an incident
- Provides a map showing the evacuation centre
- Offers key resource company contacts for additional information as well as the resource company (and/or mutual aid group's) main emergency number(s)

On reserves and on Crown land where Aboriginal rights and treaty rights are asserted or exist (including those lands often referred to as "traditional lands") and where Aboriginal residents are within the EPZ, an emergency planning/risk communication specialist makes the initial contact with the band office to determine protocol and receive the band's recommendation or agreement for selection for hire of the Aboriginal liaison(s). The function of the Aboriginal liaison is twofold:

1. Primarily the Aboriginal liaisons are hired to work closely with the consultation specialist in conducting the one-on-one visitations with Aboriginal residents within the EPZ. With training, the liaisons can effectively explain the project, the safety precautions and the procedures in the event of an emergency. It is not expected that the Aboriginal liaison would undertake this alone, but would travel with and be supported by the consultation specialist.
2. Secondly, the Aboriginal liaison fills a vital role in public safety as defined with the ERP during specific operations such as sour drilling and completions. The Aboriginal liaisons must be trained, competent and available to notify and support evacuation of the public if an emergency situation with potential to impact the public were to take place.

In planning (within the ERP) and in the selection of the Aboriginal liaisons for a particular operation, some key considerations include:

- The consultation specialist who is training and working closely with the Aboriginal liaisons requires a high level of cultural awareness, sensitivity and risk communication skills.
- The company and contracted consultation specialist need to work with the chief and council to obtain band administration advice and recommendations regarding who should could fill Aboriginal liaison functions.

- When hiring the Aboriginal liaison, preference should be given to those who have a proven competence, previous experience and those with specialized training in safety (e.g. H₂S Alive certification) or risk communications.
- Ensure that there are adequate numbers of Aboriginal liaison personnel and back-ups. It is recommended that if two liaisons are required then have three in place.
- The consultation specialist must carry out initial and on-going training to ensure the Aboriginal liaisons understand the importance of the role to their own community's safety.
- Liaisons must fluently speak the language of the relevant Aboriginal community(s).
- The consultation specialists should encourage a strong link between the Aboriginal liaisons and elders in the community to provide encouragement and mentoring. The elders provide a spiritual element to the mentorship and are often role models for no-substance abuse, thus resulting in a higher level of dependability and competence in the designated Aboriginal liaisons.
- The consultation specialist must continually strive to build and strengthen positive working relationships with the Aboriginal liaisons, and encourage them in developing competence and confidence in their role as Aboriginal liaisons.
- The consultation specialist meets one-on-one with Aboriginal residents, always accompanied by a chief-and-council-approved Aboriginal liaison, to explain the project.
- Clarify any safety concerns, the involvement of workforce (e.g. lease construction), and confirm any agreements that may have been made with the resource company landmen. Workforce commitments may include discussions with the economic development officer.
- Complete area surveillance for a general idea of the residents with the EPZ and the geographical area, homes, roads and trails.
- The Aboriginal liaison (traveling with the consultation specialist) makes contact with residents of each home in the emergency planning zone, gathering confidential resident information such as occupant names and telephone numbers (if available), exact residence locations, special issues that must be addressed within the ERP (e.g. special medical conditions and/or limited mobility); alternative contacts; place of employment, schools attended and other relevant public-safety information. During this information exchange process (e.g. sharing project and public safety data and gathering confidential resident information), the Aboriginal liaison supports the consultation specialist by identifying where residences/residents are located. The consultation specialist will have to schedule resident visits around the Aboriginal liaison's availability.
- Distribute the information package to each residence. As literacy can be an issue, the information package may be interpreted by the Aboriginal liaison.

Involving other resource companies

Many resource companies are developing mutual aid agreements in areas in proximity to Aboriginal communities and reserves. This mutual aid agreement outlines how companies will support one another in responding to incidents. It defines each participant's responsibilities for providing aid and support during an incident. It is vital that once developed, the mutual aid arrangement and process for notification and mobilization be communicated to the First Nation

administration and to the Aboriginal community.

Developing the emergency response plan

Base area maps and confirmation of maps to current resident data are prepared and verified. ERPs must be flexible and innovative. Residents may not always be living at the same home and some residents cannot be reached by phone. Transportation by bus in case of evacuation is often required due to lack of personal transportation. For certain operations (e.g. sour drilling & completions), the plan may need to specify that busses be accessible on a 24-hour basis, with the drivers on-call, for the specified period of time

Communicating and testing the plan

For certain higher risk operations (e.g. sour drilling and completions) where there are more than approximately 25 residences within an EPZ, resource companies should consider utilizing a dedicated local public safety coordinator. The coordinator stays in the area to manage the community relations during drilling, testing and completions, trains and supervises the Aboriginal liaisons and bus drivers, and is prepared to coordinate all public-safety measures as outlined in the ERP in the event of an emergency. The public safety coordinator depends upon local Aboriginal liaisons and the specified bus drivers to conduct the notification and evacuation of potentially affected residents and transients within the EPZ.

Communication of an ERP that includes Aboriginal residents should include the following steps:

- Review plan outline with Aboriginal authorities, including chief and council, and liaisons
- Conduct regular visits with Aboriginal authorities and liaisons to discuss emergency response plan and any other issues or concerns
- Document and follow up on all issues and concerns raised about the plan and communicate any resulting changes
- Be prepared - have radio systems and pagers in place to contact the Aboriginal liaisons and check-in regularly to confirm their engagement
- Include residents and designated Aboriginal leadership in emergency exercises and review of your emergency response plan to ensure their needs are addressed, they understand your commitment and approach to emergency response, and the plans are appropriate to the site and the community.
- Evaluate all real and simulated implementations of the plan to determine the effectiveness of communication with all stakeholders, correct deficiencies and communicate resulting changes.

Notification and communication during an emergency

The resource company (public safety coordinator) will ensure all residents and affected publics are contacted and kept informed with up-to-date information in the event of an incident. Have a plan in place for the Aboriginal liaisons to keep in direct contact with the public safety coordinator and residents in the EPZ. Telephones may quite likely be an unreliable method to contact residences, so generally a well-prepared ERP will be designed to mobilize the designated Aboriginal liaison to make personal contact with each of the residents.

For drilling or completion operations, the on-site supervisor (e.g. drilling foreman) will activate

the ERP as required and as outlined in the plan. Upon activation of the company's ERP, notification and communications will be made with the First Nation administration, the required emergency services and government agencies, and the media (if required). The company must be prepared to provide information directly to the residents and Aboriginal authorities. In a real emergency, company personnel should stick to the facts and provide the Aboriginal community with the information, such as:

- Nature and current status of the incident
- Incident location and proximity to people in the vicinity
- Potential for the incident to escalate in severity and the potential impact to the people in the area
- Description of the emissions or releases involved, and their short- and long-term effects
- Status and identification of any affected public evacuation or other emergency processes and procedures
- Time period anticipated to correct the situation
- Procedures to prevent future occurrences and sources for additional information
- Open invitation and a compassionate attitude to listen to, clarify and address concerns

Community relations following an emergency event

When the emergency has been downgraded and terminated, the public safety coordinator (and/or consultation specialist), with support from the Aboriginal liaisons, should personally notify the First Nations administration, businesses, residents, employees, media, and other interested affected parties, as required. Post-incident contact and direct communication and explanation of the incident, the response actions and current status build and maintain trust with stakeholders. This direct one-on-one communication helps to identify information needs, issues or outstanding concerns (e.g. compensation) requiring attention by the resource company.

A review of the actual response actions compared to the pre-defined response actions in the ERP should be conducted. Lessons learned and areas for improvement should be documented and action items assigned and completed. Results of the response and action plans to improve preparedness should be shared with the First Nations administration and possibly with the community as a whole.

4. Timeframe for Results

Depends on the number of residents in the emergency response plan and the particular aspects of the site-specific operation.

5. Measurable Criteria

- No delay in consultation process or regulatory application approval
- Good reputation which may allow for less time intensive planning and consultation phase for subsequent applications in the same community
- Effective response efforts during a real emergency event

6. Budget

Depends on the nature of the project, the concerns of the area residents and administration, the size of the EPZ and the number of residents.

7. Partners and Sponsors

Resource company, emergency response planning company (GECKO Management Consultants), the Aboriginal community

8. Experience with the Program

GECKO Management Consultants have been providing the consultation and emergency response planning service to numerous oil and gas companies since 1997. They deliver effective communication, which has gained the confidence of Aboriginal communities living within the planning zones. Success is attributed to the utilization of local Aboriginal liaisons, skilled consultation and emergency planning specialists, and highly trained competent public safety coordinators.

9. General Applicability

This program can be used by companies to raise the understanding of the sensitivities and unique challenges and opportunities of emergency response planning near Aboriginal communities on Crown lands.

10. Additional Information or Support

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