BCEMS Response Levels
During response BCEMS uses a comprehensive response management system based on Incident Command System (ICS) that ensures a coordinated and organized response to emergencies and disasters. This framework comprises four levels:

1. Site Level – An incident command post is established to direct all site response activities by single or unified command, i.e. police, fire, ambulance.

2. Site Support Level – When the site level requires additional support, an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may be activated to source additional resources, provide policy guidance, coordination, etc.

3. Provincial Regional Coordination Level – When response requirements exceed the site support level, the Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre (PREOC) is activated to provide access to and coordination of provincial assets, specialists and information.

4. Provincial Central Coordination Level – The Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) leads the overall provincial government response and provides policy guidance and coordination support for the regional levels, manages the acquisition and deployment of provincial, federal and inter-provincial resources, and provides support to other provincial ministries.

BCEMS Response Goals
1. Ensure the health and safety of responders
2. Save lives
3. Reduce suffering
4. Protect public health
5. Protect infrastructure
6. Protect property
7. Protect the environment
8. Reduce economic and social losses

Recovering from Disaster
Recovery measures are initiated as quickly as possible, generally right after life safety issues have been addressed and include:

- Temporary housing
- Monitoring of health care needs, including psychosocial needs, and continued provision of health services
- Environmental impact assessment
- Economic recovery
- Planning and reconstruction

When disaster strikes, day to day activities associated with planning, mitigation, and preparedness, including residual recovery activities from past events, come to a sudden halt. Life as we know it stops and response starts. Usually response is of short duration and high intensity, with initial focus on imminent life safety issues. Recovery however, needs to begin almost simultaneously with response as the longer it is delayed, the longer it will take the community to recover and resume a new normal. In a large event, recovery can take years.

For additional information please see the full BCEMS guide at: 
www.gov.bc.ca/emergencymanagementsystem
The British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS) is a comprehensive framework for a coordinated and organized approach to mitigating, preparing, responding and recovering from the effects of emergencies and disasters. Developed under the authority set out in the BC Emergency Program Act and the Emergency Program Management Regulation, BCEMS is standard practice for all provincial government ministries and Crown corporations, and is recommended as best practice for local government and other emergency management stakeholders in B.C.

Guiding principles
The guiding principles reflect the fundamental values that influence the practice of emergency management in B.C.:
- Health and Safety
- Shared Responsibility
- All-Hazards Approach
- Collaboration and Engagement
- Common Approach
- Clear Communication
- Continuous Improvement

Building the Foundation
Implementing the BCEMS framework begins with the following steps:
- Developing an Emergency Management Program provides focus and a centre of responsibility
- Identifying and engaging stakeholders at the start leads to effective collaboration during a crisis
- Conducting a hazard, risk and vulnerability analysis (HRVA) provides the basis for setting priorities

Emergency Management Cycle
Emergency Management is a continuous process consisting of four interconnected phases. These may occur sequentially or, in some cases, concurrently, but they are not independent of each other.

Mitigation & Prevention
Identify, prevent, or reduce the risk and impact of a hazard to protect lives, property, and the environment, and to reduce economic and social disruption (e.g., earthquake retrofitting, building codes, land-use planning).

Preparedness
Develop plans to support emergency response, business continuity and recovery. Establish networks, mutual aid agreements and resource inventories. Conduct education, training, exercises and evaluations.

Response
Activate plans to limit loss of life, minimize suffering, and reduce personal injury and property damage (e.g., emergency public/stakeholder information, fire-fighting, search and rescue, emergency medical assistance, evacuation, site support, and agency coordination).

Recovery
Repair the community and restore conditions to an acceptable level or, when feasible, improve them. e.g. return of evacuees, provision of psychosocial support, resumption of impacted businesses and services, provision of financial assistance, conduct of economic impact studies, and reconstruction.

Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis
An HRVA provides critical, community specific information and is an assessment of:
- Hazards - source of potential harm
- Risk - likelihood of occurrence and severity of impact
- Vulnerability - the people, property, environments, etc. that would be exposed

Planning Process
- Based on the HRVA, develop an emergency plan in collaboration with key stakeholders
- Gain approval, and provide orientation and training of the plan
- Exercise the plan and evaluate its effectiveness
- Review, revise, and maintain the plan

Continuous Improvement
Learning about what works and what does not work helps everyone better prepare for future emergencies. Regular evaluation of the emergency plan keeps it updated, workable and relevant to changing needs and conditions. After action reviews, documentation and feedback from those involved in emergency events and exercises provides valuable information to enhance preparedness and build resiliency within the community.

“IT does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.”
— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit