

Factsheet: Multijurisdictional Emergency Management Organizations

What is a multijurisdictional emergency management organization?

B.C.'s new Emergency and Disaster Management Act aims to support cross-jurisdictional collaboration in all four phases of emergency management – mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Feedback from local governments has highlighted the need for legislation that fosters strong intergovernmental partnerships. To reflect this, the Emergency and Disaster Management Act introduces a framework for collaboration and partnerships that can include any combination of local governments, Indigenous governing bodies, and the Province, called multijurisdictional emergency management organizations (MJEMOs). MJEMOs are community – driven and will enable members to work together collaboratively at any phase of emergency management.

Requirement to have an emergency management organization

Emergency management organizations (EMOs) provide oversight, leadership, and coordination of emergency management activities and make recommendations to the local authority on emergency management matters. Just as local authorities were required to establish an EMO under the Emergency Program Act, the new Emergency and Disaster Management Act requires local authorities to have EMOs. However, if a local authority joins an MJEMO, it is not required to have its own EMO.

The MJEMO structure reflects the collaborative practices that many B.C. communities already have in place and builds in the ability to simplify processes by completing legislative requirements together. The intention is to address capacity issues and foster the development of lasting emergency management partnerships.

Flexible structures to meet emergency management requirements

The MJEMO framework will allow for member entities to complete legislative requirements such as risk assessments, emergency management plans, and business continuity plans together. MJEMOs will also be able to undertake response and recovery actions as a single body.

MJEMOs are voluntary structures although the legislation provides that the minister may order or require them in some cases. To fit different contexts across B.C., the framework will allow entities to join an MJEMO for the purposes of meeting any combination of



legislative or operational requirements. This means that local authorities may join an MJEMO to complete all requirements and perform all emergency management operations together, or they could form an MJEMO for a select number of purposes, such as completing risk assessments or an emergency management plan. Local authorities must ensure that, together, all legislative requirements are met through their EMO or participation in an MJEMO.

Acting on behalf of a local authority

By default, the Emergency and Disaster Management Act provides that the head of a local authority is authorized to exercise powers and perform duties of local authorities. The Act also provides ways for a local authority to designate others to act on its behalf. A designation must be made in writing and must identify designated persons or entities by name, title, or position. If a designation is made, the local authority must ensure that the process for determining who among the designates is authorized to exercise powers or perform duties is described in the local authority's emergency management plan or in an agreement made for the purposes of joining an MJEMO.

A local authority can designate one or more of the following to act on its behalf:

- a member of the local authority's EMO;
- if the local authority has described powers or duties that may be exercised within an agreement made for the purposes of joining an MJEMO, an employee of a member of the MJEMO;
- if the local authority is the Nisga'a Nation or a treaty first nation, any other person or entity.

While the Emergency and Disaster Management Act authorizes the head of a local authority and other designated persons or entities to exercise powers held by local authorities, the following powers cannot be exercised by the head of a local authority or by a person designated to act on behalf of a local authority:

- Adopting bylaws to borrow money to pay response or recovery expenses; and,
- Recovery powers.

These rules can streamline and simplify the exercise of powers and performance of duties by local authorities who are members of MJEMOs. For example:

- Three local authorities—A, B, and C—decide that they will make emergency management decisions together and form an MJEMO.
- Within the MJEMO, A, B, and C decide that they will designate an employee of A to exercise powers and perform duties.



- Decisions leading to the exercise of powers or performance of duties are still made collectively—with the participation of A, B, and C—but when orders are made or actions are taken for the purposes of exercising powers or performing duties, the employee of A makes the order or takes the action on behalf of each local authority.
- Because certain powers cannot be exercised by a person or entity designated to act on behalf of a local authority, local authorities participating in MJEMOs that wish to use the borrowing powers or recovery powers in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act still require instruments (e.g., bylaws, resolutions, laws, or other types of legal instruments for exercising statutory powers) to be made by the governing body (e.g., council or board) of each local authority.

Optimizing collaboration

The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness recognizes that there are existing collaborative practices across B.C. that take many forms, including agreements for service or mutual aid. The MJEMO structure is entirely optional and local authorities and Indigenous Governing Bodies can continue using existing collaborative arrangements. However, if there is an interest in meeting local authority statutory obligations as a collective, the organization must meet the requirements of an MJEMO.

More information

Online: gov.bc.ca/emergencymanagementact

Email: modernizeEM@gov.bc.ca

The information in this document is for your convenience and guidance and is not a replacement for the legislation.

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