



# Fort McMurray Flood Emergency Communications

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# Converso Case Study

## Fort McMurray Flood Emergency Communications

In April 2020, Fort McMurray was hit by a 1-in-100-year flood. In the midst of COVID-19.

During a national quarantine, over 10,000 evacuees now had to find food, shelter and disaster relief. Adding to an already complex situation, flooding also resulted in all of Fort McMurray being placed under a boil water advisory. While the initial needs were met, evacuees and other impacted residents had many questions and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB), which includes Fort McMurray. The municipality needed to share important information on the flood response and the next steps for recovery. But how could they connect a wide cross-section of their community to the Red Cross, government officials and emergency management agencies with restrictions on large in-person meetings?

### The Solution

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) partnered with Converso Inc., to conduct five telephone town hall events to support the flood emergency response. These sessions brought together RMWB officials, the Canadian Red Cross, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Regional Emergency Services, and many others who were part of the response effort. In addition to representatives of these groups, speakers also included the region's Mayor, Members of the Legislative Assembly and other government officials.

The RMWB connected with over 29,000 total participants during five events, ranging from 60 to 100 minutes in length. By contacting residents on their mobile phones or landlines, the RMWB and its partners were able to communicate new and relevant information, answer evacuees' most pressing questions and, most importantly, make subject matter experts available with the most up-to-date knowledge.

Recognizing the importance of having a variety of options for residents to participate, the events were concurrently live streamed over the web to desktop, tablet and mobile devices. Audio recordings from each event were also posted online, further spreading vital information and increasing accessibility. The events provided correct, critical information in real-time and the interactive, personal contact from leaders and emergency experts resonated with evacuees and residents in the community.

### The Results

A total of 983 questions were asked by evacuees (58 were answered live) who participated for an average of 30 minutes across telephone and streaming technologies. Impacted residents expressed appreciation to the RMWB and its partners for their effective communication in a time of need.

"The results were great. We had a wide variety of agencies and representatives – anywhere from 10 to 15 panelists – participating and interacting with residents. We heard positive feedback that our residents really appreciated having access to those individuals."

- Matthew Harrison, Director, Communications & Engagement, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

### The numbers are impressive:



29,445 Participants  
Avg. 5,890 Per Event

### 30 Minutes



Average Duration per Participant



983  
Participant Questions