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For Immediate Release

Some Residents Begin Returning Home in ʔaq'am

Partial as Evacuation Order is Partially Rescinded

A number of residents in the community ʔaq'am will be returning home tonight for the first time since they were evacuated on Monday as the St. Mary's River Fire exploded amid erratic winds and tinder dry conditions.

“The Evacuation Order for a portion of Mission Road has been partially rescinded, which will allow residents in 16 homes to be able to go home,” says ʔaq'am Nasuʔkin (Chief) Joe Pierre. The homes will remain on Evacuation Alert and residents should be prepared to leave again on a moment's notice should conditions worsen.

“We are supporting our community members with the re-entry process, and while this is an exciting time for all those who can return home, we know it comes with mixed emotions as friends and neighbours have lost homes and others remain on Evacuation Order and are not able to go home yet,” adds Pierre.

Due to the ongoing fire and safety hazards, the Evacuation Order remains in effect for 36 homes beyond 5200 Mission Road. “This remains an active fire situation. While we know it will be hard for residents who cannot yet return home, we are appealing to them to abide by the Evacuation Order for their safety and to allow the crews free and clear access. We are also appealing to the public to stay out of the area, not only for their safety, but to respect the privacy of our community as residents transition back in,” adds Pierre.

A total of seven homes have been confirmed to have been lost as a result of the fire. ʔaq'am leadership were able to take the families who lost their homes in to see their properties prior and are working on escorted entry for residents who remain on Evacuation Order to enable people to get essential personal items as conditions are safe to do so.



With the partial rescind, 26 homes in ?aq'am are now on Evacuation Alert, while 36 remain on Evacuation Order. 15 nearby homes in the Regional District of East Kootenay remain on Evacuation Order, while a further 652 are on Evacuation Alert including the Canadian Rockies International Airport and Fort Steele Heritage Town.

“We are overwhelmed with the offers of support and we are still working to get a full grasp on what will be needed. For those wanting to help, we would ask that you hold onto donations until we have had an opportunity to narrow down our community’s needs. Financial donations are being accepted directly through ?aq'am Administration and Ivan Winter at iwinter@aqam.net.

“We remain deeply grateful for the incredible efforts of all those who are working so hard on this fire – from the exhaustive efforts on the front lines to the people working in the background to support in any way they can. While this has been an immensely trying time in our community, the incredible cooperation and support will be forever remembered,” adds Pierre.

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