

Towards a Prepared and Resilient Yukon Tourism Sector

A preliminary assessment on the impacts of emergency events on the Yukon tourism sector and foundational opportunities to enhance resilience.

Submitted to: Caroline Anderson, Executive Director, Yukon Tourism Industry Association

Prepared by: Katie McPherson, Principal, KM Resilience & Foresight Services

March 30, 2026



Executive Summary	2
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
<i>Analytical Framework: Applying a Tourism Lens to the Emergency Management Cycle</i>	9
Tourism, Climate Hazards and Emergencies	12
<i>The Canadian Context</i>	12
<i>Learning from Partners Across the Country</i>	16
<i>The Yukon Context</i>	19
Understanding Impacts of Emergencies in the Yukon through a Tourism Lens	24
<i>Scenario-based Impact Assessments: Rolling Blackouts & Unprecedented Wildfires</i>	24
<i>Case Study: 2025 Dawson Wildfires</i>	32
Integrated Findings: Tourism Resilience in the Yukon	40
<i>Coordination and Integration of Tourism in Emergency Management</i>	40
<i>Visitor Experience and Exposure</i>	42
<i>Gaps in Data and Situational Awareness</i>	43
<i>Tourism Sector Readiness</i>	44
<i>Emergency Decision Making and Communication</i>	46
<i>Tourism’s Operational Role in Emergency Response</i>	48
<i>Recovery, Economic Impacts and Reputation</i>	49
Recommendations for Strengthening Tourism Sector Resilience	52
Conclusion	62
References	63
Appendix 1: Detailed Recommendation Table with Actions	66
Appendix 2: Phased implementation approach, options and indicative costing	71
Appendix 3: Issues Brief Example – Kootenay Rockies Tourism	76
Appendix 4: Alignment of Recommendations with Canada’s Emergency Management Strategy	77

Executive Summary

Tourism is a vital contributor to Yukon's economy, communities and cultural vitality. In 2024, the sector generated an estimated \$560 million in revenue and supported approximately 7% of employment, enabling investment in local businesses, arts, culture and infrastructure (Government of Yukon, 2024).

At the same time, much of what draws visitors to the Yukon - remote landscapes, outdoor adventure and strong connection to nature -- also creates exposure to increasing climate-related hazards. Wildfires, flooding, extreme cold, and infrastructure disruptions are becoming more frequent and complex (Government of Yukon, 2022), affecting not only residents but also the growing number of visitors travelling across the territory.

Recent events, including the 2025 Dawson wildfires, demonstrate that even when communities are protected from physical damage, emergency events can create significant operational disruption, economic loss, safety concerns and reputational impacts for tourism destinations. Across the country, tourism organizations are learning how to cope and recover in the aftermath of hurricanes, wildfires and flooding, and actively investing in industry resilience.

In 2025, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIAY) identified a critical need to enhance tourism sector preparedness for emergencies. With support from the Government of Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture (Tourism Yukon), TIAY launched this independent study to explore the impacts of emergencies on tourism and identify key vulnerabilities and opportunities as a foundation for future investment in resilient tourism sector.

Approach

This study draws on multiple sources of evidence, including desktop research, interviews with tourism and emergency management stakeholders across Canada, scenario-based workshops, and a targeted engagement session focused on the 2025 Dawson wildfires.

By analyzing emergency impacts through a tourism lens, the study examines how emergencies affect visitors, operators, infrastructure, communities and destinations and identifies opportunities to mitigate impacts sector-wide.

Key Findings

Across all lines of evidence, a consistent and critical insight emerges: tourism in the Yukon is both highly exposed to emergency events and an under recognized partner in managing them. During peak season, visitor numbers can exceed resident population by three. Despite this, visitors are not accounted for in emergency planning or risk assessment, leaving a critical gap between response capacity and on-the-ground reality.

While tourism operators already play essential roles across preparedness, response and recovery – for example through support for visitors, accommodations and essential services for visitors, residents and responders alike - this contribution is largely informal, unevenly supported and not systematically integrated into emergency management structures.

Key gaps persist in governance, data, preparedness, communication and recovery planning, limiting the sector's ability to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from disruptions. These gaps are closely linked to the absence of a comprehensive, coordinated and well-resourced emergency management framework in the Yukon, which currently constrains the ability to fully integrate tourism and other sectors into a whole-of-society approach.

At the same time, strong local relationships, adaptive operators and community based responses in the territory and across the country demonstrate significant existing capacity and roles for the tourism sector. The role of the Klondike Visitors Association (KVA) and the local Visitor Information Centre (VIC) during the Dawson wildfires indicates an opportunity to focus on regional coordination and partnerships for the benefit of communities, visitors and the economy.

As emergency events become more costly and frequent in the Yukon and across Canada, tourism operators are experiencing a gap in financial assistance and insurance. Multiple efforts are underway to catch-up and prepare operators to minimize impacts, respond and recover from emergency events. There is a role for TIAY and Tourism Yukon to play in supporting operator preparedness, facilitating responsible and strategic destination marketing and advocating for proactive policy for disaster recovery and mitigation

The priorities of Canada's Emergency Management Strategy highlight a clear opportunity to move from ad hoc engagement of tourism stakeholders toward a more coordinated, proactive and systems based approach that strengthens resilience for visitors, businesses and communities alike. This work will take time and sustained collaboration, but there are immediate, practical actions that can be taken to begin this transition and to build momentum toward a more resilient and integrated system.

Recommendations

The breadth of gaps and opportunities identified in this study will require coordinated action and sustained investment across government, industry and communities. This includes formalizing roles, strengthening regional coordination, improving data and decision-making tools, and providing targeted supports for operators. A resilient future for tourism is also inherently tied to broader systems, including infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing. Achieving this vision will take time. It represents a long-term shift in how tourism is integrated into emergency management, and will require ongoing commitment across multiple sectors.

At the same time, emergency events are already affecting the Yukon, and there is an urgent need to reduce impacts on visitors, operators and the reputation of the tourism sector. While foundational gaps remain, there are practical and achievable actions that can be advanced immediately to strengthen preparedness, improve coordination and better support tourism operators and communities.

The nine recommendations in this report are grounded in the recognition that, in a future shaped by more frequent and severe emergencies, tourism can and must be positioned as an active partner across the full emergency management cycle. This includes not only response, but also preparedness, mitigation and recovery. By working collaboratively and creatively the tourism sector can prepare for the future and contribute to a more resilient Yukon for all of us.

Recommendations Towards a Prepared and Resilient Yukon Tourism Sector

1. Establish a tourism emergency management working group co-led by TIAY and YG TC <i>This foundational recommendation prioritizes subsequent actions, allocates budget, assigns roles and responsibilities and oversees project implementation.</i>
2. Strengthen tourism sector integration in Yukon’s emergency management plans and structures. <i>Contribute to the transition of EM in the Yukon from response-oriented to a proactive, whole-of-society emergency management that explicitly recognizes and includes visitors and the tourism sector.</i>
3. Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships <i>Building on the Dawson experience, build community relationships, offset economic impacts and enhance regional and sector preparedness through targeted coordination and planning at a regional scale, including leveraging the territory’s six Visitor Information Centres.</i>
4. Improve tourism data and situational awareness <i>Explore options to enhance real-time data to inform emergency planning, decisions and situational awareness, and improve data collection before, during and after emergencies to better understand impacts of events on visitor perception, operators and communities.</i>
5. Invest in training and exercises to build emergency management literacy among key partners <i>Strengthen tourism emergency management literacy through joint training and exercises for TIAY, Tourism Yukon alongside emergency management partners.</i>
6. Develop a tourism emergency preparedness / climate readiness program for operators <i>Provide Yukon-specific guidance, training and funding for operators to support business continuity and emergency planning, hazard mitigation and preparedness, and specific capacity for TIAY and Tourism Yukon to support operators directly through high impact emergency events.</i>
7. Develop a strategic approach for emergency communications <i>Leverage existing communications and tools from other jurisdictions to develop a Yukon-specific suite of visitor guides, tools and messages and integrate strategic emergency preparedness, response and recovery into destination management</i>
8. Strengthen tourism recovery planning and capacity <i>Identify tourism recovery best practices for implementation in a tourism recovery strategy, advocate for investment in and coordination of recovery plans across the Yukon, and promote the role of resilient tourism in community social and economic recovery.</i>
9. Integrate assessment of climate change and future risks into the next Tourism Development Strategy <i>Assess potential impacts of climate projections and hazard scenarios, identify methodologies and existing strategies that integrate future scenarios into strategic planning processes and develop and explore alternative future scenarios for tourism.</i>

Introduction

Tourism is a vital contributor to Yukon's social fabric and economy. Drawn by pristine wilderness, northern lights and the midnight sun, hundreds of thousands of visitors travel to experience the exceptional culture, communities and landscapes of the territory each year. In 2024, the Government of Yukon invested approximately \$25 million in tourism, which, in turn, generated an estimated \$560 million in revenue for local businesses, supporting investment in communities, arts, culture and infrastructure, and accounting for approximately 7% of employment in the Yukon (Government of Yukon, 2025).

The same rugged and remote environments that attract visitors also expose communities and travellers to hazards. As the climate changes, the tourism sector is increasingly affected by wildfires, flooding, permafrost thaw and extreme weather events. In northern and remote communities, the impacts of these hazards can be amplified by logistical challenges, infrastructure disruption, and limited emergency response capacity (Government of Yukon, 2022).

During the summer of 2025 wildfires burned across the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and in the vicinity of Dawson City. The fires triggered evacuation alerts, highway closures and poor air quality during peak tourism season. Although a coordinated emergency response ultimately protected the community, the event created significant uncertainty and social and economic impacts for tourism operators, residents and visitors.

Dawson City is not alone. Tourism destinations around the world are increasingly affected by climate change and emergency events that disrupt operations, threaten visitor safety and damage infrastructure, while also creating long-term economic and reputational challenges for destinations (Danzi et al., 2024; UNDP, 2023). In a 2025 survey of Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIAY) members, climate change and emergency events were identified as the most significant emerging challenge to tourism operations.

Recognizing the implications of emergencies for tourism, TIAY identified an opportunity to learn from the Dawson wildfire experience and from experiences and emerging practices across Canada. With support from the Government of Yukon's Department of Tourism and Culture (Tourism Yukon), TIAY undertook this study to better understand how emergency events affect the Yukon tourism sector and to identify opportunities to strengthen and support sector preparedness and resilience.

This report draws on research, interviews, workshops and engagement with tourism and emergency management partners. It examines how emergencies affect tourism in the Yukon, explores lessons from other jurisdictions, and identifies opportunities for tourism stakeholders to contribute to preparedness, response and recovery. The report concludes with recommendations to support TIAY and its partners in strengthening the resilience of Yukon's tourism sector.

Methodology

This study combined desktop research with qualitative engagement to explore both current experiences and future risks through a tourism lens. It was guided by the following objectives:

- identify leading practices, tools and frameworks related to tourism and emergency management;
- strengthen understanding of hazard risks and emergency impacts on the Yukon tourism sector;
- identify sector needs and opportunities to enhance resilience before, during and after emergencies;
- explore where tourism stakeholders may contribute value to emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery;
- inform preliminary recommendations regarding the roles of industry, government and partners across the emergency management cycle; and
- identify practical next steps to support future preparedness and implementation.

Scope and Limitations

As a preliminary exploration, the study generated key themes, insights and opportunities for action to support future targeted work. It was not intended to provide a comprehensive quantitative risk assessment, economic impact analysis, or formal evaluation of emergency management performance.

This study focused primarily on climate-related hazards and emergency events with community and regional impacts that require coordination across multiple jurisdictions. This study did not focus on smaller events, such as medical, transportation or search and rescue operations, or other emergencies managed by first responders with limited cascading impacts. The study also did not focus on issues related to security or health emergencies.

Yukon engagement for this study included representatives of the TIAY Board of Directors, staff from the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture, tourism and emergency management stakeholders impacted by the Dawson Fires and territorial emergency management staff. This means that important perspectives have not been included in this report. In future, ongoing sector-specific and regional engagement will enhance understanding of emergency impacts, opportunities for resilience, and offer more nuanced solutions and approaches relevant to different stakeholders and visitor groups.

Research Design

The study relied primarily on qualitative methods supported by a review of publicly available documents, data and literature. Evidence was gathered through four main streams:

1. desktop research;
2. semi-structured interviews;
3. scenario-based workshops; and
4. a targeted engagement session focused on the 2025 Dawson wildfires.

In addition, a short member survey circulated by the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIAY) during an extreme cold and power supply event in Whitehorse was reviewed as a supplementary input. Due to the limited number of responses, survey findings were treated as directional only.

Together, these methods provided both breadth and depth. Desktop research and cross-jurisdictional interviews helped identify broader trends and emerging practices, while Yukon-based workshops and engagement sessions grounded the study in local conditions, lived experience and sector priorities.

Desktop Research

Desktop research reviewed publicly available resources relevant to tourism, climate change and emergency management. Sources included:

- academic literature examining the intersection of tourism and emergency management;
- after action reviews, recovery reports and impact assessments related to emergency events;
- news articles related to tourism and emergency events;
- emergency management legislation, programs, plans and frameworks;
- tourism strategies, sector reports and industry data; and
- climate projections and risk assessments relevant to the Yukon.

The review revealed a limited body of literature focused specifically on the intersection of tourism, climate change and emergency management in northern and remote Canadian contexts. While lessons can be drawn from studies conducted elsewhere in Canada and internationally, relatively little research reflects the operational realities and logistical conditions faced by tourism operators in northern regions.

Stakeholder Engagement

Interviews

A total of twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen participants representing tourism organizations across Canada, and emergency management stakeholders.

Interview participants included:

- eight representatives from tourism industry associations and destination management organizations across Canada, including from British Columbia, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, as well as one international interview from Finland;
- three government of Yukon emergency management officials; and
- two board members of the Yukon River Quest, a major event that has experienced repeated disruption due to high water and wildfire conditions.

Interviews explored topics including the impacts of emergency events on tourism operators and destinations, planning challenges related to visitor safety, sector roles during emergencies, coordination with emergency management agencies, lessons learned from past events, and emerging opportunities

to strengthen resilience. Cross-jurisdictional interviews were particularly valuable in identifying promising practices and emerging approaches to tourism emergency management in other regions of Canada.

Scenario-Based Workshops

Two scenario-based workshops were conducted to explore how future emergency events could affect the Yukon tourism sector and to identify potential vulnerabilities, cascading impacts and opportunities to strengthen resilience.

Fourteen participants took part across the two workshops, including members of the TIAY Board of Directors representing a range of tourism operators across the territory.

Two hypothetical scenarios were developed based on climate risk assessments, and informed by emergency management expertise:

1. an unprecedented wildfire season in 2028 affecting multiple Yukon communities and critical infrastructure; and
2. rolling blackouts in Whitehorse in 2028 triggered by extreme cold and generator failure.

Using the vision, values and goals of the Yukon tourism strategy as a guide, participants examined the potential direct and cascading impacts of each scenario over a twelve-month timeframe. Through an impact mapping exercise, participants considered implications for visitor experience, operators, labour, culture and heritage, community wellbeing, infrastructure, the natural environment and Yukon's broader tourism reputation. The purpose of these scenarios was not to predict specific future events, but to broaden understanding of potential risks and identify near and long-term impacts and resilience opportunities for the sector.

Dawson Wildfire Engagement Session

A targeted engagement session was held in Dawson City to gather direct input from tourism and emergency management stakeholders affected by the 2025 Dawson wildfires. Nineteen participants attended the session, representing local businesses, tourism operators, the Klondike Visitors Association (KVA), and multiple levels of government.

The session began with an incident overview and reflections from members of the Emergency Control Group and Incident Management Team, including representatives from Yukon Wildland Fire Management, the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the City of Dawson.

Following these presentations, participants worked in small groups to map key decisions, impacts and operational challenges along an event timeline. Discussions focused on identifying what worked well during the response, what challenges were experienced, and what improvements could strengthen preparedness and coordination in the future.

The engagement session was designed to complement other research methods by capturing lived experience from a real emergency event and documenting the perspectives of those directly involved. A

What actions/work/information/relationships/support could enhance preparedness + resilience?

BEFORE (PREPAREDNESS/INITIATION)

- **MAKE ENGAGEMENTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS EARLIER (APRIL?)**
- **Communication issues**
 - Should we tell visitors to still travel to Dawson or tell them not to?
 - What to communicate to stakeholders in community?

DURING (RESPONSE)

- **CONVENE VIC**
 - CONSENSUS ON ACTION WHAT TO COMMUNICATE TO VISITORS + COMMUNITIES
 - between stakeholders
- **active communication** thru operator - real-time as if hotel rooms, fuel availability, supplies
- **Stakeholder Conf.** - from before - good

AFTER (RECOVERY)

- **Good communication** "we're open & ready"
- **take immediate stock/notes of what worked/did not work to prep for next time**
- **QUICKER RRR**

LONGTERM (RESILIENCE)

- **BETTER MESSAGE / PLAN**
- **knowing what's in your toolbox**
- **Get a more strong**
 - linker to better Dawson
 - partnership w/ local business
 - collaborate: Dawson council, Dawson town
 - emphasize common language of emergency

Analytical Framework: Applying a Tourism Lens to the Emergency Management Cycle

Collectively, these frameworks emphasize that emergency management is not limited to response activities, but includes a broad range of actions undertaken before, during and after emergencies to reduce risk and strengthen resilience.

An emergency is defined as a “present or imminent event that requires coordinated action to protect the health, safety and welfare of people, or to limit damage to property or the environment” (Public Safety Canada, 2011).

Emergency management is commonly described as a cycle consisting of four interconnected phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. This model recognizes that managing emergencies is an ongoing process rather than a single event.

- **Mitigation** focuses on reducing hazards and long-term risks before disasters occur.
- **Preparedness** involves planning, training and coordination to ensure people and systems are ready to respond.
- **Response** includes the immediate actions taken during an emergency to protect life, property and the environment.
- **Recovery** focuses on rebuilding, restoring services and supporting communities following an emergency (Public Safety Canada, 2017).

The emergency management cycle highlights that actions taken during any phase influence the effectiveness of the others. Investments in mitigation and preparedness, for example, can significantly reduce impacts during response and accelerate recovery.

While the cycle remains a useful framework for understanding emergency management activities, disasters are becoming more complex and interconnected due to factors such as climate change, infrastructure dependencies and development in hazard-prone areas (Public Safety Canada, 2019). As a result, governments and organizations are increasingly emphasizing the importance of proactive risk reduction and resilience-building across all sectors of society.

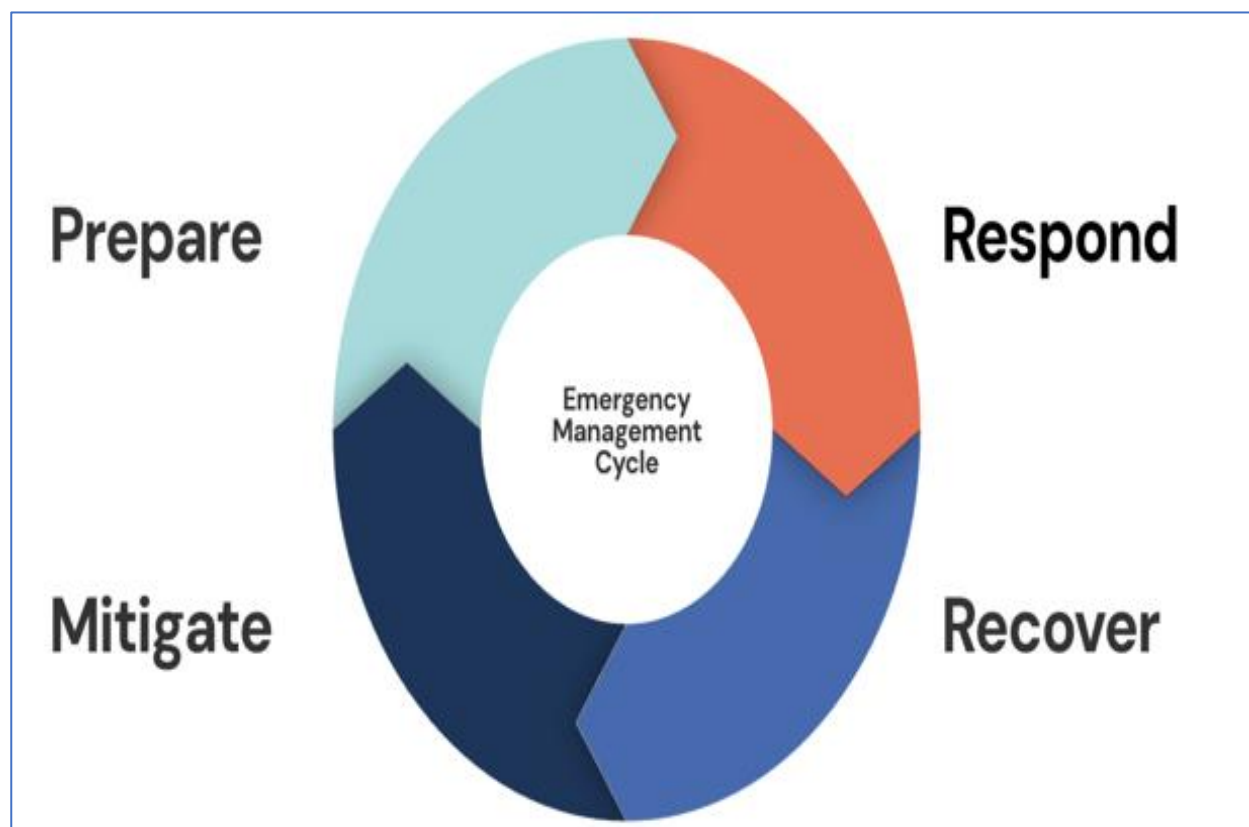


Figure 1: The Emergency Management Cycle

Applying a Tourism Lens

For the purpose of this study, a **tourism lens** was applied to the emergency management cycle. This lens draws on the values and priorities identified in the **Yukon Tourism Development Strategy (2018–2028)**.

Applying this lens makes it possible to identify both the vulnerabilities of the tourism sector and the ways in which tourism stakeholders may contribute to stronger preparedness, response and recovery efforts.



Figure 2: A emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery were viewed through a tourism lens during scenario-based workshops.

This combined approach was applied during workshop activities, and made it possible to examine not only how emergency events affect tourism, but also how tourism stakeholders may contribute to broader community resilience and emergency management efforts. In this way, tourism is understood not only as a sector affected by emergencies, but also as a potential partner in strengthening the resilience of Yukon communities and destinations. The insights generated through this process form the basis for the findings and recommendations presented later in this report.

Tourism, Climate Hazards and Emergencies

The following section explores the high level intersections between climate hazards, emergency events and tourism in both the Canadian and Yukon contexts.

The Canadian Context

Tourism is a significant contributor to Canada's economy, generating more than \$50 billion in GDP in 2024 and accounting for approximately one in ten jobs nationwide (Destination Canada, 2025). Canada's reputation for safety, stability and natural beauty—combined with strong global perceptions of cultural diversity and sustainability—continues to make the country an attractive destination for both domestic and international travellers (TPBO, 2025). In recognition of tourism's economic and cultural importance, the federal government released Canada 365: A Federal Tourism Growth Strategy in 2022, highlighting tourism as a key driver of economic development and community vitality across the country (Government of Canada, 2022).

While the outlook for tourism growth in Canada remains positive, the sector is increasingly affected by climate change and more frequent and severe emergency events. In recent years, hurricanes, extreme heat, flooding and wildfires have caused infrastructure damage, transportation disruptions, ecological impacts and evacuation events across multiple regions of the country (Haldane et al., 2023; Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2025; Mercer & Andrew-Gee, 2022; Public Safety Canada, 2024; Public Safety Canada, 2026). These events have resulted in billions of dollars in insured and uninsured losses and have affected nearly every province and territory.

Such events can have significant implications for tourism destinations. Emergency events often occur during peak travel seasons, affecting visitor mobility, business operations and destination reputation. Interviews with Tourism Industry Association (TIA) representatives across Canada highlighted growing concern among tourism organizations regarding the direct and indirect impacts of emergencies on operators, small businesses, visitor experiences and the long term reputation of destinations.

For example, wildfire evacuations in northern and rural regions often result in evacuees being relocated to urban centres during peak tourism season, when hotels and accommodations are already heavily booked (CBC News, 2025). While hotels may remain fully occupied during these events—often housing evacuees, response personnel or recovery workers—other parts of the tourism sector can experience significant downturns. Interviewees shared that attractions, restaurants, tours and events often see reduced visitation, particularly when potential visitors perceive destinations to be unsafe or inaccessible.

Despite the growing frequency of emergency events and their effects on tourism destinations, there remains limited data available to fully understand the economic and reputational impacts on the tourism sector. Tourism impacts are often not captured in post-event assessments or after-action reviews, which tend to focus primarily on emergency response operations and infrastructure damage rather than broader economic and visitor-related effects.

Recent events illustrate the scale and geographic diversity of hazards affecting Canadian tourism destinations. For example, Hurricane Fiona in 2022 caused widespread damage across Atlantic Canada, disrupting transportation networks and tourism infrastructure across Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island

and Newfoundland and Labrador (Haldane et al., 2023; Mercer & Andrew-Gee, 2022). In 2021, atmospheric river events in British Columbia caused severe flooding and landslides that damaged major transportation corridors and temporarily isolated tourism regions in the Fraser Valley and Interior (Public Safety Canada, 2024).

Wildfires have emerged as one of the most significant and visible hazards affecting tourism destinations across the country. In 2023, Canada experienced its largest wildfire season on record, with more than 15 million hectares burned nationwide (Natural Resources Canada, 2026). Since 2023, an estimated 350,000 Canadians have been evacuated due to wildfire events, affecting communities across multiple provinces and territories (Public Safety Canada, 2024; Public Safety Canada, 2026).

Several recent wildfire events have directly affected tourism destinations during peak visitor seasons. In 2024, the Jasper Wildfire Complex in Alberta led to the evacuation of approximately 25,000 residents and visitors during the summer tourism season, temporarily halting tourism activity in one of Canada's most iconic national park destinations (Beaton, 2025). Similarly, in 2023 the evacuation of Yellowknife disrupted travel and tourism operations across the Northwest Territories, stranding backcountry visitors and affecting tourism businesses throughout the territory (Personal Communication, D. DeMarcke, December 2025).

These events illustrate how hazards affecting communities can quickly translate into broader impacts for tourism destinations. In addition to immediate disruptions to travel and operations, emergency events can influence visitor perceptions and travel decisions. Images of wildfire smoke, flooding or other disasters often circulate widely through international media and social media, shaping how travellers perceive the safety and accessibility of destinations (Rabson, 2025; Destination Canada, 2025).

Canada's Emergency Management Strategy

This study did not include in depth review of territorial and provincial emergency management regimes. However, interviews and research reveal investment in and approaches to emergency management vary greatly, often influenced by the magnitude and severity of emergency events that a region has experienced. Across the country, local authorities and First Nations have primary responsibility for responding to emergencies at the community level, while provinces and territories establish legislation, regulation and policy to guide local efforts. At all levels, emergency management is evolving as the risk landscape changes, and emergencies go from becoming one-off, unlikely events, to becoming the 'new abnormal' (Agrawal, 2024).

In 2015, Canada became a signatory to the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, a global agreement that guides disaster risk reduction efforts between 2015 and 2030 (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

The Sendai Framework marked an important shift away from response-focused approaches toward a broader emphasis on anticipating, understanding and reducing disaster risk across society. This approach recognizes that disaster impacts are shaped not only by hazards themselves, but also by social, economic, cultural, physical and environmental vulnerabilities.

Canada's Emergency Management Strategy reflects these principles and promotes an "all-of-society" approach to disaster risk reduction (Public Safety Canada, 2017). It encompasses the following fire priorities:

1. **Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience**
Strengthen coordination and shared responsibility across governments, Indigenous communities, the private sector and civil society to collectively manage disaster risks.
2. **Improve understanding of disaster risks across all sectors of society**
Increase the use of data, science and local knowledge to better understand hazards, vulnerabilities and impacts in order to inform risk-based decision making.
3. **Increase focus on disaster prevention and mitigation**
Invest in proactive measures that reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability, minimizing the likelihood and consequences of disasters before they occur.
4. **Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster new capabilities**
Improve the ability to respond effectively to emergencies through stronger coordination, clear roles and responsibilities, and the development of new tools and capabilities.
5. **Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better**
Support recovery processes that restore communities while reducing future risk by integrating resilience, sustainability and long-term improvements into rebuilding efforts.

Canada's emergency management framework is aligned with international best practice, and reflects a comprehensive all-hazards approach (Public Safety Canada, 2019). The priorities set out in Canada's EM Strategy are clearly make space for and support the integration of sector-wide preparedness, and therefore the integration of tourism values. However, research indicates that preparedness varies significantly across jurisdictions due to decentralized governance, uneven capacity, limited local resources, and gaps in risk data and science integration (CCA, 2022; Henstra & Thistlethwaite, 2017; Government of Canada, 2024). While the Canada's EM Strategy and Framework is intended as a joint federal, provincial and territorial strategy, implementation and even awareness of provincial and territorial responsibilities under the strategy is extremely limited (Goldstein & Jenson, 2025), and provincial and territorial commitments have not been assessed under recent national strategy implementation reports (Public Safety Canada, 2022).

A scan of legislation and programs finds that while many jurisdictions promote emergency management as a 'shared responsibility', only BC specifically integrates the Sendai Framework into legislation (Government of British Columbia, 2023). Unsurprisingly, BC's approach to tourism and emergency management is the most advanced and highly regarded by TIA representatives that participated in the study (See Figure 3). Across the country, most provincial and territorial emergency management organizations, including the Yukon, remain largely response-oriented with limited support or strategic investment in multi-partner models of disaster risk reduction, recovery or resilience (Goldstein & Jenson, 2025). This spectrum directly corresponds to the way in which tourism stakeholders described their relationship with emergency management organizations.

Figure 4 illustrates the trajectory of perceptions described by TIA representatives about the way the tourism industry is viewed by emergency managers. This spectrum has been created based on research and interviews for this study.

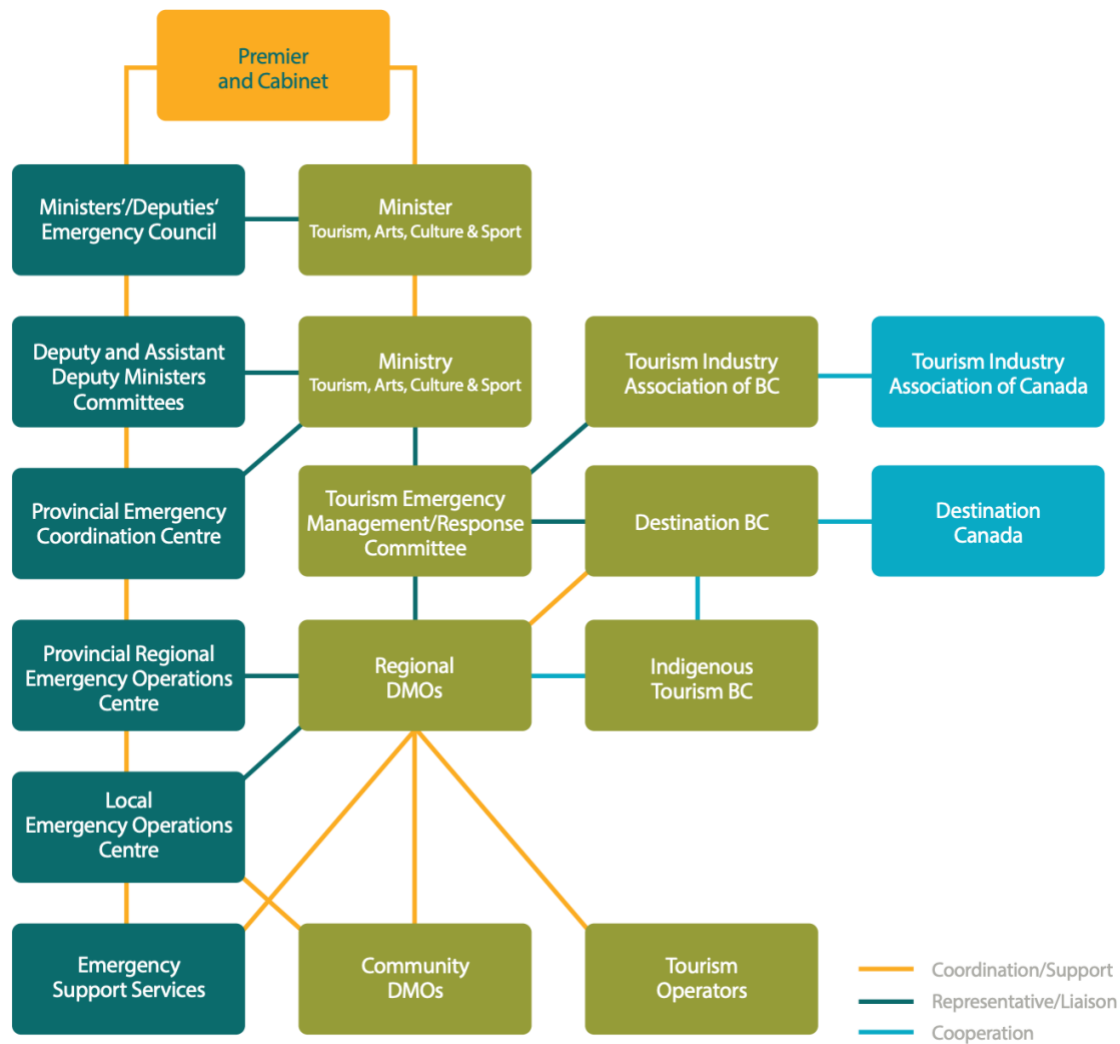


Figure 3: The organizational structure of BC's Tourism Emergency Management Framework reflects relationships and connections across multiple levels and alignment with the whole-of-society approach to disaster risk governance set out in Canada's strategy (BC TEMF, 2022).

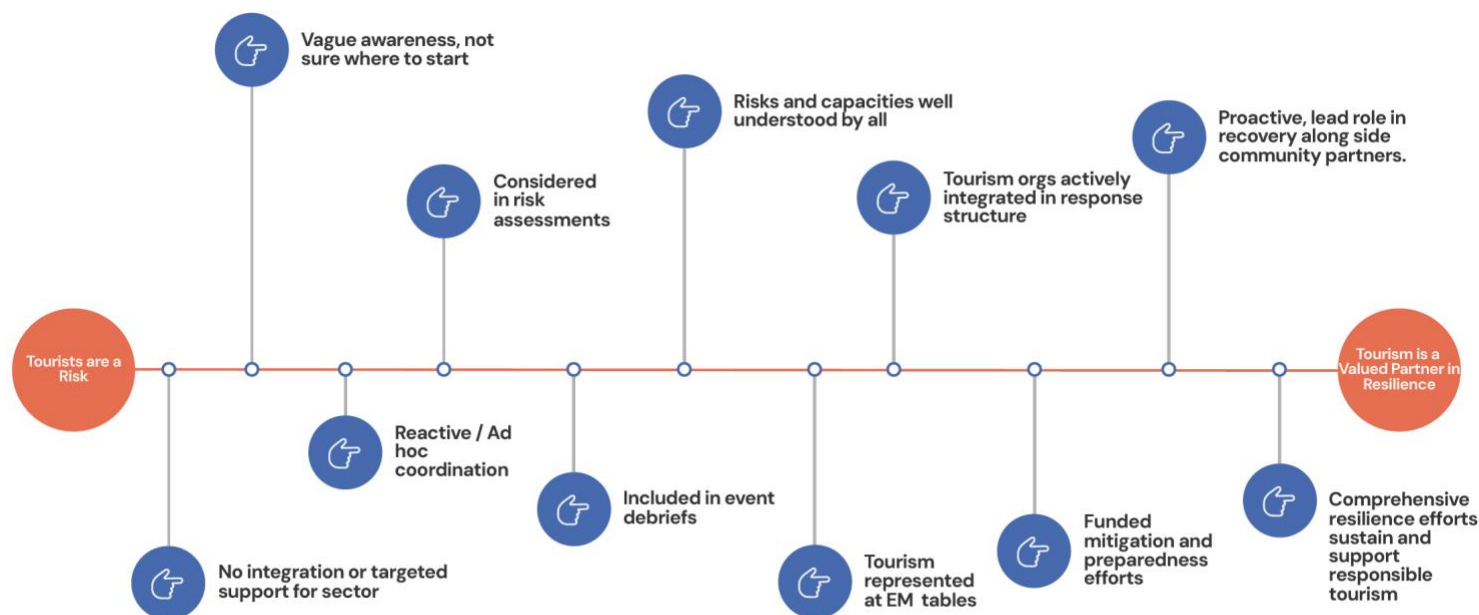


Figure 4: How do emergency manager's view tourism? There is a wide spectrum of perspectives indicating how emergency managers view the role of tourism. While some view tourism as a risk, others see tourism as a valued partner. Most jurisdictions are somewhere in the middle.

Learning from Partners Across the Country

Regardless of the status of provincial and territorial efforts, tourism organizations across Canada are considering how emergency preparedness, risk reduction and climate adaptation can be integrated into tourism planning and destination management. Interviews conducted for this study demonstrate that tourism industry associations and destination management organizations are ready to take on roles in supporting sector preparedness, coordinating information and supporting operators during emergencies and contributing to longer-term recovery efforts.

However, levels of engagement vary widely across jurisdictions, and the role that TIAs are taking varies with their unique mandates. For example, in Alberta, the TIA is primarily focused on advocacy to other levels of government. In Nova Scotia, the TIA is responsible for a wide range of training and skills development, and is actively pursuing opportunities to integrate training for emergency management and business continuity into their future offerings. In BC, a province that has experienced repeated and severe events over the last decade, and where emergency management frameworks are the most advanced and well resourced - tourism organizations are developing more formal emergency management roles and actively leading resilience efforts. Figure 5 illustrates the range of perspectives that tourism organizations hold and the actions that are being taken across the country.

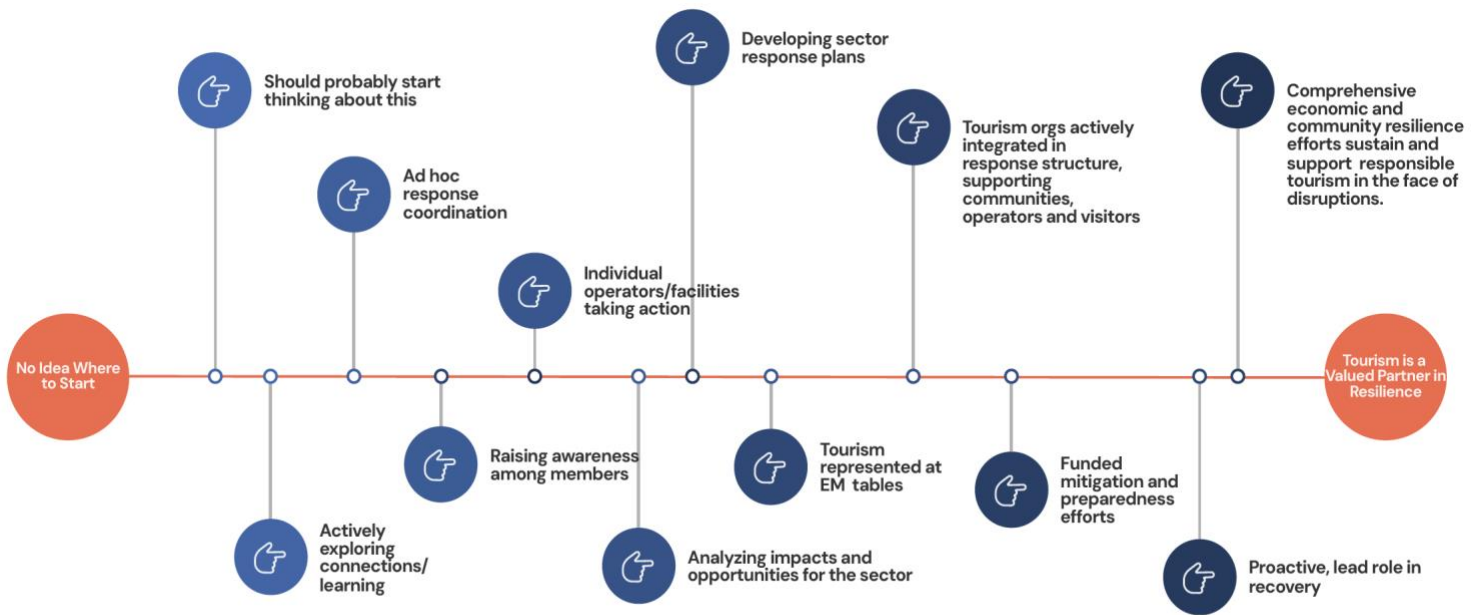


Figure 5: *How to Tourism Organizations Think about Emergency Management?* Tourism stakeholders perceive and engage in emergency management in very different ways depending on capacity, experience during emergency events, and jurisdictional emergency management approaches.

Distinct learnings and examples emerged from each discussion. The following highlights stand out from interviews with TIA leaders.

- **British Columbia** provides one of the most developed examples through the [BC Tourism Emergency Management Framework](#) (BC TEMF), which is collaboratively governed through government-industry partnerships with representation from multiple tourism and emergency management stakeholders. The BC TEMF clarifies roles and responsibilities for coordination of tourism partners across the EM Cycle, and guides the development of key tools, plans. This approach directly guides and supports regional emergency management coordination. For example in the [Cariboo Chilcotin Tourism Association](#), and the [Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association](#), staff emergency management positions dedicated to supporting operators navigate and recovery from emergency events, while ensuring the safety and quality of visitor experiences – these efforts acknowledge the responsibility of the sector in caring for the visitors and communities they rely on (Personal communications, W. Judas, Dec 2025).
- In **Alberta**, the role of the tourism sector in disaster recovery has been well established – less than 2 weeks after the 2013 floods the business community and government came together to clean-up and host the Calgary Stampede. While federal funding and insurance claims can take months to years, the Stampede injected an immediate boost to the economy and morale of the City in the aftermath of devastating floods. In [Jasper](#), post-fire recovery has been relatively swift – in part due to comprehensive emergency management and recovery strategies in place before the fires (Personal communications, S. Karlos, Dec 2025). Coordinated efforts for debris removal, interim housing and pop-up storefronts have helped to sustain tourism businesses, alongside rent relief for businesses (Parks Canada, 2024) and support for strategic destination marketing

that encourages visitors to contribute to the resilience of the community while respecting the fragile regeneration of the National Park (Travel Alberta, 2025, Destination Think, 2025).

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona, prepared tourism operators on **Prince Edward Island** played an important role in supporting residents during power outages and TIAPEI staff went door to door in some areas to check out operators that couldn't be reached by phone. Driven by the impacts of Fiona and the COVID-19 pandemic TIAPEI successfully advocated for access to mental health supports for tourism operators and their families. The [TIAPEI Mental Wellness Program](#) that continues to provide an important service for the sector nearly four years later (Personal Communications, C. Clemence, Dec 2025) .
- In Nova Scotia, strong community relationships and a commitment to regenerative and adaptive tourism are central to a new tourism strategy. TIANS's Roadmap for Sustainable Growth 2025-2030 reflects deep understanding of the factors that will support a resilient tourism sector (Personal communications, L Dahr & L McDonagh Hughes, Dec 2025)

In other regions, where fewer emergency events have occurred and overall resources are limited, TIAs and tourism operators have played an ad hoc, but important role during and after emergency events, with important lessons for the Yukon.

- In **Newfoundland and Labrador**, limited wildfire response capacity in 2023 meant that air resources stationed at Gros Morne National Park for backcountry safety, were deployed to the other side of the province to support wildfire response. This necessitated the closure of the Park's backcountry access, and meant the abrupt cancellation of once-in-a-lifetime trips due to resource limitations. In places like this, where access is challenging and itinerary changes are difficult, these cancellations can have reputational impacts. Hospitality NL is actively promoting climate adaptation and 'future-proofing' for its members through the [development of climate adaptation tools and education for members](#), and continues to advocate for a role for the tourism sector in emergency management (Personal communications, C. Foley, Nov 2025)
- In **Northwest Territories**, an evacuation order was issued after days of messaging from officials about the safety of Yellowknife during the 2023 wildfire events. In making this call, there was no consultation with the tourism association about the location or safety of visitors. As the central hub for NWT's tourism sector, visitors were coming in to the Territory right up until the order was issued, while hundreds of others were paddling remote rivers across the Territory. As vendors, transportation operators, staff and residents evacuated, Spectacular NWT (both a TIA and DMO) fielded calls from distressed family members around the world, trying to locate backcountry travellers, while also trying facilitate return for visitors to Yellowknife and then out of the territory at a time when many services were not available (Personal Communications, D. Demarcke, Dec 2025).

In NWT and N.L., where visitor and emergency access are constrained by limited transportation options (marine and air in N.L., air and single highways in NWT), there is added pressure on emergency responders, residents and visitors during emergency events. In both of these places, where formal emergency management programs are less developed than more populated regions, personal relationships have proven to be important during response, while formal integration and consideration of tourism stakeholders and values tends to be more ad hoc and reactive.

In all cases, interview participants highlighted the knowledge, resources and capabilities that the sector can offer in support of emergency management efforts, and the opportunity and responsibility of

industry associations and destination marketing organizations to play an active role. Across the country, organizations are advocating for the inclusion of visitors in risk assessments, concrete support for emergency preparedness, and clear communication and coordination with the tourism sector before, during and after emergencies.

Interview participants across the country shared common examples of the ways that insurance and government relief funding has failed to support operators, especially those that have experienced indirect impacts of emergency events. Business disruption insurance does not come into effect in the absence of direct damage, or evacuation orders – so cancellations or closures due to smoke, or the perception of risk, for example, are not eligible. Similarly, federal disaster financial assistance arrangements (DFAA) do not cover ‘insurable losses’, but with the cost of insurance rising rapidly, many operators find they are under insured, or are hesitant to make a claim, lest their costs go up even further.

These experiences highlight both the growing exposure of tourism destinations to emergency events and the emerging role of tourism organizations in strengthening resilience. They also underscore the need for approaches that reflect the unique characteristics of tourism systems, including visitor mobility, seasonal economies and the interconnected nature of tourism services.

The following section examines how these broader trends relate to the Yukon context, where tourism plays a critical economic role and where communities face unique challenges associated with climate change, remoteness and emergency management capacity. Additional insights and recommendations from these interviews are integrated into the findings section and reflected in report recommendations.

The Yukon Context

Climate Change and Hazards

The Yukon is known for extreme environmental conditions. Today, however, the territory’s climate is changing at a rate approximately three times faster than the global average (Bush & Lemmen, 2019), resulting in increasingly variable temperatures, rapid ecosystem changes and less predictable seasonal conditions (Government of Yukon, 2022).

The 2022 Climate Change Risk and Resilience Assessment for the Yukon identifies five key climate-related hazards affecting the territory, including wildfires, permafrost thaw, changes in snow, ice and water conditions, shifts in vegetation and wildlife, and extreme weather events (Government of Yukon, 2022). Northern and remote communities often face disproportionate impacts from these hazards. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure and supply chains, combined with limited emergency management capacity can make it more difficult and costly to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergency events (Government of Yukon, 2022).

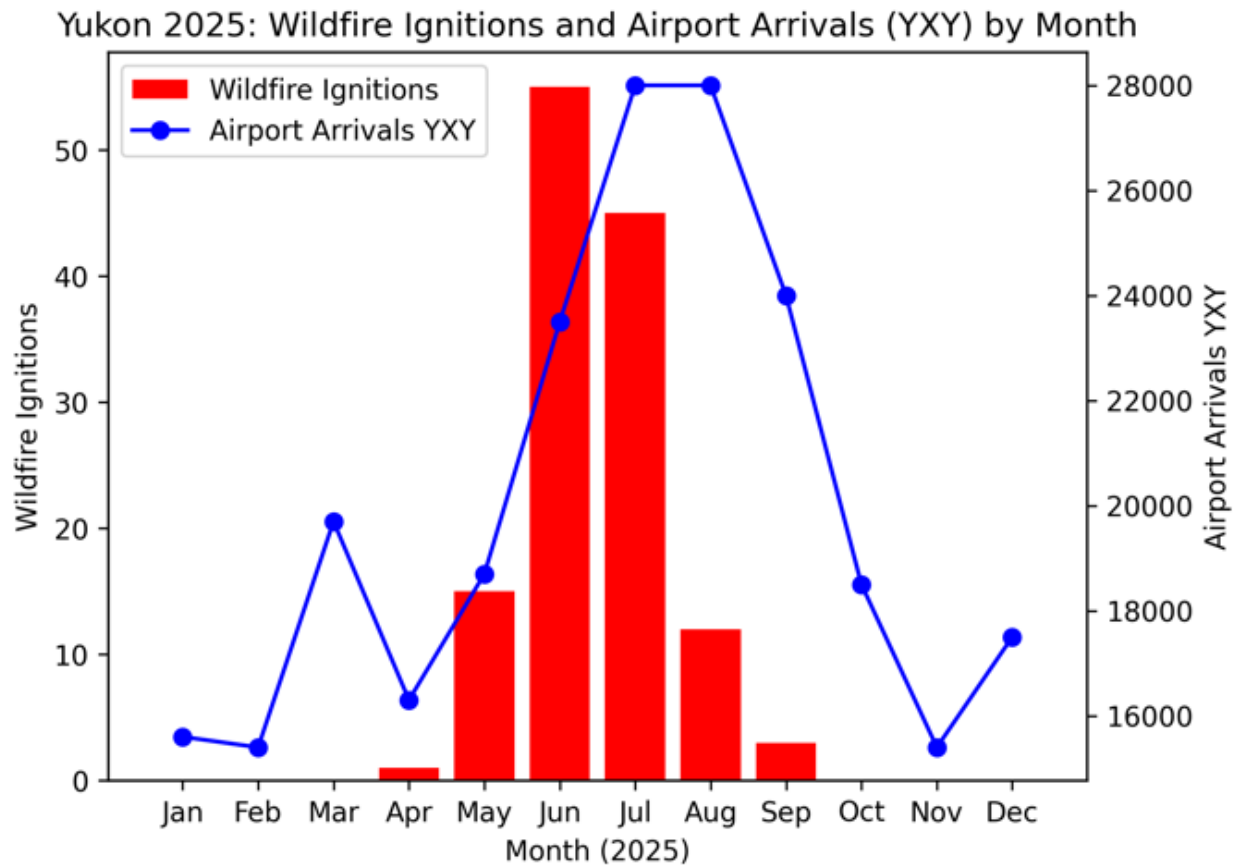


Figure 6: In the Yukon, tourism season peaks alongside wildfire ignitions. Data collated from YG Dept of Tourism and Culture and Wildland Fire Management.

Tourism in the Yukon is closely tied to natural environments, seasonal weather patterns and reliable access to remote destinations. As a result, changes in climate conditions and hazard patterns can have direct and indirect implications for tourism operations, destination access, visitor safety and the visitor experience.

Because many Yukon tourism businesses operate during a relatively short peak season between June and August, disruptions during these months can have significant economic consequences. At the same time, tourism activity increases the number of people potentially exposed to hazards like wildfires, flooding and extreme heat. During peak periods and events, visitor numbers significantly exceed residents across the territory and in many communities. In August 2025, for example, the Yukon welcomed more than 150 000 visitors (more than three times the number of residents!) This number reinforces the importance of seasonal travel to local businesses, and illustrates the substantial increase in the number of people potentially exposed to hazards like wildfires. At this time, neither visitors nor the tourism and culture sector are explicitly included in Yukon's Emergency Management plans, and there has not been a territorial hazard risk and vulnerability assessment completed to further inform capacity requirements.

Emergency Management in the Yukon

Emergency management in the Yukon is governed primarily by the Civil Emergency Measures Act (CEMA), which establishes the responsibilities of the territorial and municipal governments in preparing for and responding to emergency events.

The Act provides the legal authority for the Government of Yukon to coordinate emergency response and outlines municipal and territorial responsibilities related to emergency planning, response coordination and recovery activities. The legislation has several recognized limitations. For example, the Act does not explicitly reference First Nations governments and does not fully reflect contemporary emergency management approaches such as those promoted through the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. It also does not include comprehensive requirements related to risk assessment, continuity or planning for critical infrastructure or support for vulnerable populations. Tourism and visitors are not explicitly referenced within the legislation or within the broader territorial emergency management framework.

A review of the Civil Emergency Measures Act was announced following the COVID-19 pandemic, although no updated legislation or public report has been released at the time of writing (CBC News, 2022).

Emergency Management Agencies

Emergency management coordination at the territorial level is led by the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization (EMO). EMO is responsible coordinating government-wide preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts and for supporting emergency management activities across the territory.

EMO consists of a small, dedicated team of approximately three to five staff responsible for coordinating emergency planning and response across government departments. EMO also provides emergency management support to unincorporated communities and assists municipal and First Nations governments and communities when events exceed local response capacity. In addition, EMO coordinates with federal partners, utilities and other response agencies during emergency events, and oversees the distribution of federal Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) during recovery.

Local authorities are required to have emergency coordination plans, and request support from EMO when they become overwhelmed. Not all local authorities have dedicated emergency managers or comprehensive emergency plans, however, in recent years, several Yukon communities have made significant investments in strengthening emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Dedicated emergency management positions have been established in Whitehorse, as well as for Vuntut Gwitchin, Kwanlin Dün and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nations. Several communities have recently undertaken hazard risk and vulnerability assessments and participated in emergency exercises (personal communication, EMO, November 2025).

Several other organizations play important roles in emergency preparedness and response. These include:

- **YG Wildland Fire Management (WFM)**, the territory's primary wildfire response agency;
- **YG Health and Social Services (HSS)**, responsible for emergency support services (ESS) and health-related emergency management activities.
- **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**, responsible for policing and evacuation support; and
- **The Canadian Red Cross**, contracted by the Government of Yukon to provide ESS support.
- **Government of Canada**, through CIRNAC and Public Safety Canada, provide federal coordination at the request of First Nations and EMO respectively.

Despite recent advances, emergency management capacity in the territory remains limited relative to the scale of potential hazards, geographic size and vulnerability of the Yukon. Limited capacity and planning at all levels mean that emergency response remains the focus over preparedness, mitigation and recovery. There is no coordinated recovery plan or framework for the territory, and where recovery efforts do occur, they are ad hoc and event-specific – focused on distribution of recovery funding (where eligible) and often basic repairs over coordinated project management to build back better.

Government of Yukon Emergency Coordination Plan (ECP) and Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC)

The Government of Yukon Emergency Coordination Plan (ECP) establishes the framework for all-of-government preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery for emergencies. The YG ECP identifies an Emergency Coordination Group made up of representatives from across government departments that is intended to support this framework, and contribute to holistic and comprehensive risk assessment and emergency management. In practice, the ECG has not been active for years and there is limited coordination across departments outside of response efforts (Personal communication, EMO, 2025).

During an emergency event, EMO may activate the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) and call in staff from across YG to provide support to communities experiencing emergencies. Figure 7 illustrates the coordination model for response and support across multiple levels, including the engagement of other departments. In practice, this model is not consistently applied and there is inconsistent representation for departments in response and decision making.

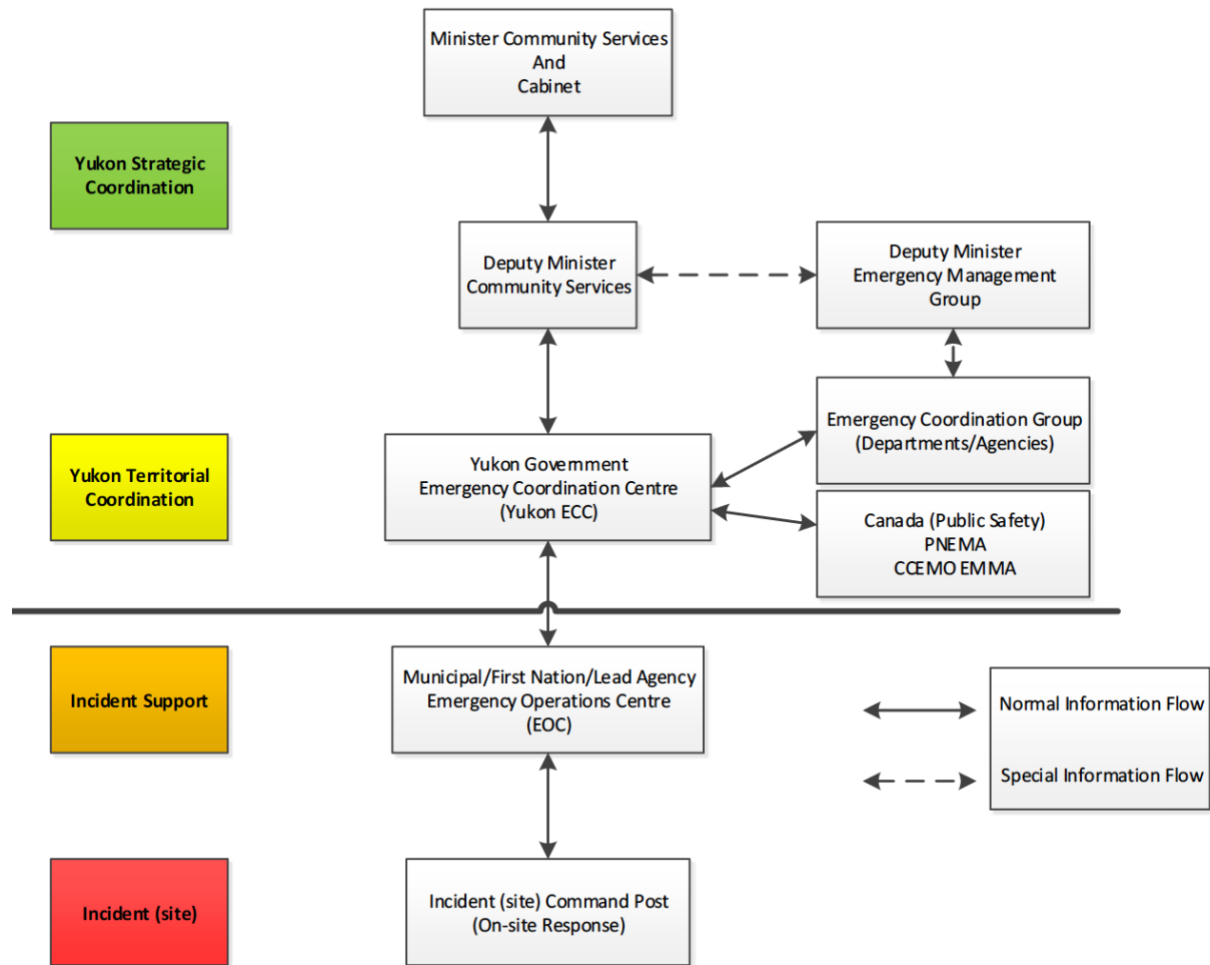


Figure 7: The theoretical coordination structure for incident support and emergency management for the Yukon. In practice this structure is not consistently implemented.

The ECP also outlines the roles and responsibilities of government departments and describes how departments coordinate during emergency events. Responsibilities assigned to the Tourism Yukon include:

- *assisting with the dissemination of information to the travelling public;*
- *providing the use of visitor information centres and the Beringia Centre to support emergency operations;*
- *undertaking impact assessments and mitigation at historic and tourism sites;*
- *protecting essential archival materials; and*
- *protecting valued cultural and historic resources (Government of Yukon, 2011).*

The ECP focuses on 1-way information out to visitors, the use of facilities for EM purposes, and protection of sites and property. It does not include specific provisions addressing visitor or operator emergency preparedness or response, consideration of impacts to staff, or support for visitors travelling within the territory. According to interviews conducted for this study, neither EMO nor HSS is formally

mandated or resourced to plan for or provide emergency support services to non-residents visiting the Yukon. (Personal Communications YG EMO and HSS Staff, November 2025)

As tourism activity grows and visitor numbers increase during peak travel periods, this gap highlights an emerging area of risk and an opportunity for stronger collaboration between tourism stakeholders and emergency management partners.

Emergency Planning and Capacities within the Department of Tourism and Culture

The Department of Tourism and Culture does not have a dedicated emergency management coordinator or strategy. However, the scenario-based workshop and subsequent discussions with staff confirmed that the department does maintain different types of emergency capabilities and several plans across its branches, including:

- A departmental Emergency Response Plan with procedures for staff in responding to specific incidents inside facilities (ie: building fires, security threats, power outages).
- Emergency plans and procedures related to specific facilities, collections and archives.
- The Department oversees restoration of heritage and cultural sites that may be damaged during emergency events, including floods and fires.
- A number of staff are trained to take on positions in YG's Emergency Coordination Centre – this is primarily as ECC staff, not as tourism sector liaisons.
- Visitor Information Center staff play an important role in communicating with both the general public and visitors during emergency events
- In recent years, the department has taken part in training to salvage and restore heritage artifacts in the aftermath of floods and fires.
- A Travel Yukon Safely guide has been published and there is some information on the Travel Yukon website pointing visitors to VICs for information during emergencies.

Tourism Yukon has been working with provincial and territorial partners to explore options and roles for the department in strengthening tourism emergency management, but does not currently have a strategy for emergency preparedness, response or recovery for visitors or the sector. Support for this study is one way that the government is advancing this work.

Understanding Impacts of Emergencies in the Yukon through a Tourism Lens

Workshops with Yukon tourism stakeholders were a key component of this study. This section documents and summarizes impacts of real and hypothetical emergency events on the tourism sector, drawn from the three Yukon-based workshops designed to gather knowledge and perspectives from the TIAY Board, Tourism Yukon staff, and local operators and emergency management partners. This approach was used to draw out key concerns and priorities for the Yukon tourism sector.

Scenario-based Impact Assessments: Rolling Blackouts & Unprecedented Wildfires

Two scenario-based workshops challenged participants to consider how significant emergency events in different seasons and communities could play out for tourism. Each workshop explored both

scenarios. Workshop 1 included the TIAY Board of Directors, and Workshop 2 was delivered for the YG Tourism and Culture Department – all of whom play a central role in planning for and supporting the tourism values in the territory.

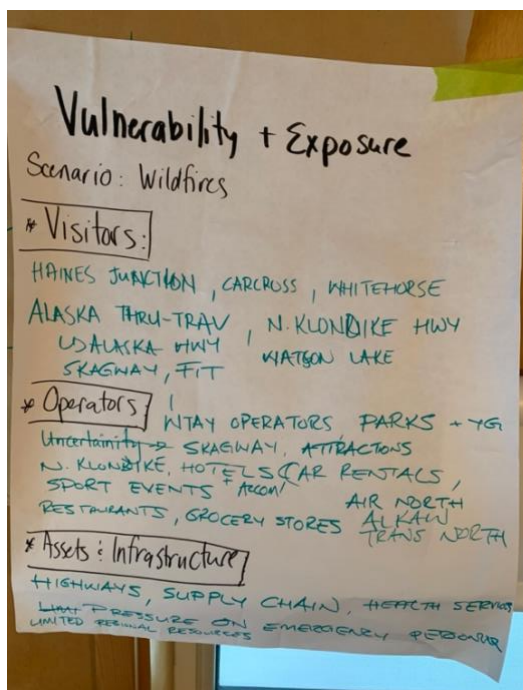


Scenario 1: Unprecedented Wildfires explored the impacts of a major wildfire season affecting multiple Yukon communities and critical transportation corridors during peak tourism season.

Scenario 2: Rolling Blackouts explored the impacts of prolonged rolling blackouts in Whitehorse and surrounding areas triggered by the failure of a generator, combined with extreme cold temperatures.

Participants were asked to consider the vulnerability and exposure of the tourism sector to this event, and then to map the cascading impacts over time, focusing on the implications of the emergency through a tourism lens. The combined results of these scenario discussions are summarized below.

Understanding Tourism Sector Vulnerability and Exposure



Exposure refers to the people, assets, systems, and infrastructure that are located in places where they could be affected by a hazard.

Vulnerability describes the characteristics and conditions that influence how severely those exposed elements may be impacted, including factors such as preparedness, awareness, capacity, and available supports. (UNDRR, 2017). Together, exposure and vulnerability help determine not only who and what is at risk, but also the scale and nature of potential consequences.

The second priority of Canada's EM Strategy is to 'Improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society' (Public Safety Canada, 2017). Understanding risk includes understanding vulnerability and exposure. The exercise began by asking participants to identify who and what is exposed in each of the hazards, and what factors influence vulnerability.

Discussion on Vulnerability and Exposure to Wildfires

Participants working on the wildfire scenario felt that **visitors** could be highly exposed depending on their location across remote highways and the backcountry. Self-guided visitors may be less aware of wildfire risks or emergency procedures. Many could be unprepared for heavy smoke and wildfire delays, unsure where to access reliable information, and reliant on tourism operators for guidance and support. This leaves them particularly susceptible to smoke exposure, sudden road closures, and evacuation scenarios.

Tourism operators, including wilderness and backcountry guides and outfitters, accommodations, event organizers, and transportation providers, are also exposed to wildfire impacts. Their vulnerability is reflected in their dependence on seasonal revenue, sensitivity to cancellations, and operational disruptions caused by smoke, access restrictions, and staffing challenges. Direct exposure for staff and operators creates potential health and liability concerns.

Tourism assets and infrastructure exposed to wildfire including heritage and cultural sites, museums, and art collections that may be damaged by fire or smoke. Reliance on limited transportation corridors, such as the Alaska, Klondike, and Dempster Highways, creates systemic vulnerability, as closures can isolate communities and disrupt visitor movement – even in areas not directly affected. Remote tourism infrastructure is particularly at risk, while supply chain disruptions can affect access to food, fuel, and essential services across the territory. Participants felt that northern and remote operators face greater challenges during recovery, with rebuilding timelines extending over years and further constrained by short construction seasons, limited trades, and long northern winters, compounding both vulnerability and long-term impacts.

Discussion on Vulnerability and Exposure to the Rolling Black Out / Extreme Cold Scenarios

During the rolling black out scenario, both exposure and vulnerability across the tourism system are heightened due to reliance on critical systems and varying levels of preparedness.

Visitors are exposed through their presence in unfamiliar and often remote environments, with many lacking awareness of extreme cold risks and emergency procedures. Their vulnerability is shaped by limited access to reliable information during outages, potential lack of appropriate winter gear, and reliance on operators and visitor services (that may not be open) for guidance. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with local conditions can further impact their ability to access and interpret emergency information.

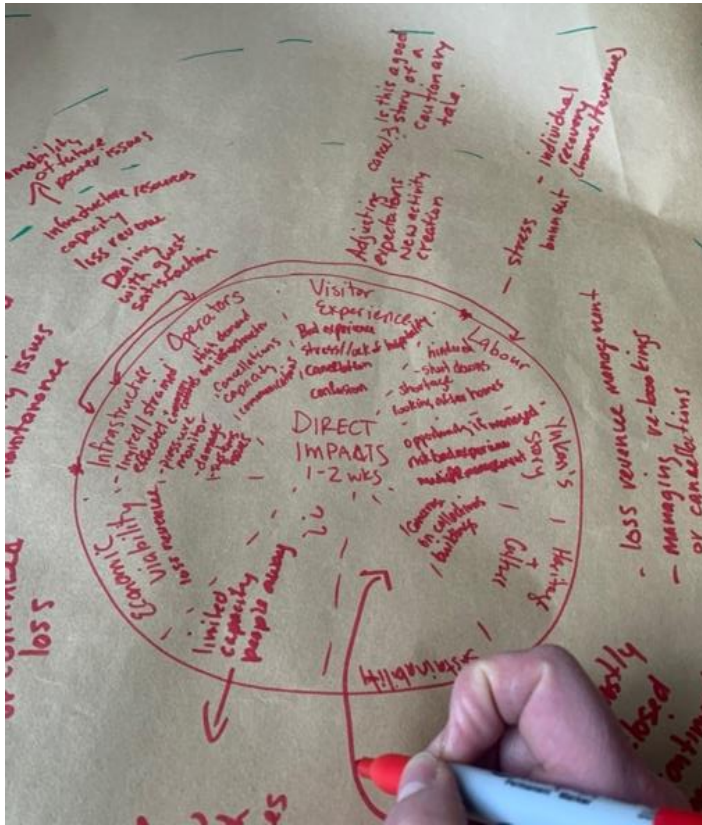
Tourism operators with exposure included hotels and accommodations, short-term rentals, restaurants, event organizers, and transportation providers that depend on electricity, heating, and communications to maintain operations. Their vulnerability varies depending on access to backup power, staffing capacity, and ability to manage competing demands between guest needs, staff wellbeing, and business continuity. Operators also play a key role as information providers to visitors, increasing their exposure to uncertainty, expectations and reputational damage.

Tourism assets and infrastructure are exposed through their dependence on interconnected systems, including power, heating, telecommunications, transportation networks, and supply chains. Vulnerability is influenced by the resilience of buildings and infrastructure to prolonged outages and extreme cold, as well as the interdependencies between systems that can affect reliability and continuity. Participants also noted that the scenario takes place during the holiday, when many Yukon residents are travelling and their homes and properties may be unoccupied and become damaged. This can further shape the overall impacts to the community and demand for transportation.

Table 1 summarizes the combined results of this discussion across both workshops and scenarios.

Table 1 Vulnerability and Exposure of Visitors, Operators and Infrastructure During Wildfires and Blackouts/Extreme Cold Emergencies in the Yukon

	Unprecedented Wildfire Season	Rolling Blackouts/Extreme Cold
Visitors	• Dispersed across highways, backcountry routes and remote lodges • Limited awareness of wildfire risks and emergency procedures • Potentially unprepared to take care of themselves • Unsure where to get information • Reliance on operators for information and transportation • Exposure to smoke, road closures and evacuation scenarios	• Unprepared for extreme cold conditions • Limited access to information during outages • Lack of appropriate winter gear • Continued travel despite worsening conditions • Reliance on operators and visitor services • Stranded if flights are down • Language barriers and challenge getting emergency information
Operators	• Wilderness / backcountry operators • Accommodations in the area and in Whitehorse (where evacuees are sent) • Sports events cancelled • Air North, Alkan safety and operations • Cancellations and revenue loss • Disruptions to operations due to smoke, closures and staffing challenges	• Hotels, STRs without back up power supply unable to support guests • Disruptions to operations due to power loss – event cancellations, restaurants unable to operate • Exposure to cancellations and lost revenue • Pressure to provide accurate information • Challenges balancing guest needs with staff wellbeing and business continuity • Employees may be vulnerable, unable to come to work
Tourism Infrastructure and Assets	• Smoke and fire damage to heritage sites, art collections, museums • Dependence on limited transportation corridors • Exposure of remote tourism infrastructure to wildfire and smoke, limited protection • Supply chain vulnerabilities • Rebuilding can take years	• Businesses depend on power, heating and telecommunications systems • Vulnerability of buildings during prolonged outages (burst pipes, impact of cold, automated systems) • Disruptions to travel, roads, fuel supply and deliveries • Interdependencies between infrastructure systems • Residents are travelling over the holiday, many homes are empty and at risk.



For both scenarios, participants applied a tourism lens to map the impacts of the emergencies over time based on sector vulnerability and exposure, and participant knowledge and perspectives on the current status emergency planning and preparedness. This resulted in a trajectory of potential impacts over time and allowed for further discussion on cross-cutting themes and opportunities to enhance resilience before during and after emergency events. Tables 2 and 3 document the potential impacts identified during the sessions.

The impacts of these scenarios illustrate how prolonged and widespread emergency events can disrupt tourism across the Yukon, affecting visitor safety, business operations, transportation systems, community wellbeing, and Yukon's reputation over an extended period.

In addition to the impacts documented and listed in the tables, participants discussed the specific impacts to government staff, including the need to pivot workplans to directly support operators, develop economic relief packages, and protect cultural assets and art collections. These impacts to Government of Yukon operations, while not immediately obvious through the tourism lens, are central to the continuity and recovery of the sector. When emergencies happen, government focus shifts, and support for the tourism sector – *including operators and communities that have not been directly impacted* – will be influenced by capacity and costs of emergency response. At the same time, operators directly impacted by these disruptions may experience significant losses, and their recovery and future viability may depend on the speed and level of support that can be delivered by the government. In the absence of community and economic recovery frameworks, participants in both groups felt that tourism was particularly vulnerable to large scale disruptions.

While many of the impacts identified through this process are negative, during discussion the potential for positive outcomes was also identified. For example, visitors that were well cared for may choose to return to the Yukon in the future, sharing a positive story or resilience. Wildfire recovery efforts may foster more coordinated economic development and support for adaptation across the sector. Some businesses and operators may benefit from more demand, by serving evacuated communities, and by being prepared. Elements of these positive potential outcomes were reflected in the opportunities for resilience identified during the final exercise.

Table 2: Impacts of Unprecedented Wildfire Scenario through a Tourism Lens

Scenario: Unprecedented Wildfires 2028			
Impact Area	Immediate	Medium Term	Long Term
Visitor Safety & Experience	Evacuation alerts, stranded visitors, poor air quality, confusion and fear. Cancellations and limited accommodation options.	Continued cancellations, reduced participation and altered itineraries. Limited access to parks and services; negative reviews.	Reduced confidence, changed travel behaviour and ongoing safety concerns.
Business Operations	Closures in fire zones, reduced capacity and increased demand for visitor support. Asset protection and relocation challenges.	Ongoing cancellations, revenue loss and operational instability. Difficulty managing assets and responding to information requests.	Financial strain, delayed recovery and reduced investment. Risk of business closure or downsizing.
Infrastructure & Access	Highway closures, flight disruptions and limited access. Transportation focused on evacuation over visitor movement.	Continued access issues and supply chain disruptions. Maintenance and upgrades delayed.	Ongoing infrastructure recovery, with potential limits to visitor access.
Workforce	Staff shortages, safety concerns and increased workload. Housing pressures and mental health impacts.	Staff displacement, fatigue and stress. Seasonal workers leave; uneven labour demand.	Retention challenges and ongoing strain. Limited seasonal housing; shift toward recovery and prevention roles.
Communities	Pressure on emergency services and accommodations. Evacuations underway; potential tension with visitors.	Displacement and housing pressure. Tensions over accommodation access; damage assessments underway.	Ongoing recovery and rebuilding, often delayed. Housing versus business priorities; role for tourism in recovery.
Economic Viability	Immediate loss of bookings and revenue.	Peak season declines, cash flow challenges and insurance uncertainty. Demand for government support.	Reduced bookings, rising costs and prolonged recovery. Some businesses may not reopen.
Events & Activities	Immediate cancellations and disruptions.	Continued uncertainty and reduced participation.	Impacts to future planning and event viability.
Yukon's Story	Heightened perception of risk; widespread media coverage of fires and smoke.	Ongoing negative perceptions; challenges marketing unaffected areas.	Long term reputational impacts requiring careful messaging.
Sustainability	Direct environmental impacts	Limited access to nature and increased sensitivity in wilderness operations.	Ongoing constraints on outdoor use; need for careful regeneration and access management.
Heritage & Culture	Threats to cultural sites and assets; emergency protection measures.	Salvage planning and storage of collections.	Long term recovery and preservation of cultural assets.

Table 3: Impacts of Rolling Blackouts/ Extreme Cold scenario through a Tourism Lens

Scenario: Rolling Blackouts and Extreme Cold in Whitehorse			
Impact Area	Immediate	Medium Term	Longer Term
Visitor Safety & Experience	Cancellations, confusion, stress and disrupted travel. Limited services, displacement and difficulty accessing essentials.	Continued cancellations, fewer activity options and degraded experiences. Opportunity for off-grid operators.	Reduced confidence in winter travel and shifting behaviour. Higher expectations for safety and preparedness.
Business Operations	Closures, reduced capacity and increased staff demands. Operators with backups see higher demand. Events cancelled and uncertainty high.	Ongoing cancellations, rising costs and instability. Insurance uncertainty. Advantage for operators with backup capacity.	Financial strain, delayed recovery and reduced investment. Growing divide between prepared and unprepared operators.
Infrastructure & Access	Power outages, communication failures and transport disruption. Damage to buildings and systems. Pressure on trades and supply chains.	Continued strain on infrastructure and supply chains. Fuel shortages, equipment failures and flight cancellations.	Ongoing concerns about infrastructure reliability during extreme cold.
Workforce	Staff shortages, increased workload and personal impacts. Travel limitations and safety concerns in extreme cold.	Fatigue, burnout and reduced availability. Stress and competing demands. Temporary layoffs or reduced hours.	Retention challenges and ongoing strain. Uneven impacts based on ability to prepare.
Community Wellbeing	Pressure on emergency services and municipal systems. Impacts to vulnerable populations. Residents concerned about homes and businesses.	Sustained demand for services, housing and food support. Repair delays and increased mental health pressures.	Greater caution around energy use and improved preparedness for some. Ongoing stress as winter conditions recur.
Economic Viability	Immediate revenue loss. Insurance uncertainty and increased fuel costs.	Cash flow pressure from refunds and rebookings. High operating costs with unreliable power. Demand for support.	Reduced bookings and slower recovery. Rising insurance costs. Need to strengthen resilience.
Events & Activities	Immediate cancellations and disruptions.	Continued uncertainty and reduced participation. Opportunity for unique cold-weather experiences.	Reduced viability of large events and higher mitigation costs. Greater need for contingency planning.
Yukon's Story	Perception of being unprepared or unreliable, alongside narratives of resilience and shared experience.	Continued negative perception and media attention during events.	Long-term impacts on destination image. Opportunity to reposition around resilience and preparedness.
Sustainability	High reliance on generators and diesel, with associated costs and emissions.		Questions about whether infrastructure can support winter growth without improved reliability.
Heritage & Culture	Risks to cultural assets and facilities. Opportunity to frame cold as part of cultural identity.	Storage, care and maintenance challenges.	Ongoing consideration of how culture and identity are shaped by climate.

Opportunities for Resilience

The final part of the workshop discussions focused on opportunities to reduce exposure and vulnerability, and better prepare TIAY, Government of Yukon and the tourism sector over all, for emergencies. Opportunities include:

Tourism Emergency Planning & Preparedness

- Developing robust emergency plans at all levels, practicing them.
- Training and education for visitors and operators for seasonal hazards.
- Embed emergency preparedness into annual workplans/ operations
- Budget for operator preparedness

Leveraging Tourism Knowledge and Preparedness

- Inventorying assets that could support community and tourism response (vans, accommodations, off-grid capabilities, first aid training, languages)
- Contracts with operators interested in supporting emergency response operations when tourism is disrupted.
- Learning with and celebrating resilience and knowledge of First Nation communities; to educate staff and visitors on preparedness and being ready
- Strengthening community support for tourism by using transferable skills and knowledge for community response.
- Supporting social and cultural recovery through local events and experiences; culture, arts and celebration as part of healing and honouring community experience.

Large Scale Evacuation Planning

- Engage tourism stakeholders in large scale evacuation planning – including airlines, transportation businesses, accommodation, food and supplies.
- Include visitors / visitor numbers in this planning to be realistic; Recognize visitors have no vehicles, rely on rentals, buses, airlines
- Get prepared in order to be ready to move, and also to take care of other communities when they need support

Improving Communications and Information Sharing Structures

- Establishing communications structures between EM Agencies, TOURISM YUKON, TIAY, Operators/ Front line staff; training for this, strategic communications developed in advanced, supporting multi-directional information sharing (not just one way, but also gathering intel from the ground).
- Hiring more multi-lingual staff, identifying staff with language skills to support with emergency translation (and better visitor experience all around)
- Communicating specific messages to niche audiences, informing of risk, and risk mitigation

Destination Marketing/ Yukon's Story

- Managing media perceptions, honest, safe, and offering alternatives. Sharing good news stories.
- Strategic comms and alternative itineraries for impacted visitors.
- Promote operators' stories that are about helping, healing and resilience.

Use of Data

- Access/develop better data sources and tools to track visitor locations, accommodation availability, sector inventories for emergency response and to re-direct visitors.
- Data, including economic contributions of tourism and visitor numbers, to inform investment in emergency response capabilities

Recovery

- Advocacy within and outside government for robust disaster recovery planning and mitigation investments
- TIAY and Tourism Yukon engagement in economic recovery planning, grant / funding design and marketing strategy

This closing discussion surfaced a number of priorities for both TIAY and the Government of Yukon, as well as underlying and systemic challenges. For example, data limitations across the territory make risk and impact assessment challenging; current issues including limited/costly housing for workers, access to skilled labour, and infrastructure fragility, will all be amplified during emergency events; limited resourcing for comprehensive emergency management territory-wide makes the development of robust structures and recovery strategies more challenging. Both groups also discussed the question of mandate and responsibility for emergency management - recognizing that while neither TIAY or Tourism Yukon is exclusively responsible for managing emergency events, they do have a role to play in advocating for and protecting visitors and operators, and in preparing for and managing the consequences of emergencies on the tourism sector.

Case Study: 2025 Dawson Wildfires

This case study summarizes impacts of the 2025 Dawson wildfire event identified during a targeted engagement session with local tourism and emergency management stakeholders in Dawson in March 2026. This case study also integrates findings from a KVA survey of members taken during the fires. As a recent, real-world emergency affecting a highly seasonal and visitor-dependent destination, this example provides important context for understanding how emergency events impact the Yukon tourism sector, and complements the scenario-based workshops.

This case study is not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the wildfire response. By all accounts, the response was well-coordinated and effective in protecting the community. Rather, the purpose of this section is to document the impacts, issues and decisions experienced by tourism operators and stakeholders, and to identify considerations relevant to tourism preparedness and resilience.



Participants gathered at the Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture to share experiences and recommendations for tourism resilience.

Incident Overview: Dawson Complex Wildfires (June 19 – July 15, 2025)

Between June 15 and 23, 2025, a dry lightning storm ignited thirty wildfires in the vicinity of Dawson City and across the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, including three main fires of concern – the Rabbit Creek fire (DA-007), the Quebec Creek fire (DA-012) and the Leotta Creek fire (DA-016). These fires occurred during a period of heightened wildfire activity across Canada, with significant fires burning in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, limiting the availability of national response resources.

Locally based air tankers had been deployed to priority fires near Mayo, and fires of concern in Dawson grew rapidly while awaiting additional resources from Whitehorse and other jurisdictions. Evacuation alerts were issued on June 20 for the West Dawson, Sunnyside, Rock Creek and Henderson Corner areas as a precautionary measure.

Over the following weeks, wildfire crews from Yukon and across North America worked to contain the fires. Evacuation alerts were rescinded on June 30, and rainfall on July 15 significantly reduced fire risk in the region. Although no major damage to homes or infrastructure occurred, the event created sustained disruption and uncertainty during peak tourism season. Primary impacts of the incidents included:

Wildfire Response

- Prioritization of limited firefighting resources across multiple active fires in the territory

- Reliance on external personnel and equipment to support local response capacity
- Implementation of structure protection measures in high-risk areas

Transportation and Access

- Highway closures, including the Top of the World Highway and the North Klondike Highway
- Temporary shutdown of commercial air traffic
- Challenges moving emergency personnel and equipment into the region
- Increased pressure on the George Black Ferry, the primary access and evacuation route to and from West Dawson

Health and Safety

- Evacuation alerts issued for multiple neighbourhoods
- Poor air quality affecting residents and visitors
- Ongoing safety concerns for travellers on highways and in remote areas



The Rabbit Creek Fire (fire 007) on June 18. (Photo courtesy of Wildland Fire Management)



The Rabbit Creek Fire continues to burn in late June (courtesy of Wildland Fire Management)



Fire equipment set up to protect West Dawson June 2025 (courtesy of Wildland Fire Management)



The Leotta Creek Fire on June 21. (courtesy Wildland Fire Management)

Dawson Wildfire: Emergency Coordination and Governance

Emergency management in Dawson involves multiple jurisdictions, including the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, the City of Dawson and the Government of Yukon. These partners worked together through a Local Emergency Control Group (LECG) to coordinate response activities and manage community impacts.

Dawson has experienced several recent emergency events - including flooding, wildfires and extreme winter infrastructure failures - which has contributed to strengthened inter-agency coordination and preparedness.

During the wildfire event, the LECG was responsible for a range of complex and time-sensitive decisions, including:

- issuing evacuation alerts and coordinating joint public communications
- providing guidance to residents and businesses on emergency preparedness
- planning for potential evacuation scenarios, including support for vulnerable populations
- establishing a clean air shelter
- coordinating wellness checks
- inventorying available local response resources
- considering whether to issue travel advisories or recommend that visitors delay travel

Recognizing the high number of visitors in the community, the LECG carefully considered the potential economic and safety implications of travel advisories. For the first time since the LECG was created, the Klondike Visitors Association (KVA) was engaged in an ad hoc way, and supported decision-making by providing data on visitor numbers and accommodation capacity, which also informed planning for incoming response personnel.

Dawson Wildfire: Impacts, Issues and Decisions for Tourism Operators

Workshop participants represented a range of sectors, including hospitality, transportation, visitor services, events and parks. Tourism operators mapped key impacts, issues and decisions experienced before, during and after the wildfire event, alongside emergency management actions related to visitors and tourism. This exercise highlighted the evolving nature of impacts over time, including:

- early uncertainty and rapid escalation of impacts immediately after the fires started
- peak business disruption during evacuation alerts and transportation closures
- concern for the safety and wellbeing of staff, visitors and residents as air quality declined and fire activity grew
- ongoing economic and reputational impacts extending beyond the immediate response period

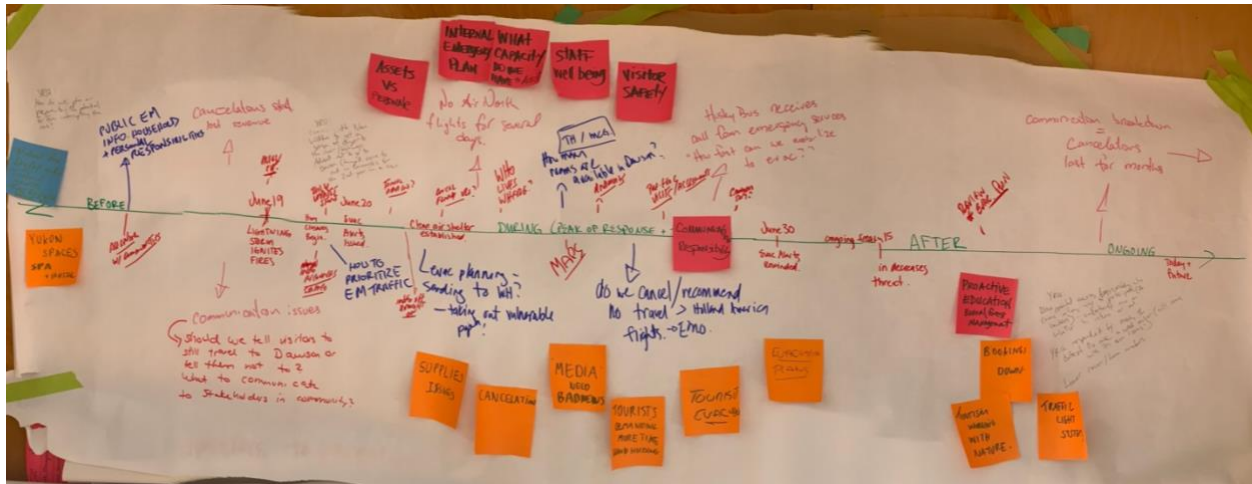


Figure 8: Participants mapped impacts and decision points along an event timeline.

While participant experiences were diverse, a number of common themes and impacts emerged from this activity. These are summarized in Table 4. The experience of the Yukon River Quest illustrates the complexity of issues that many in the tourism sector were navigating during the Dawson Wildfires:

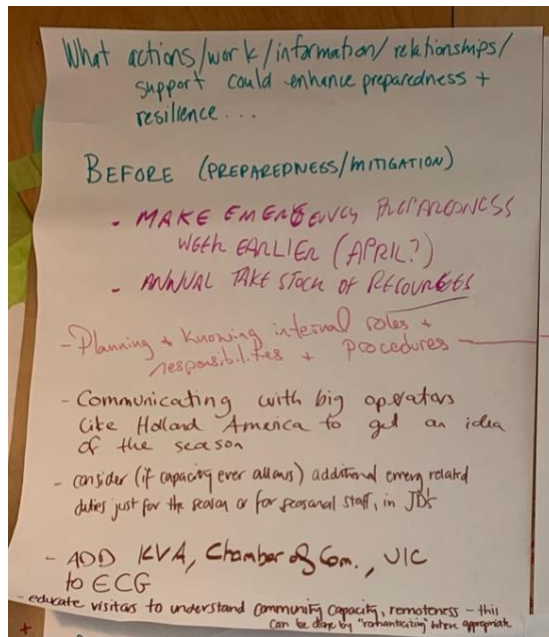
When the Yukon River Quest announced the decision to end the race in Carmacks in 2025, for the second year in a row, due to wildfires in Dawson. Some participants were disappointed and angry that their experience was being cut short. They felt prepared to navigate the river and accept the risks of the fire. But the organizers didn't cancel because of risks to the paddlers- they cancelled based on the information provided direction by EMO staff, whom they had been in touch with leading up to the event, and who had alerted them that the community of Dawson threatened by multiple fires, that the campground had been evacuated, and that outside firefighters were coming in, needing accommodations and resources.

In the aftermath, race organizers remain confident they made the right decision for the wellbeing of the community of Dawson, protection of the hundreds of paddlers and support crew members who would have otherwise converged on the community, and the support of the emergency responders, but strongly recommend clarity in decision making, travel advisories, and recommendations to visitors and operators alike.

Table 4: Overview of issues, impacts and decisions navigated by tourism community during Dawson Wildfires

Theme	Issue, Impacts and Decisions
Economic Impacts	• Lost revenue due to cancellations, including impacts extending beyond the immediate fire period. • Increased operating costs, including staff overtime associated with delays and disruptions • Limited ability to quantify or track the broader economic impact on the tourism sector • Lack of clarity around insurance, no clear support for economic disruption. • LECG weighing economic impacts of wildfire and response decisions
Operations	• Supply chain disruptions affecting business operations • Challenges maintaining service delivery due to transportation closures and delays • Short-notice requests to support emergency response efforts (e.g., providing accommodation, data, transportation support)
Communications and Information	• Lack of clarity regarding whether it was safe for visitors to travel to or remain in Dawson • Uncertainty around thresholds for event cancellations and travel advisories • Confusion related to the status of highways, flights and access routes • Ethical tensions and tough decisions between economic and safety considerations in the absence of clear direction • Inconsistent guidance around event and service cancellations, business closures, in absence of alternative supports • Specific information not flowing to visitor facing individuals (ie: hwy control staff, VIC staff, tourism operators) • Visitor reliance on operators for information • Ongoing communication with cancelled or “lost” clients • Challenges communicating that Dawson remained open and accessible following the event
Visitor Experience and Safety	• Concerns about the community’s capacity to safely evacuate both residents and visitors if conditions worsened • Significant increase in questions and distress of visitors • Visitors/travellers stranded on highway without proper preparedness • Ethical dilemmas about putting visitors / staff at risk versus putting people out of work
Staff Safety and Wellbeing	• Concerns regarding staff safety, health and wellbeing, particularly in smoky conditions • Seasonal staff not familiar with wildfires experiencing stress, fear • Increased demand for visitor support, including more than 1,000 daily inquiries at the Visitor Information Centre
Emergency Preparedness and Response	• Efforts by businesses to identify available resources and skills that could support the response and the community • Internal emergency planning undertaken by some operators during the event
Long-Term Reputation and Recovery	• Media focus on the negative, lack of positive stories, minimal reporting on re-opening/safe conditions • Communicating with future guests • Cancellations make potential visitors reconsider to more reliable option • Concerns about the future viability of events, including the Yukon River Quest, which has experienced repeated disruption • Re-thinking marketing towards responsible tourism and stewardship of boreal forest • Staff wellbeing, burn out, mental health recovery

Opportunities to Enhance Resilience Before, During and After Future Emergencies



Dawson participants shared ideas and discussed opportunities to strengthen preparedness, coordination and communication. Emergency management partners and tourism stakeholders expressed broad interest and support to deepen collaboration, enhance situational awareness and leverage and create local resources to be better prepared for future emergency events. Suggestions and ideas from the Dawson session are captured in Figure 7, and discussed alongside other findings in the next section.

The 2025 Dawson wildfires illustrate how emergency events can significantly disrupt tourism destinations even when physical damage is limited. The event created widespread operational, economic and communication challenges for tourism operators, while also increasing demands on local organizations supporting visitors.

At the same time, the case study highlights the strong coordination among emergency management partners and the willingness of tourism stakeholders to contribute to community response efforts.

These experiences underscore both the vulnerability of the tourism sector to emergency events and the potential role of tourism stakeholders as active partners in preparedness, response and recovery.

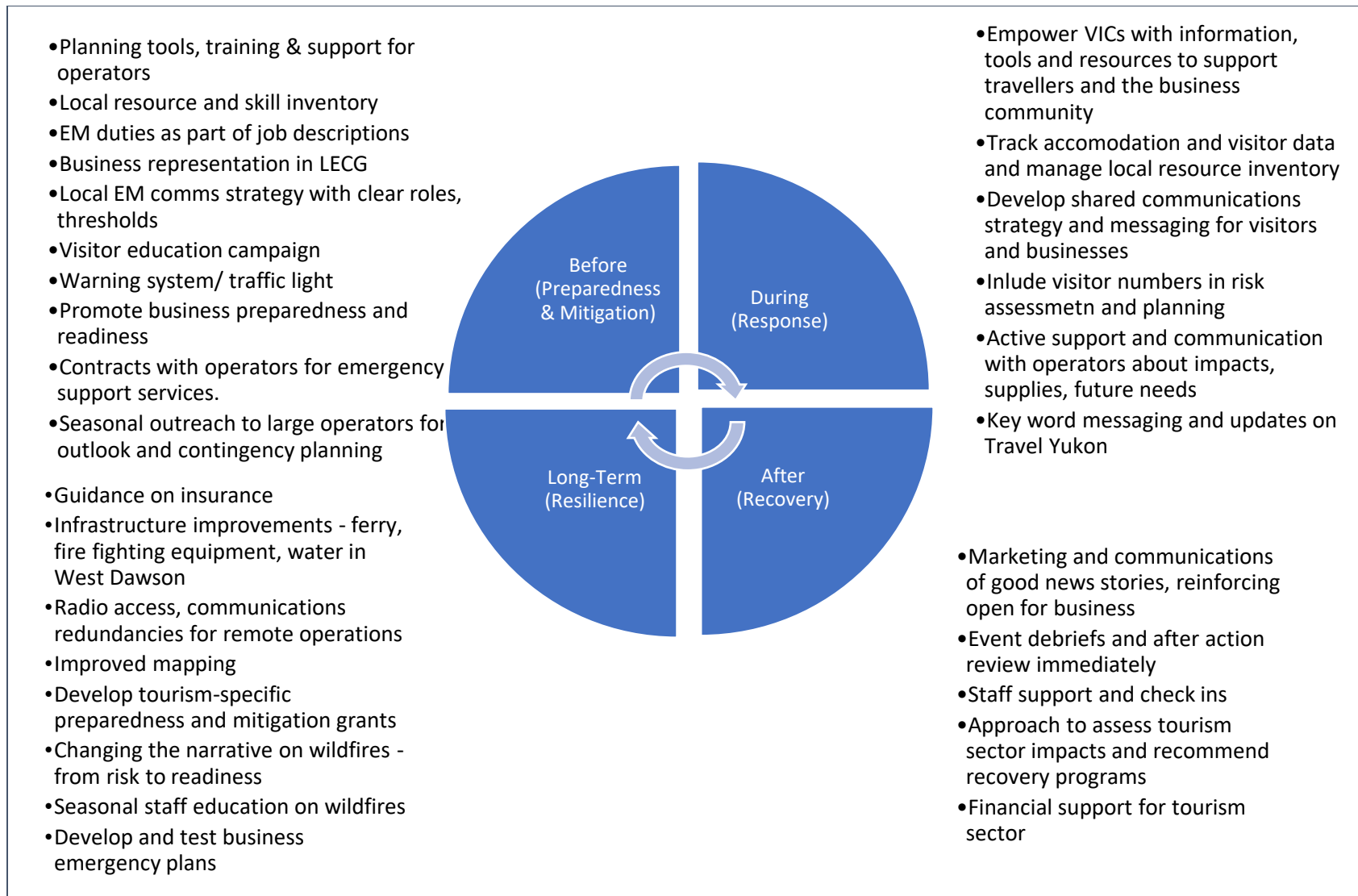


Figure 9: Joint recommendations for preparedness, response and recovery in Dawson.

Integrated Findings: Tourism Resilience in the Yukon

This section synthesizes and summarizes insights from interviews, scenario-based workshops, the Dawson wildfire engagement session and supporting research. The findings highlight both the vulnerability of the tourism sector to emergency events and the important role tourism already plays in supporting communities before, during and after emergencies.

Coordination and Integration of Tourism in Emergency Management

Tourism operators and organizations are involved, but not formally integrated in Emergency Management in the Yukon

Tourism stakeholders already contribute to emergency management in practice, but are not consistently embedded within governance and decision making structures. Where organizations are involved, it is often a one-way relationship – with emergency management organizations and structures requesting resources or pushing out information during response. For example:

- While Government of Yukon relies on Visitor Information Centres to deliver information to the public, VIC's themselves are not formally integrated into emergency management decision making or risk assessments.
- Staff from Tourism Yukon are trained to work in the Emergency Coordination Centre in ECC staff roles, but this is different from specifically representing tourism. There is not a formal or specific liaison position to represent the tourism sector, provide specific intelligence and recommendations about sector impacts, capacity or needs, or shape targeted communications relevant to visitors and operators.
- The Dawson wildfire demonstrated how tourism input can strengthen decision making. The Klondike Visitors Association contributed data on visitor numbers and accommodation capacity, which informed planning for incoming response personnel and potential evacuation scenarios. This improved situational awareness for emergency management decision makers during a period of uncertainty. However, this involvement was ad hoc and based on relationships rather than formal roles, and input from the KVA was not necessarily translated into clear messaging, consideration or support for tourism operators and visitors. In Dawson, last minute requests to operators about the capacity to mobilize transportation for evacuations, for example, demonstrate an opportunity to engage and contract these critical services in advance of emergencies.
- The organizers of the Yukon River Quest proactively reached out to the Emergency Measures Organization and remained in touch during event planning. This relationship was important to provide critical information not only for event safety, but for understanding the potential implications of the event on Dawson City, during the peak of the fires. This relationship was important in providing clear and actionable information to the organizers, who ultimately decided to end the race in Carmacks to reduce pressure on the community of Dawson. However, this happened because YQR organizers were proactive, and other events and operators do not have a relationship with EMO, EMO is not staffed to specifically provide this support, and there are no requirements for large operators or events to consult with emergency management agencies.

Across the Yukon, tourism operators and organizations are not formally included in:

- local and regional emergency planning processes
- coordination structures
- formal decision making frameworks

As a result, tourism stakeholders are often relied upon during emergencies without being systematically prepared, resourced or supported beforehand, missing key opportunities to strengthen social and economic resilience, and make more informed decisions about risk, response and recovery.

Regional tourism and emergency management coordination is uneven, but local capacity and relationships exist.

Emergency preparedness and coordination vary across the territory. From an emergency management perspective, regions and communities organize differently, influenced by risk, complex governance structures, culture and capacity. While regional and inter-governmental coordination is strong in Dawson, interviews with EMO indicate varying levels of coordination and different approaches to risk governance in other parts of the territory. A similar pattern is evident in the tourism sector, where the KVA is the only regional body for tourism operators, while other operators are represented by territory-wide sub-sector associations. During emergencies, regional points of contact and coordination structures play an important role in communication, risk assessment and situational awareness.

Unlike jurisdictions such as British Columbia, where regional tourism organizations have formalized roles in emergency coordination, Yukon relies more heavily on local relationships and informal collaboration. The value of these relationships should not be understated. Social connection, especially in small communities, is an indicator of resilience. Local connections allow for more flexible and responsive actions, cutting through bureaucratic processes and approvals that plague larger cities. Across the country, and in the Yukon interviewees described how community-based networks play important roles, and often stand up ad-hoc.

For example:

- During the Dawson Wildfires the Visitor Information Centre managed more than 1,000 daily inquiries.
- When Mayo and Old Crow evacuated to Whitehorse in 2023, Kwanlin Dunn First Nation offered essentials supports and gathering locations, including use of local spaces.
- When travellers are delayed on highways, communities like Carmacks, Pelly Crossing and Selkirk First Nation rally to provide water, food and support.
- Across the country tourism operators that are prepared provide shelter, food, transportation and information to visitors when power is out, roads are blocked and services are limited.

These examples highlight an opportunity to formalize and support regional coordination mechanisms. Because most emergencies are regional in scale and impact, this is particularly important for visitors and the tourism sector. Being able to quickly activate regional plans, receive intelligence from the ground, inventory regional resources and assess regional impacts can result in better coordination and targeted sector response and recovery supports. In the Yukon, the six VICs offer a specific opportunity for more formal regional coordination, backed by resources and training.

Visitor Experience and Exposure

Visitors make up a significant and distinct population with unique vulnerability that is not fully reflected in planning.

Visitors were consistently identified as a unique group with specific exposure and vulnerability characteristics:

- dispersed across highways, communities and remote areas
- unfamiliar with local hazards and emergency procedures
- reliant on operators and visitor services for information
- limited social or community connections which are critical during emergencies
- affected by language barriers and limited connectivity

Findings from the Dawson wildfire and scenario workshops illustrate these dynamics:

- visitors continued to arrive in Dawson during evacuation alerts with concerns about safety
- stranded travellers required support on highways
- the majority of travellers to the Yukon are older, a risk factor during smoke events and stressful situations.

Beyond specific vulnerabilities, during peak season there can be three times as many visitors as residents in the territory. In an emergency these are people that may require support just like anyone else living impacted communities. Despite this, visitors are not explicitly included in Yukon (or many other jurisdictions) emergency management plans. This creates a gap between planning assumptions, resource capacity and the actual conditions on the ground.

For example:

- During large scale evacuations or emergencies, visitors and residents all require the same services, use the same roads, and rely on the same infrastructure.
- In remote locations, like the Yukon, NWT and Nfld, bottlenecks form at critical transportation hubs and visitors must to be accommodated where they are.
- Operators may be relying on the same vans and buses to run operations and care for clients, that emergency managers assume will be available to evacuate residents.
- Operators invest in back up power systems to support their businesses, but and may not be planning on or adequately prepared to host evacuees.
- Visitors may be more vulnerable because of lack of familiarity with the region, language barriers and a lack of community and social connections to support them.

At the same time, participants noted that many Yukon visitors are experienced and prepared for remote travel. This reinforces that risk is not uniform, and that improved understanding of visitor profiles is needed to inform planning and communication.

Tourism injects hundreds of millions of dollars into the economy each year, yet there is limited investment in emergency response capacity or resilience to protect the sector in the face of growing

threats. As the sector grows, this represents a key gap and opportunity to reduce risk to people and the economy.

Truly understanding disaster risk requires the integration of visitors and the tourism sector into risk assessment and disaster planning.

Gaps in Data and Situational Awareness

Data limitations undermine risk and impact assessment and response coordination

Limited access to real time and tourism specific data was identified as a significant barrier in the Yukon and across the country.

Across the Yukon, access to and use of reliable data is an issue writ large. Climate data and monitoring is limited in the north (Government of Yukon, 2022), tourism data is improving but not real-time or refined enough to support quantitative analysis of disaster risk and impacts, and there is insufficient data to use models designed to inform tasks like evacuation planning (Personal communications, EMO, 2025).

Across all research streams, participants identified gaps in:

- visitor tracking and flow data
- accommodation and asset inventories
- tourism specific impact measurement
- risk exposure information to inform targeted mitigations

These gaps affect:

- emergency planning and preparedness
- evidence-based coordination during response
- planning for visitors
- understanding of economic impacts
- evidence-based recovery and mitigation supports

Improved data systems were consistently identified as a foundational requirement to strengthen decision making and coordination. However, developing robust data systems for emergency management is not necessarily a quick or easy solution. Scenario participants identified trust and privacy concerns related to the sharing of data about visitors during emergencies. Even when successful, data-dependent tools require consistent investment and maintenance, for example, in BC, a pilot initiative to show occupancy rates across the province (and support decisions related to visitor and evacuee support), was not funded even after a successful launch.

In the Yukon, the best source of visitor data is the Visitor Exit Survey, which is challenging to administer and not completed annually. Credit card spend data and monthly hotel occupancy rates offer more up to date insights, but are not useful in the moment.

Opportunities do exist to use historical data to model and test future scenarios. In the future, strong foundational data could be applied to advanced AI tools to simulate visitor behaviour during

emergencies, simulate evacuations, and test different communications responses. But data doesn't have to be that complicated, in Dawson, the recommendation to develop a basic community resource inventory and update it annually offers not on the chance to better leverage local resources, but also to come together to discuss and update plans regularly.

Tourism Sector Readiness

Preparedness across the tourism sector is uneven

Preparedness varies widely across tourism operators. While many wilderness and backcountry operators are well equipped and potentially less impacted by some emergency situations, other groups are vulnerable. Survey results during the real life 2025 extreme cold event indicated that many respondents would be unable to operate and experience significant disruptions to their businesses after relatively short power outages during extreme cold conditions. Just as remote and northern communities are more exposed to supply chain disruptions and emergencies across the territory, tourism operators face the same reliance on functional infrastructure, services and access. In NWT, when grocery stores in Yellowknife closed and air transportation companies evacuated, remote operators and visitors were left with few options.

While further information from operators would inform sector-specific trends, research for this study indicates that operators across the country and in the Yukon:

- do not have formal emergency or business continuity plans
- rely on informal or reactive approaches
- face challenges integrating preparedness into day-to-day operations

These challenges are particularly pronounced among small and seasonal businesses where cash flow is tight and seasonal pressures are high.

Engagement with Yukon stakeholders reinforced that many preparedness activities, such as planning for power outages, evacuation or communications, and stocking up on supplies or taking protective actions, are often developed during events rather than in advance.

This is not unique to tourism operators. Across the Yukon, many communities are grappling with community preparedness challenges. Promoting preparedness before a serious emergency is difficult.

Across the country investment and buy in for preparedness is strongest in places that have direct experience of emergency events. In Banff and Jasper, for example, there has been a transformation in the approach to Fire-smarting for the community and for tourism. Everybody, including visitors, is on board with preparedness and mitigation, and these actions are less controversial than they have been in the past. In the aftermath of devastating fire in Manitoba, a funding stream was created to support preparedness grants for tourism businesses. In the Yukon, there is growing emphasis on Fire Smart, for example, but limited support for individuals and businesses to take action.

Creating, supporting and celebrating a 'culture of preparedness' was identified as a key opportunity for the Yukon, and tourism has a role to play in this. Many Tourism Industry Associations and Emergency Management Organizations across Canada promote business planning resources and tools for

emergency management. However, the effectiveness of this guidance is unclear. Local operators identified that they require simple, well supported approaches that meet them where they are at, and that generic tools and templates must be accompanied by specific supports and guidance for implementation. The challenge will be to do this *before* a major emergency strikes.

Targeted supports and incentives are required to enable mitigation efforts across the sector. A strong example of this exists in the Cariboo Chilcotin Tourism Association which offers dedicated support and expert emergency management guidance to complement BC's many tools and templates.

Foundational and systemic barriers influence disaster preparedness and resilience

Operators identified broader systemic limitations and issues that would be amplified during emergencies and reduce resilience capacity, including:

- limited access to skilled labour and trades
- short construction seasons
- high cost of materials and supplies
- limited housing options for workforce
- dependence on vulnerable infrastructure systems

Interviews and workshops illustrate how these differences affect outcomes. For example, recovery from wildfires takes longer in remote locations, extending economic impacts. Investing in upgrades and preparedness is expensive, and still relies on parallel investments in territorial emergency management capacity (like fire-fighting equipment and regionally-based resources). In Dawson, there was significant concern around the limitations of the George Black Ferry to transport visitors, residents and emergency response resources during and evacuation. In all types of emergencies, housing is among the most impacted resources. Even if businesses are not directly affected, the loss of housing for seasonal staff can immediately result in an inability to operate.

These findings highlight that preparedness is not solely an individual responsibility, but is shaped by broader economic and infrastructure conditions.

Climate and emergency risk are not yet embedded in tourism strategy

A key gap identified in this study is the absence of climate change, emergency management and disaster risk reduction within the Yukon's current tourism policy framework. The **Yukon Tourism Development Strategy (2018–2028)** does not explicitly reference climate change or emergency management. This is notable given the increasing frequency and severity of hazards affecting the territory and the growing exposure of the tourism sector to disruption. The absence of this lens creates a disconnect between increasing climate and emergency risks and tourism planning and investment.

Table XX summarizes the key climate-related hazards identified in the Yukon government climate risk and resilience assessments and identifies potential direct impacts and exposure of the tourism sector based on findings from interviews and desktop research. Beyond direct impacts, this study shows the implications for destination management and reputation, operational wellbeing and the economic viability of the tourism sector.

Climate Hazard (YG, 2022)	Impacts	Direct Impacts for Tourism
Wildfire	Increasing wildfire frequency and intensity across Yukon forests during the summer tourism season. Smoke and fires may occur near highways, communities and wilderness tourism areas.	Evacuation alerts or orders affecting visitors and communities; damage to tourism assets, infrastructure and attractions; highway and airport disruptions; reduced air quality affecting outdoor experiences and health; cancellations and revenue losses for tourism operators.
Permafrost Thaw	Thawing permafrost affecting infrastructure stability across northern landscapes.	Damage to roads, trails, buildings and heritage sites; increased maintenance costs for tourism infrastructure; access challenges for remote tourism destinations.
Snow, Ice and Water	Changing snowpack, earlier spring melt and increased flooding risk, including ice jam events.	Shorter or less predictable winter tourism seasons; impacts to activities such as dog sledding and snowmobiling; flooding affecting campgrounds, paddling routes and tourism infrastructure.
Changes to Vegetation and Wildlife	Shifts in forest composition, pest outbreaks and wildlife migration patterns.	Changes to wildlife viewing opportunities; altered landscapes affecting visitor experiences; increased wildfire risk linked to vegetation change; potential increase in human-wildlife interactions.
Extreme Weather	Increasing variability in temperatures, precipitation and seasonal transitions.	Safety risks for visitors engaged in outdoor activities; disruptions to tours, events and transportation; infrastructure damage and operational challenges for tourism businesses.

This issue was highlighted during discussions about the Rolling Black Out scenario, as participants grappled with the intent to grow year-round and winter tourism, alongside the reality of infrastructure fragility and lack of preparedness for winter emergencies.

There is a clear opportunity for future tourism strategy to integrate current and projected climate and disaster risks and impact assessments in order to develop robust strategies for resilience across the sector.

Emergency Decision Making and Communication

Communication challenges are widespread during and after emergencies

Communication was identified as one of the most critical challenges across all research streams. This is not unusual. In a world where communication is often instant, residents and visitors alike expect current and accurate information and clear directions. The reality is that emergency events are dynamic, with constantly changing conditions and myriad factors influence risk. During the Dawson wildfire, participants reported:

- lack of clarity about whether it was safe for visitors to travel
- uncertainty regarding highway and flight status

- inconsistent information being shared across platform
- insufficient communications when the threat had past

The following perspectives drawn from discussions about wildfire communications highlight the complexity of this challenge:

- Wildland Fire Information Officers describe their responsibility as ‘providing information about the status of a wildfire, and offering enough information so that the public and visitors can make their own decisions about risk based on their tolerance and preparedness.’
- Emergency management partners expressed hesitation (and with good reason) to issue blanket travel advisories or recommend against certain types of travel
- Visitors and seasonal staff reported that information was confusing, that they often have no context or experience of wildfires, so it is very difficult for them to assess their own risks.
- Operators in communities under evacuation alert (meaning, be ready to leave in a moment’s notice), were unclear about if they should be operating or if there was capacity to get visitors out
- Businesses are fielding inquiries about safety of experiences, future cancellations, insurance and refunds without supportive messaging.

In the absence of clear and useful information, misinformation abounds. But it is not the responsibility of fire fighters, for example, to craft messages relevant and actionable to visitors based on their unique situations, or to advise them on alternative travel itineraries. This is where tourism organizations can play an important role. In recent years, the Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association has invested in strengthening crisis communications support and information analysis for operators. By sending out weekly situation reports analyzed through a tourism lens and creating consistent messages for operators to relay to visitors about risks and alternative travel options, communications challenges are greatly reduced.

Developing clear communications structures and messaging is best done if strategies are developed proactively, and tourism organizations are at the table to align official sources of information, provide insight into how messages will be received by visitors, and to translate these messages into actionable and useful information for the sector.

Decision making is complex and not always transparent for tourism.

Decision making during emergencies is time sensitive and focused on life safety, but implications of response actions for tourism are not always clearly understood or communicated.

Across the study, operators described challenges related to:

- determining when to cancel events or services
- balancing safety considerations with economic impacts
- interpreting evolving conditions without clear thresholds
- knowing who was responsible for making decisions about visitors and visitor safety
- communicating decisions across impacted stakeholders to allow them to react and prepare as necessary.

An example of this was during the Yellowknife evacuation, when the order to evacuate came after days of community leadership advising that the situation was under control, and without a evacuation alert preceding it (An evacuation alert would have indicated the threat and the need to be ready to move when and if an order was issued). The impacts on backcountry travellers and operators were significant. With advanced engagement, the Spectacular NWT may have offered important insights into the implications of the decision and opportunities to minimize impacts and improve response.

In the Yukon, tourism perspectives are not consistently integrated into formal decision making structures. Although mechanisms for this exist in the Territorial Emergency Coordination Plan, in practice tourism and other business stakeholders are not proactively engaged, and the coordination bodies that could support this, like the Emergency Coordination Group, are not resourced or active.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities in emergency decision making are central to effective outcomes, and must be part of any future emergency management frameworks in the Yukon.

Tourism's Operational Role in Emergency Response

Tourism operators function as informal responders

Tourism operators and front line staff play important roles during emergency response, including:

- providing information and reassurance to visitors
- supporting stranded travellers
- adapting operations to changing conditions
- assisting with logistics and coordination

During the Dawson wildfire:

- operators fielded increased inquiries from visitors and families
- the Visitor Information Centre managed high volumes of requests for information
- businesses adapted to support both visitors and community needs

These roles are critical but largely informal, and are not consistently supported through training, protocols or compensation mechanisms. Tourism operators and staff are often highly skilled in customer service, adept at complex logistics and highly adaptive to changing circumstances. These are transferable skills with important roles during emergencies.

The better prepared tourism operators are for these events, the better they can support visitors and their community. In Nova Scotia, TIANS is exploring specific training opportunities that recognize this inevitable role for operators during emergencies. In Dawson, the recommendation to inventory local resources and establish formal plans, contracts and procedures for engaging with operators and local businesses, reflects both the desire and capacity that operators have to support.

Supporting staff and operators during and after response is critical

Tourism operators and front-line staff experience significant stress during emergencies as they balance responsibility for visitor safety with their own personal and business impacts. Participants described the pressure of supporting visitors, managing uncertainty and maintaining operations while also dealing with concerns for their own safety, families and livelihoods. In Dawson and across scenario discussions, this dual responsibility was identified as a key source of stress and fatigue.

Cross-jurisdictional insights reinforced the importance of supporting front-line staff. Examples such as de-escalation training for tourism workers in Nova Scotia, and the provision of mental health supports following Hurricane Fiona in Prince Edward Island, highlight emerging practices that recognize the role of tourism workers as both service providers and informal responders.

There is an opportunity to strengthen supports for tourism staff through training in communication, conflict management and crisis response, access to mental health and wellbeing resources during and after events; and structured debrief processes to support learning and recovery following emergencies.

Recovery, Economic Impacts and Reputation

Recovery is a critical component of emergency management, but not well understood or resourced in the Yukon

Across the country, communities and tourism organizations that have experienced major emergency events emphasize the importance of planning for recovery even before an emergency occurs. Best practice across the country is for economic development organizations and the tourism sector to be well represented in recovery planning efforts. Recovery planning, policy and practice, however, remains underdeveloped in the Yukon. While Canada released an updated Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) policy in 2025 aimed at enhancing support for communities, individuals and businesses impacted by emergencies (Public Safety Canada, 2025), Yukon has yet to develop its own program to support rapid access to this recovery funding (Personal Communications, EMO, 2025). When recovery programs are rolled out, they tend to be ad hoc, rather than a coordinated approach to ‘building back better’ and mitigating impacts of future emergencies to communities. This contrasts with leading practice and Canada’s own policies around recovery, which recognize the intangible impacts of emergency events and disruptions, and supports cultural, social and economic recovery alongside physical repairs.

In addition, a strong tourism sector contributes to overall community recovery, providing necessary and critical functions to both visitors and residents, while also restoring social fabric through cultural events and experiences, entertainment and celebrations. Interviews with participants across the country reinforced that while recovery funding can take months or years, tourism offers more immediate economic activity (if operators can get off the ground!). In Jasper, the tourism sector has been instrumental in establishing pop up storefronts and visitor services that has kept tourism dollars in the community, even while long term rebuilding continues. In PEI, cultural events and community gatherings hosted by tourism operators contributed to an overall sense of wellbeing in the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona.

As the Yukon strives to align with Canada’s recovery programs, the tourism sector (and private sector writ large) has an important role to play in shaping appropriate policy and evaluating and informing recovery needs and requirements, and benefits when infrastructure is built to withstand future threats.

Economic impacts for tourism extend beyond physical damage

Emergency events create significant financial impacts across the tourism sector, even in the absence of direct damage to infrastructure or assets. Research from the Canadian Climate Institute indicates that for every dollar invested in preparedness and mitigation, three to fifteen dollars are saved during response and recovery (Canadian Climate Institute, 2023). Across interviews, workshops and engagement sessions, participants consistently identified:

- lost revenue due to cancellations and reduced visitation
- increased operating costs during and after events
- ongoing cash flow pressures, particularly for seasonal businesses

Impacts vary across subsectors. While some accommodations may maintain occupancy during emergencies by hosting evacuees or response personnel, tours, events and attractions often experience immediate and sustained losses. These uneven impacts complicate recovery and highlight the need for more nuanced support mechanisms, like low-interest loans and grants to sustain operations during disruptions that are acutely felt by tourism.

In the Yukon, there is currently limited ability to quantify tourism-specific impacts. This limits the ability to advocate for targeted recovery measures. Without clear data, the broader economic implications of disruptions to tourism remain underrepresented in decision making about recovery. Formalizing economic impact assessments could enable faster and targeted support for the sector.

Insurance is becoming more expensive and there are gaps in coverage for tourism operators

Insurance was identified across all research streams as a critical and growing challenge.

Participants described:

- limited coverage for indirect impacts such as smoke, perception of risk or access disruptions
- increasing premiums and reduced availability of coverage across the country
- uncertainty regarding eligibility and claims processes

In some cases, operators reported that insurance is becoming unaffordable or inaccessible. Where coverage does exist, it is often tied to physical damage thresholds, excluding many of the most common tourism impacts such as cancellations, closures due to advisories or reduced visitation linked to perception. For visitors, travel insurance often requires specific travel advisories or emergency orders – so evacuation alerts and smoke events don't qualify.

This creates a disconnect between how impacts are experienced by the tourism sector and how support systems are structured. As a result, many operators absorb financial losses without access to meaningful support. These findings point to an opportunity to:

- expand eligibility criteria for government and insurance support programs to include business disruption
- improve clarity and accessibility of insurance products
- provide guidance and tools to help operators understand and manage risk

Strategic destination marketing is critical for tourism recovery

Emergency events influence visitor perceptions and travel decisions beyond the immediate event period. Media stories and social media posts outlive disaster impacts, and recovery efforts rarely make the news. Recovery from emergency events requires strong campaigns to let visitors know that destinations are safe and ready to welcome them.

Participants identified challenges related to:

- communicating that destination remained open or safe
- managing media narratives focused on risk and negative visitor experiences
- rebuilding visitor confidence

At the same time, experiences during and after emergencies can shape long term perceptions. Visitors who feel informed and supported may be more likely to return or share positive experiences. Marketing needs to balance the goal of attracting visitors, with managing expectations in communities where services may still be limited or attractions have been affected. This underscores the importance of coordinated communication and recovery strategies that balance transparency with confidence. This doesn't need to be developed on the fly, strategic messages can be crafted during planning and exercises, and refined to suit different situations.

Summary of Findings

Across all lines of evidence, a consistent and critical insight emerges: tourism in the Yukon is both highly exposed to emergency events and an under recognized partner in managing them. While tourism operators already play essential roles across preparedness, response and recovery, this contribution is largely informal, unevenly supported and not systematically integrated into emergency management structures. Key gaps persist in governance, data, preparedness, communication and recovery planning, limiting the sector's ability to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from disruptions. These gaps are closely linked to the absence of a comprehensive, coordinated and well-resourced emergency management framework in the Yukon, which currently constrains the ability to fully integrate tourism and other sectors into a whole-of-society approach.

At the same time, strong local relationships, adaptive operators and community based responses in the territory and across the country demonstrate significant existing capacity and roles for the tourism sector. The priorities of Canada's Emergency Management Strategy highlight a clear opportunity to move from ad hoc engagement of tourism stakeholders toward a more coordinated, proactive and systems based approach that strengthens resilience for visitors, businesses and communities alike. This work will take time and sustained collaboration, but there are immediate, practical actions that can be taken to begin this transition and to build momentum toward a more resilient and integrated system.

Recommendations for Strengthening Tourism Sector Resilience

The breadth of gaps and opportunities identified in this study will require coordinated action and sustained investment across government, industry and communities. This includes formalizing roles, strengthening regional coordination, improving data and decision-making tools, and providing targeted supports for operators. A resilient future for tourism is also inherently tied to broader systems, including infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing. Achieving this vision will take time. It represents a long-term shift in how tourism is integrated into emergency management, and will require ongoing commitment across multiple sectors.

At the same time, emergency events are already affecting the Yukon, and there is an urgent need to reduce impacts on visitors, operators and the reputation of the tourism sector. While foundational gaps remain, there are practical and achievable actions that can be advanced immediately to strengthen preparedness, improve coordination and better support tourism operators and communities.

The nine recommendations that follow must be evaluated and prioritized by TIAY, the Government of Yukon and many partners. They are grounded in the recognition that, in a future shaped by more frequent and severe emergencies, tourism must be positioned as an active partner across the full emergency management cycle. This includes not only response, but also preparedness, mitigation and recovery. Strengthening this role is closely connected to broader efforts to advance a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to emergency management in the Yukon, one that meaningfully integrates tourism and other sector, in alignment with Canada's Emergency Management Strategy (See Appendix 4 for table illustrating the alignment of the recommendations with Canada's 5 EM Priorities).

Table 5 summarizes the recommendations and implementation pathways, while a detailed table and phased implementation guide are included in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 5: Summary of Recommendations: Towards a Prepared and Resilient Tourism Sector

1. Establish a tourism emergency management working group co-led by TIAY and YG TC <i>This foundational recommendation prioritizes subsequent actions, allocates budget, assigns roles and responsibilities and oversees project implementation.</i>
2. Strengthen tourism sector integration in Yukon's emergency management plans and structures. <i>Contribute to the transition of EM in the Yukon from response-oriented to a proactive, whole-of-society emergency management that explicitly recognizes and includes visitors and the tourism sector.</i>
3. Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships <i>Building on the Dawson experience, build community relationships, offset economic impacts and enhance regional and sector preparedness through targeted coordination and planning at a regional scale, including leveraging the territory's six Visitor Information Centres.</i>
4. Improve tourism data and situational awareness <i>Explore options to enhance real-time data to inform emergency planning, decisions and situational awareness, and improve data collection before, during and after emergencies to better understand impacts of events on visitor perception, operators and communities.</i>
5. Invest in training and exercises to build emergency management literacy among key partners <i>Strengthen tourism emergency management literacy through joint training and exercises for TIAY, Tourism Yukon alongside emergency management partners.</i>
6. Develop a tourism emergency preparedness / climate readiness program for operators <i>Provide Yukon-specific guidance, training and funding for operators to support business continuity and emergency planning, hazard mitigation and preparedness, and specific capacity for TIAY and Tourism Yukon to support operators directly through high impact emergency events.</i>
7. Develop a strategic approach for emergency communications <i>Leverage existing communications and tools from other jurisdictions to develop a Yukon-specific suite of visitor guides, tools and messages and integrate strategic emergency preparedness, response and recovery into destination management</i>
8. Strengthen tourism recovery planning and capacity <i>Identify tourism recovery best practices for implementation in a tourism recovery strategy, advocate for investment in and coordination of recovery plans across the Yukon, and promote the role of resilient tourism in community social and economic recovery.</i>
9. Integrate assessment of climate change and future risks into the next Tourism Development Strategy <i>Assess potential impacts of climate projections and hazard scenarios, identify methodologies and existing strategies that integrate future scenarios into strategic planning processes and develop and explore alternative future scenarios for tourism.</i>

Recommendation 1. Establish a tourism emergency management working group.

A coordinated approach to assessment and implementation of actions, co-led by the TIAY and Tourism Yukon will be essential to moving forward. This recommendation underpins the success of subsequent actions. A critical step in this will be engaging more fully with First Nations Tourism partners and other sub-sectors. Recognizing resource limitations and demands, this working group may evolve overtime through different models. Ideally staff and/ or contracted expertise is specifically resourced to lead this work.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

⇒ Confirm project resourcing and identify key partners.

- Confirm resourcing and identify internal project manager, external contractor or hybrid (PM with advisory support).
- Convene key partners to launch process (TIAY, Tourism Yukon, EMO, major operators, sector representatives, First Nations, municipalities).
- Establish project charter, objectives, roles and responsibilities.

⇒ Develop workplan and strategy leading towards integration of tourism in EM.

- Review, prioritize and assign responsibility for actions in this report across members.
- Clarify phased approach, starting with capacity building and leading towards integration of tourism in EM.
- Explore opportunities to align with / develop alongside other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen tourism sector integration in the Government of Yukon's emergency management plans and structures.

Shifting away from a response-focused emergency management approach toward one that aligns with Canada's Emergency Management Strategy and supports proactive, whole-of-government coordination will help the Government of Yukon better address complex future risks. For the tourism sector, an important next step is to expand the current EM framework to formally recognize visitors and tourism values within comprehensive emergency management. This will help support a more proactive and integrated approach.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions

⇒ Strengthen and expand Tourism's role in territorial coordination mechanisms.

- Advocate for YG EMO to revitalize the interdepartmental Emergency Coordination Group (ECG) and broader coordination processes with resources to support a whole-of-government approach to emergency preparedness, mitigation response and recovery.
- Establish active participation of the Department of Tourism and Culture in the ECG with defined responsibilities related to visitor safety, sector impacts and cultural assets.

- Enhance the role of Tourism and Culture in YG's Emergency Coordination Plan to include a clear mandate to represent visitor, sector and cultural considerations in planning and decision making.
- Create a focused role within the Department of Tourism and Culture to lead sector preparedness, coordination and recovery, and to act as a bridge between government, industry and emergency management partners.

⇒ With support of the Tourism Emergency Management Working Group, develop a Tourism Sector Emergency Management Plan.

- Define roles and actions for Tourism and Culture (and partners) across:
 - Preparedness: supporting operator readiness, disseminating risk information and developing sector tools.
 - Response: coordinating sector information, supporting visitor needs, and advising on tourism impacts during decision making.
 - Recovery: supporting business continuity, advocating for and developing funding supports (including federal disaster financial assistance), workforce stabilization and destination recovery efforts.
- Establish specific protocols related to tourism values.
 - Locating and communicating with dispersed and mobile visitors.
 - Coordinating tourism assets (e.g., accommodations, transportation) when appropriate.
 - Supporting operators facing indirect impacts (e.g., cancellations, smoke, access disruptions).

⇒ Integrate tourism into risk and planning processes.

- Recognize visitors as a specific population that must be included in effective emergency management (advocacy).
- Incorporate tourism considerations into hazard, risk and vulnerability assessments where feasible.
- Identify high-risk periods (e.g., peak summer visitation) and locations (e.g., remote corridors) to inform planning and resource allocation.
- Integrate protection of cultural and heritage assets into emergency planning and recovery approaches.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships.

For remote and smaller communities, understanding and planning for locally available resources accelerates local response while external supports mobilize. Where tensions arise due to the presence of visitors during emergency events, proactive regional planning can help mitigate threats and community concerns. In other locales, regional DMOs, chambers of commerce and tourism associations have played an important role in coordinated emergency management. The Dawson engagement session reinforced the opportunity for regional tourism coordination to contribute to emergency planning and response, but also highlighted the last-minute nature of requests to the private sector to support critical emergency tasks (like evacuations).

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

- ⇒ Building on recommendations from the Dawson workshop, pilot a coordination role for the Dawson VIC in collaboration with the KVA.
 - Pilot a regional government-industry tourism EM partnership, co-led by the KVA and Dawson VIC with support from TIAY and YG, to support and represent visitors and operators in emergency planning and response.
 - Establish and support VICs to manage a resource inventory of tourism-related assets that can be called on for support during emergencies in Dawson on behalf of interested operators.
 - Support VIC and KVA staff to participate in the Dawson Local Emergency Control Group training and exercises, in order to serve as a tourism liaison to provide critical information about visitor impacts, operator capacities, to advise on information needs, and connect to territorial tourism resources as required.
 - Explore opportunities to develop and refine this role through future emergency exercises and training.
- ⇒ Conduct regional outreach to tourism operators and emergency management representatives to assess capacity and potential for regional partnerships and coordination.
 - Explore options to host in-person emergency management and preparedness events and training at VICs.
 - Identify and develop contacts with emergency management personnel within First Nations and local governments to facilitate information sharing, partnerships, and identify opportunities to contribute to local risk assessments, joint training and emergency exercises.
 - Work with EMO and regional partners to identify ongoing planning activities that could impact / benefit from coordinated tourism engagement and explore options to contribute (ie: evacuation planning in Whitehorse).
- ⇒ Offset economic impacts of emergencies, enhance community preparedness and invest locally in emergency management capabilities through contracts with prepared and qualified tourism operators.
 - Explore and advocate for government to invest in pre-planning with tourism operators to ensure preparedness to deliver emergency support services.
 - Advocate for local and territorial emergency management organizations to establish standing contracts and rates for qualified tourism operators to prepare for and deliver support services for community emergency management where appropriate.
- ⇒ Formalize and strengthen the role of Yukon's 6 Visitor Information Centres in supporting visitors during emergency events, and providing critical information to emergency decision makers.
 - Resource VICs with emergency preparedness kits, supplies and resources for visitors relevant to the types of hazards and disruptions they are likely to experience.

- Develop and test data gathering tools to gather real-time information during emergencies, and assess impacts on visitors and destinations. This information can be used to strengthen response and recovery decisions.
- Include emergency management roles and responsibilities in job descriptions. Develop associated policies for staff care, wellbeing and support during emergency events.
- Offer crisis communications and emergency management training for seasonal staff to empower them to support visitors and emergency management efforts during emergencies.
- Develop an internal emergency management plan and training program to provide surge support for VICs during emergency events, ensuring staff are well supported.

Recommendation 4: Improve tourism data and situational awareness.

Gaps in data undermine risk assessment and capacity to plan for emergency events. This issue is pervasive across multiple facets of emergency management in the Yukon. There are some steps that TIAY and YG could take to improve tourism-related data inputs and advocate for inclusion of visitors in emergency planning.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

- ⇒ Improve data collection before, during and after emergencies to better understand impacts of events on visitor perception, operators and communities.
 - Integrate specific questions into the Visitor Exit Survey to identify how and if emergency events or disruptions affected their trips and perception.
 - Develop a standard method for post-emergency surveys to gather consistent information from operators and visitors, allowing for analysis of trends and impacts over time.
 - Gather and analyze financial and economic impacts of emergency events to inform recovery support requirements.
- ⇒ Explore options to enhance real-time data to inform emergency decisions and situational awareness.
 - Explore technologies to track occupancy rates across the Yukon, to inform evacuation planning and destination management and marketing.
 - Explore options for tracking visitor movement and locations, to better understand and mitigate risks and impacts of regional emergencies (ie: impacts of highway closures).
- ⇒ Integrate tourism data into risk and evacuation planning.
 - Call for Inclusion of visitor data in evacuation and emergency planning scenarios.
 - Advocate for integration of economic impact data into emergency and recovery planning.

Recommendation 5: Invest in training and exercises to build tourism emergency management literacy among key partners

A foundational step for TIAY and YG will be developing basic competencies in emergency management within the tourism sector, and building relationships and awareness among emergency management partners of the value, role, concerns and capabilities of the tourism sector. This relationship building and

capacity development is foundational for further integration of tourism in emergency management processes and decision making. As other TIAs and DMOs across the country also invest in capacity building, there may be opportunities for collaboration.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

- ⇒ Strengthen emergency management literacy and prepare TIAY and Government of Tourism Yukon to represent Tourism Values in emergency management through specific training for the TIAY Board, tourism association leaders, destination marketing team, visitor information centre management, and departmental leadership.
 - Deliver series of tourism emergency management literacy training and workshops, including crisis communications for tourism for key partners, designed to learn from other jurisdictions (NS and BC) but rooted in Yukon context.
 - Explore options to observe or participate in upcoming emergency management exercises and training.
- ⇒ Create opportunities to strengthen understanding of territorial and community emergency management partners regarding the risks and impacts to the tourism sector and the potential roles of tourism operators and organizations in emergency management.
 - Share and present key findings and opportunities from this report with Yukon EMO and community partners, to raise awareness of gaps and opportunities.
 - Invite EM partners to participate in Tourism Emergency Management training sessions.
 - Explore options to collaborate with Destination Management Canada and/or PTIAs to invite / host / promote a speaker's series from other jurisdictions to share experiences through webinars and speaking engagements.
- ⇒ Participate in and/or convene emergency table top exercises, training and discussions, to build EM literacy, collaboratively explore gaps and opportunities, strengthen relationships and mutual knowledge of values and processes.
 - Conduct outreach and identify opportunities for TIAY, Tourism Yukon, VICs and/or local liaisons to observe or participate in EMO and community hosted emergency exercises and training.
 - Develop and host seasonal exercises with working group and EM partners, centring tourism values and issues.

Recommendation 6: Develop a tourism emergency preparedness / climate readiness program for operators.

Operators require clear and simple support to prepare their businesses and minimize the impacts of disruptions. While many online guides and templates exist, there is limited evidence as to the efficacy of online tools, especially for small businesses. Pairing these with specific training and funding opportunities may increase uptake.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

- ⇒ Provide guidance for operators related to business continuity planning, emergency planning, hazard specific mitigation and preparedness, insurance and disaster financial assistance.
 - Collate existing tools from other locations, review and update as required for Yukon context and niche audiences.
 - Develop and pilot emergency management resources and training through virtual or in-person opportunities; receive feedback on needs and gaps.
 - Explore options to partner with emergency management organizations to co-develop and coordinate campaigns, for example with Fire Smart Canada, or during the annual Emergency Preparedness Week.
- ⇒ Develop a funding stream for operator climate readiness and emergency preparedness.
 - Explore options for grants to support sector-specific emergency preparedness and mitigation efforts and/or to integrate resilience requirements into funding programs. This could include funding to enable staff to take part in emergency management training, local emergency exercises, development of internal emergency plans, disaster mitigation (Fire Smart, back up communications or power, emergency supply storage).
- ⇒ Develop capacity to support operators directly during high impact emergency events.
 - TIAY should develop an internal emergency management and business continuity plan, to ensure capacity to function and support operators during major events.
 - Consider assigning / contracting staff to directly support operators to navigate emergency events, including issues related to insurance, disaster assistance, evacuations and recovery.
 - Explore operator interest in supporting emergency operations and promote direct contracts with emergency management organizations that enable preparedness and offset losses.
 - Explore opportunities for staff and operators impacted by emergencies to access mental health supports.

Recommendation 7: Develop a strategic approach for emergency communications.

Clear, coordinated communication is critical to visitor safety, operator decision-making, and destination reputation. While incident information and public safety directions should always come from a common source, a tourism emergency communications plan can establish proactive strategies to minimize visitor exposure, complement and reinforce emergency information during response, and establish procedures and messages to support visitors based on their unique needs and vulnerabilities. There is an opportunity to build on examples like the “Travel Yukon Safely” guide to develop hazard specific guidance targeting unique visitor groups.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

- ⇒ Leverage existing communications and tools from other jurisdictions to develop a Yukon-specific suite of visitor guides, tools and messages related to the primary hazards visitors may face.
 - Review communications messaging and tools from other jurisdictions related to emergency preparedness for visitors and modify where appropriate for a Yukon context.

⇒ Develop basic communication protocols.

- Create emergency contact lists.
- Define how information flows in an emergency (who shares what with whom, how, why and when).
- Identify and align messaging channels.

⇒ Integrate strategic emergency preparedness, response and recovery into destination management

- Contract tourism emergency communications specialist to advise on / facilitate a tourism crisis communications strategy relevant to the hazards that the Yukon faces, visitor exposure and destination impacts.
- Develop a crisis communication tool kit for use before, during and after emergencies.
- Embed tourism crisis communications and emergency management responsibilities into destination roles, consider specific seasonal contracts for this purpose.
- Tourism Yukon should assign a liaison where appropriate to attend the ECC and /or local EOCs to support translation of emergency information into actionable messages for visitor and operators.

⇒ Monitor seasonal risks, emergency events and media to proactively assess and manage risk and provide guidance to tourism operators

- Participate in seasonal hazard updates and stakeholder calls led by YG EMO and ensure Tourism Yukon is on the distribution list for situational updates and monitoring.
- Monitor emerging risks for the sector and provide strategic advice to operators regarding crisis communications.
- During peak tourism season, consider weekly hazard updates and issues briefs translated through a tourism lens, to support strategic media and visitor experience strategies (see Appendix 3 for example Issue Brief from Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association).

Recommendation 8: Strengthen tourism recovery planning and capacity.

There is no evidence of comprehensive disaster recovery plans anywhere in the Yukon. Given the exposure of tourism operators to even minor disruptions, the lack of investment in this critical component of emergency management is concerning. In the aftermath of destructive floods and fires, recovery and rebuilding take years, and many challenges are amplified in the north. While comprehensive recovery plans are not the responsibility of TIAY or Tourism, there are actions that can contribute to more effective recovery from any range of emergencies.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

⇒ Advocate for investment in and coordination of recovery plans in the Yukon

- Call on the Governments of Yukon and Canada to meaningfully invest in disaster recovery planning, including economic recovery, that account for the Yukon's exceptional logistics challenges.
- Call on Government of Yukon to establish a disaster recovery working group to learn from and act on evidence from fires and floods across the country, and especially in the North.

⇒ Gather information quickly in the aftermath of emergencies

- Tourism representatives should participate in After Action Reviews and event debriefs to ensure economic and visitor impacts are accounted for in reviews and improvement strategies.
- Develop a process for tourism sector outreach and emergency debriefs, to immediately gather information critical to recovery.

⇒ Identify tourism recovery best practices for implementation in a tourism recovery strategy

- Explore and learn from Destination Management campaigns to redirect and /or promote tourism in the aftermath of emergency events.
- Advocate for / develop quickly deployable financial recovery and resilience packages for operators impacted by emergency events.
- Explore opportunities / advocate for low-interest loans or grants to support operators to withstand impacts of disruptions not covered by insurance or federal assistance (for example, cancellations due to smoke or evacuation alerts, increased labour costs during highway closures).

⇒ Promote the role of resilient tourism in community social and economic recovery

- Explore options for impacted operators and service providers to be integrated into community disaster recovery plans, to offset financial impacts.
- Explore and advocate for specific supports for seasonal staff housing and tourist accommodations in the aftermath of emergency events, as a critical foundation for economic recovery.

Recommendation 9: Integrate future risks and disruptions into the Yukon's next strategic tourism development plan.

Climate hazards and emergencies are just one category of threat that will inevitably impact the resilience of the tourism sector. Across the country, tourism organizations are intentionally designing strategies to acknowledge and build resilience to uncertain futures. As the end of the 10-year strategy approaches, there is an opportunity, and need, to approach the future with eyes wide open, and build in transformative actions to adapt to emerging risks.

Implementation Pathway and Supporting Actions:

⇒ Assess potential impacts of climate projections and hazard scenarios

- Engage sub-sectors to clarify unique exposures and capabilities for different hazard scenarios.

⇒ Identify methodologies and existing strategies that integrate future scenarios into strategic planning processes

- Review methods from tourism organizations that have integrated alternative futures into tourism strategy (ie: Destination Canada, Tourism Vancouver).
- Explore arctic futures materials to identify potential changes and critical uncertainties.

⇒ Develop and explore alternative future scenarios for tourism in the Yukon

- Convene stakeholders to review trends and create alternative future scenarios.
- Explore implications of different futures for tourism.
- Identify and prioritize resilience measures across alternative futures.

Conclusion

Resilient and responsible tourism has an important role in the future of Yukon communities. Effective tourism emergency management is built on shared understanding of emergency management concepts, strong governance and coordination mechanisms, and clearly defined roles that reflect the realities of northern and remote contexts. The recommendations outlined above identify practical steps that TIAY and its partners can take now to build capacity, strengthen sector preparedness, in addition to longer term efforts to lay the foundation for a more coordinated and integrated tourism emergency management framework over time. This journey will take time, commitment and continuous learning, and will rely on partnerships within the territory and across the country. There is a tremendous opportunity to leverage the inherent resilience of Yukoners to facilitate a positive future for all of us.

References

- Agrawal, N. (2024). Is the Canadian emergency management system prepared for evolving threats? In A. Ahmad (Ed.), *Securing Canada's future: Vital insights from women experts* (pp. 125–137). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487542047-010>
- Bush, E., & Lemmen, D. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Canada's changing climate report*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada.
- CBC News. (2025, June 10). *Freeing up hotel rooms for wildfire evacuees could hurt business but is understandable: Winnipeg Chamber*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/travel-cancellations-wildfires-hotels-1.7557200>
- Canadian Climate Institute (2023) *Risk and Return on Investment Tool*. <https://climateriskinstitute.ca/rroit/>
- Council of Canadian Academies. (2022). *Building a resilient Canada: The expert panel on disaster resilience*. Ottawa, ON: Council of Canadian Academies. <https://cca-reports.ca/reports/building-a-resilient-canada/>
- Destination Think. (2025, March 5). *Jasper, Alberta's 2024 wildfires: Lessons in tourism recovery and crisis management*. <https://destinationthink.com/blog/jasper-alberta-2024-wildfires-lessons-in-tourism-recovery-and-crisis-management/>
- Danzi, L., Orchiston, C., Higham, J., & Baggio, R. (2024). *Tourism disaster management: A social network analysis of nature-based destinations in Aotearoa New Zealand*. *Journal of Travel Research*, 1–28.
- Government of British Columbia (2022) *Tourism Emergency Management Framework* https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/tourism-and-immigration/tourism-industry-resources/tourism_emergency_management_framework_may_2022_final.pdf
- Government of Canada. (2024). *Emergency management strategy for Canada: Toward a resilient 2030—Progress report*. Public Safety Canada. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/>
- Government of Canada. (2022). *Canada 365: Welcoming the world. Every day. Federal tourism growth strategy*. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-tourism-sector/en/canada-365-welcoming-world-every-day-federal-tourism-growth-strategy>
- Government of Prince Edward Island. (2023). *Post-tropical storm Fiona after action report*. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/post-tropical_storm_fiona_after_action_report_2023.pdf
- Government of Yukon. (2011) Government of Yukon Emergency Coordination Plan.
- Government of Yukon. (2026). *Yukon tourism indicators: Economic overview*. <https://open-data-static-files.service.yukon.ca/tourism-indicators/economic-overview.html>

Goldstein, D., & Jensen, J. (2025). *Sendai as a guiding force within Canadian provincial and territorial emergency management* (RAND Working Paper Series). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=5128678> <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5128678>

Haldane, E., MacDonald, L., Kressin, N., Furlotte, Z., Kinay, P., Guild, R., & Wang, X. (2023). Sustainable tourism in the face of climate change: An overview of Prince Edward Island. *Sustainability*, 15(5), 4463. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15054463>

Henstra, D., & Thistlethwaite, J. (2017). *Climate change, floods, and municipal risk governance in Canada*. Canadian Water Resources Journal / Revue canadienne des ressources hydriques, 42(2), 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07011784.2017.1306950>

Li-Wei Liu, Pahrudin Pahrudin, Cheng-Yu Tsai, Lee Hao (2024) *Disaster, risk and crises in tourism and hospitality field: A pathway toward tourism and hospitality management framework for resilience and recovery process*, Natural Hazards Research, Volume 4, Issue 4. Pages 653-668

Mercer, G., & Andrew-Gee, E. (2022, September 27). Atlantic Canada takes stock of devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona's wrath. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-post-tropical-storm-fiona-east-coast-canada/>

Municipality of Jasper. (2025). *2024 Jasper wildfire complex municipal after-action review*. Prepared by Satya Inc. & Respond Planning and Communications Inc. <https://jasper-alberta.ca/>

Parks Canada (2024 Oct) *Rebuilding after the fire: Government of Canada announces rent relief for Jasper National Park lessees and licensees*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2024/10/rebuilding-after-the-fire-government-of-canada-announces-rent-relief-for-jasper-national-park-lessees-and-licensees.html>

Parks Canada, & Municipality of Jasper. (2025). *Jasper recovery framework*. Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre. Government of Canada. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2025/pc/R64-623-2025-eng.pdf

Parks Canada, & Municipality of Jasper. (2025). *Year one progress report: August 2024 to July 2025*. Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre. <https://parks.canada.ca/> Public Safety Canada. (2019). *Emergency management strategy for Canada: Toward a resilient 2030*.

Public Safety Canada. (2019). *An emergency management framework for Canada* (3rd ed.).

Public Safety Canada (2025) *Guidelines for the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements*. <https://publicsafety.gc.ca/cng/mrgnc-mngmnt/rcvr-dsstrs/dsstr-fnncl-ssstnc-rrngmnts/2-25/dfaa-gdlns-en.aspx#a1>

Rabson, Mia. (2024 May 15) *Wildfires, climate change creating challenges for Canadian tourism industry*. CBC News. www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/wildfires-climate-change-creating-challenges-for-canadian-tourism-industry-1.7205625#:~:text=Beth%20Potter%2C%20president%20of%20the,have%20a%20%22large%20impact.%22

Travel Alberta (2025) *Alberta: Preparing Alberta's Tourism Sector*
<https://industry.travelalberta.com/resources/emergency-management>

Tourism Nova Scotia (2025) *Nova Scotia*: <https://tourismns.ca/tourism-business-tools-resources/support-emergency-response>

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030*.

United Nations. (2015). *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030: Adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction*.

Natural Resources Canada. (2026). *Climate change and wildfire*. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/wildland-fires/climate-change-wildland-fire>

The Place Brand Observer. (2025). *RepCore nations 2025 ranking: How the world views its leading economies*. <https://placebrandobserver.com/repcore-nations-2025-ranking-reputation-results/>

Appendix 1: Detailed Recommendation Table with Actions

Recommendation	Implementation Pathway	Supporting Actions
1. Establish a tourism emergency management working group co-led by TIAY and YG TC	Confirm project resourcing and identify key partners	• Confirm resourcing and identify internal project manager, external contractor or hybrid (PM with advisory support) • Convene key partners to launch process (TIAY, YG T&C, EMO, major operators, sector representatives, First Nations, municipalities) • Establish project charter, objectives, roles and responsibilities
	Develop workplan and strategy leading towards integration of tourism in EM	• Review report, prioritize recommendations and assign responsibilities for actions in this report across members. • Clarify phased approach, starting with capacity building and leading towards integration of tourism in EM • Explore opportunities to align with / develop alongside other jurisdictions
2. Strengthen tourism sector integration in the Government of Yukon's emergency management plans and structures.	Strengthen and expand Tourism's role in Territorial Coordination Mechanisms	• Advocate for YG EMO to revitalize the interdepartmental Emergency Coordination Group (ECG) and broader coordination processes with resources to support a whole-of-government approach to emergency preparedness, mitigation response and recovery. • Establish active participation of the Department of Tourism and Culture in the ECG with defined responsibilities related to visitor safety, sector impacts and cultural assets • Enhance the role of Tourism and Culture in YG's Emergency Coordination Plan to include a clear mandate to represent visitor, sector and cultural considerations in planning and decision making. • Create a focused role within the Department of Tourism and Culture to lead sector preparedness, coordination and recovery, and to act as a bridge between government, industry and emergency management partners.
	With support of the Tourism Emergency Management Working Group, develop a Tourism Sector Emergency Management Plan	• Define roles and actions for Tourism and Culture (and partners) across: ○ Preparedness: supporting operator readiness, disseminating risk information and developing sector tools ○ Response: coordinating sector information, supporting visitor needs, and advising on tourism impacts during decision making ○ Recovery: supporting business continuity, advocating for and developing funding supports (including federal disaster financial assistance), workforce stabilization and destination recovery efforts • Establish specific protocols related to tourism values. ○ Locating and communicating with dispersed and mobile visitors ○ Coordinating tourism assets (e.g., accommodations, transportation) when appropriate ○ Supporting operators facing indirect impacts (e.g., cancellations, smoke, access disruptions)
	Integrate tourism into risk and planning processes.	• Recognize visitors as a specific population that must be included in effective emergency management (advocacy) • Incorporate tourism considerations into hazard, risk and vulnerability assessments where feasible • Identify high-risk periods (e.g., peak summer visitation) and locations (e.g., remote corridors) to inform planning and resource allocation • Integrate protection of cultural and heritage assets into emergency planning and recovery approaches
3. Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships	Building on recommendations from the Dawson workshop, pilot a coordination role for the Dawson VIC in collaboration with the KVA	• Pilot a regional government-industry tourism EM partnership, co-led by the KVA and Dawson VIC with support from TIAY and YG, to support and represent visitors and operators in emergency planning and response • Establish and support VICs to manage a resource inventory of tourism-related assets that can be called on for support during emergencies in Dawson on behalf of interested operators • Support VIC and KVA staff to participate in the Dawson Local Emergency Control Group training and exercises, in order to serve as a tourism liaison to provide critical information about visitor impacts, operator capacities, to advise on information needs, and connect to territorial tourism resources as required • Explore opportunities to develop and refine this role through future emergency exercises and training

	Conduct regional outreach to tourism operators and emergency management representatives to assess capacity and potential for regional partnerships and coordination	• Explore options to host in-person emergency management and preparedness events and training at VICs • Identify and develop contacts with emergency management personnel within local governments and First Nations, to facilitate information sharing, partnerships, and identify opportunities to contribute to local risk assessments, joint training and emergency exercises • Work with EMO and regional partners to identify ongoing planning activities that could impact / benefit from coordinated tourism engagement and explore options to contribute (ie: evacuation planning in Whitehorse)
	Offset economic impacts of emergencies, enhance community preparedness and invest locally in emergency management capabilities through contracts with prepared and qualified tourism operators	• Explore and advocate for government to invest in pre-planning with tourism operators to ensure preparedness to deliver emergency support services. • Advocate for local and territorial emergency management organizations to establish standing contracts and rates for qualified tourism operators to prepare for and deliver support services for community emergency management where appropriate.
	Formalize and strengthen the role of Yukon's 6 Visitor Information Centres in supporting visitors during emergency events, and providing critical information to emergency decision makers	• Resource VICs with emergency preparedness kits, supplies and resources for visitors relevant to the types of hazards and disruptions they are likely to experience • Develop and test data gathering tools to gather real-time information during emergencies, and assess impacts on visitors and destinations. This information can be used to strengthen response and recovery decisions • Include emergency management roles and responsibilities in job descriptions. Develop associated policies for staff care, wellbeing and support during emergency events • Offer crisis communications and emergency management training for seasonal staff to empower them to support visitors and emergency management efforts during emergencies • Develop an internal emergency management plan and training program to provide surge support for VICs during emergency events, ensuring staff are well supported
4. Improve tourism data and situational awareness	Improve data collection before, during and after emergencies to better understand impacts of events on visitor perception, operators and communities	• Integrate specific questions into the Visitor Exit Survey to identify how and if emergency events or disruptions affected their trips and perception • Develop a standard method for post-emergency surveys to gather consistent information from operators and visitors, allowing for analysis of trends and impacts over time • Gather and analyze financial and economic impacts of emergency events to inform recovery support requirements
	Explore options to enhance real-time data to inform emergency decisions and situational awareness	• Explore technologies to track occupancy rates across the Yukon, to inform evacuation planning and destination management and marketing • Explore options for tracking visitor movement and locations, to better understand and mitigate risks and impacts of regional emergencies
	Integrate tourism data into risk and evacuation planning	• Call for Inclusion of visitor data in evacuation and emergency planning scenarios • Advocate for integration of economic impact data into emergency and recovery planning
5. Invest in training and exercises to build emergency management literacy among key partners	Strengthen emergency management literacy and prepare TIAY and Government of Yukon T&C to represent Tourism Values in emergency management through specific training	• Deliver series of tourism emergency management literacy training and workshops, including crisis communications for tourism for key partners, designed to learn from other jurisdictions (NS and BC) but rooted in Yukon context • Explore options to observe or participate in upcoming emergency management exercises and training

	Enhance literacy or EM partners regarding risk, impacts and role of tourism in EM.	• Share and present key findings and opportunities from this report with Yukon EMO and community partners, to raise awareness of gaps and opportunities • Invite EM partners to participate in Tourism Emergency Management training sessions • Explore options to collaborate with Destination Management Canada and/or PTTIAs to invite / host / promote a speaker's series from other jurisdictions to share experiences through webinars and speaking engagements
	Participate in and/or convene emergency table top exercises, training and discussions, to build EM literacy, collaboratively explore gaps and opportunities, strengthen relationships and mutual knowledge of values and processes.	• Conduct outreach and identify opportunities for TIAY, T&C, VICs and/or local liaisons to observe or participate in EMO and community hosted emergency exercises and training • Develop and host seasonal exercises with working group and EM partners, centring tourism values and issues
6. Develop a tourism emergency preparedness / climate readiness program for operators.	Provide guidance for operators related to business continuity planning, emergency planning, hazard specific mitigation and preparedness, insurance and disaster financial assistance.	• Collate existing tools from other locations, review and update as required for Yukon context and niche audiences • Develop and pilot emergency management resources and training through virtual or in-person opportunities; receive feedback on needs and gaps • Explore options to partner emergency management organizations to co-develop and coordinate campaigns, for example with Fire Smart Canada, or during the annual Emergency Preparedness Week
	Develop a funding stream for operator climate readiness and emergency preparedness	• Explore options for grants to support sector-specific emergency preparedness and mitigation efforts and/or to integrate resilience requirements into funding programs. This could include funding to enable staff to take part in emergency management training, local emergency exercises, development of internal emergency plans, disaster mitigation (Fire Smart, back up communications or power, emergency supply storage)
	Develop capacity to support operators directly during high impact events.	• TIAY should develop an internal emergency management and business continuity plan, to ensure capacity to support operators during major events • Consider assigning / contracting staff to directly support operators to navigate emergency events, including issues related to insurance, disaster assistance, evacuations and recovery • Explore operator interest in supporting emergency operations and promote direct contracts with emergency management organizations that enable preparedness and offset losses • Explore opportunities for staff and operators impacted by emergencies to access mental health supports
7. Develop a strategic approach for emergency communications	Leverage existing communications and tools from other jurisdictions to develop a Yukon-specific suite of visitor guides, tools and messages related to the primary hazards visitors may face	• Review communications messaging and tools from other jurisdictions related to emergency preparedness for visitors and modify where appropriate for a Yukon context
	Develop basic communication protocols	• Create emergency contact lists • Define how information flows in an emergency (who shares what with whom, how, why and when) • Identify and align messaging channels

	Integrate strategic emergency preparedness, response and recovery into destination management	- Contract tourism emergency communications specialist to advise on / facilitate a tourism crisis communications strategy relevant to the hazards that the Yukon faces, visitor exposure and destination impacts - Develop a crisis communication tool kit for use before, during and after emergencies - Embed tourism crisis communications and emergency management responsibilities into destination roles, consider specific seasonal contracts for this purpose - Tourism Yukon should assign a liaison where appropriate to attend the ECC and /or local EOCs to support translation of emergency information into actionable messages for visitor and operators
	Monitor seasonal risks, emergency events and media to proactively assess and manage risk and provide guidance to tourism operators	- Participate in seasonal hazard updates and stakeholder calls led by YG EMO and ensure Tourism Yukon is on the distribution list for situational updates and monitoring - Monitor emerging risks for the sector and provide strategic advice to operators regarding crisis communications - During peak tourism season, consider weekly hazard updates and issues briefs translated through a tourism lens, to support strategic media and visitor experience strategies (see Appendix X for example Issue Brief from Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association)
8. Strengthen tourism recovery planning and capacity	Advocate for investment in and coordination of recovery plans in the Yukon	- Call on the Governments of Yukon and Canada to meaningfully invest in disaster recovery planning, including economic recovery, that account for the Yukon's exceptional logistics challenges - Call on Government of Yukon to establish a disaster recovery working group to learn from and act on evidence from fires and floods across the country, and especially in the North
	Gather information quickly in the aftermath of emergencies	- Tourism representatives should participate in After Action Reviews and event debriefs to ensure economic and visitor impacts are accounted for in reviews and improvement strategies - Develop a process for tourism sector outreach and emergency debriefs, to immediately gather information critical to recovery
	Identify tourism recovery best practices for implementation in a tourism recovery strategy	- Explore and learn from Destination Management campaigns to redirect and /or promote tourism in the aftermath of emergency events - Advocate for / develop quickly deployable financial recovery and resilience packages for operators impacted by emergency events - Explore opportunities / advocate for low-interest loans or grants to support operators to withstand impacts of disruptions not covered by insurance or federal assistance (for example, cancellations due to smoke or evacuation alerts, increased labour costs during highway closures)
	Promote the role of resilient tourism in community social and economic recovery	- Explore options for impacted operators and service providers to be integrated into community disaster recovery plans, to offset financial impacts - Explore and advocate for specific supports for seasonal staff housing and tourist accommodations in the aftermath of emergency events, as a critical foundation for economic recovery
9. Integrate future risks and disruptions into the next Tourism Development Strategy	Assess potential impacts of climate projections and hazard scenarios	Engage sub-sectors to clarify unique exposures and capabilities for different hazard scenarios
	Identify methodologies and existing strategies that integrate future scenarios into strategic planning processes	- Review methods from tourism organizations that have integrated alternative futures into tourism strategy (ie: Destination Canada, Tourism Vancouver) - Explore arctic futures materials to identify potential changes and critical uncertainties
	Develop future scenarios for TIAY	- Convene stakeholders to review trends and create alternative future scenarios - Explore implications of different futures for tourism - Identify and prioritize resilience measures across alternative futures

Appendix 2: Phased implementation approach, options and indicative costing

Overall approach

Recognizing that little formal tourism emergency management capacity is currently in place, implementation should be staged over time. Early phases should focus on foundational actions that are relatively low cost and achievable through existing staff time, limited contract support, and targeted coordination. More resource-intensive actions, including regional pilots, liaison roles, funding programs and recovery planning, should follow once governance and basic literacy are in place.

Caveats to this implementation approach and costing include:

- Need to clarify if future projects will be led by TIAY or YG.
- Need to confirm if communications materials are already budgeted for, underway within YG
- Need to clarify costs associated with honorariums, per diems or wages for participation of TIAY members
- There are many online /existing materials, if these are not branded/updated costs will be significantly less.
- Depending on the resources/guidance from Destination Canada Resource hub, potential for lower costs.
- While this is a phased approach, emergencies will occur, and there will be inevitable demands on the project team to respond in the moment. This will impact implementation and budgeting.
- There may be components that can be funded/reimbursed through emergency management programs, for example if YG, a municipality or First Nation contracted a liaison or tourism coordinator to support during response or recovery, this may be eligible.

Summary of implementation options / Costing

Minimal resource pathway

- Primarily existing staff time
- Small contract support for facilitation or training
- Focus on governance, literacy, protocols and limited pilots
- **Estimated first-year cost:** \$10,000–\$50,000

Hybrid pathway

- Internal lead plus part-time contractor / specialized support
- Allows progress on governance, training, communications and selected pilots
- Most realistic balance of ambition and capacity
- **Estimated first-year cost:** \$40,000–\$120,000
- **Estimated ongoing annual cost:** \$100,000–\$300,000

Dedicated capacity pathway

- Full-time or near full-time coordination role

- Contracted technical expertise where needed
- Strongest option for regional coordination, operator support and integration
- **Estimated first-year cost:** \$100,000–\$180,000
- **Estimated ongoing annual cost:** \$200,000–\$500,000+ (including grant programs)

Phase 1: Foundations and coordination

Timeframe: 0–12 months

Focus

- Establish governance and basic coordination
- Confirm resourcing model
- Build foundational EM literacy
- Develop basic communication protocols
- Launch initial outreach and pilot activities

Priority actions

- Establish tourism EM working group / committee
- Confirm internal, external or hybrid project coordination model
- Develop project charter and phased workplan
- Convene key partners
- Deliver introductory tourism EM literacy training
- Share report findings with EM partners
- Develop contact lists and basic communication protocols
- Begin adapting communications tools from other jurisdictions
- Initiate Dawson pilot discussions
- Identify opportunities to observe or participate in existing exercises

Delivery options

Option A: Existing staff / side-of-desk model – \$ 10,000 - \$30,000

Uses current TIAY and Tourism Yukon capacity with limited external support. Mainly meeting facilitation, travel, basic materials, limited external expertise

Option B: Hybrid model - \$40,000–\$90,000

Internal project lead supported by a part-time contractor or facilitator. Part-time contract support for workshop delivery, communications/protocol development

Option C: Contract-led start-up model \$75,000–\$140,000

Short-term contractor coordinates foundational work, with TIAY and Tourism Yukon providing oversight. Dedicated contract coordination, stronger facilitation and early tool development.

Budget vs. time

For all options, mostly **time**, with budget for for coordination, facilitation, travel and training support.

Phase 2: Capacity building and pilot implementation

Timeframe: 1–3 years

Focus

- Deepen literacy and relationships
- Pilot place-based coordination
- Strengthen VIC and operator preparedness roles
- Develop tourism communications tools and protocols
- Improve tourism data inputs

Priority actions

- Deliver ongoing workshops, tabletop exercises and seasonal exercises
- Pilot Dawson VIC / KVA coordination role
- Support VIC participation in local EM training and exercises
- Develop and pilot operator preparedness resources and training
- Develop crisis communication toolkit
- Explore tourism liaison participation in ECC / EOCs
- Integrate tourism-related questions into surveys and post-event debriefs
- Develop standard methods for post-emergency data collection
- Resource VICs with basic preparedness kits and visitor supports

Delivery options

Option A: Hybrid model with targeted contracts

Most realistic option. Internal leadership with contract support for specific streams such as training, communications, and pilot design.

Option B: Dedicated part-time or full-time role

A TIAY, YG or shared TIAY / YG resource leads implementation, supported by specialized contractors as needed.

Option C: Seasonal / project-based contracts

Targeted contracts for peak season communications, operator support or regional pilots.

Costing:

Lean approach: \$75,000–\$150,000 annually

Training, limited travel, pilot coordination, basic resources

Moderate approach: \$150,000–\$300,000 annually

Part-time or full-time staff lead plus contract support, stronger regional and communications work

Enhanced approach: \$300,000–\$500,000 annually

Dedicated staffing, more robust pilot delivery, broader training and applied support

Budget vs. time

Requires both **time and budget**. Most meaningful progress beyond Phase 1 will likely require some dedicated resourcing.

Phase 3: Integration and program development

Timeframe: 2–5 years

Focus

- Formalize regional and territorial roles
- Embed tourism in emergency coordination structures
- Establish operator preparedness supports and funding mechanisms
- Strengthen response and recovery capacity
- Improve real-time and post-event data

Priority actions

- Formalize tourism liaison function
- Strengthen role of all six VICs in emergency support
- Develop internal VIC surge support plan and staff policies
- Explore or establish operator preparedness funding stream
- Establish process for tourism participation in After Action Reviews
- Develop tourism recovery strategy inputs and recovery outreach process
- Explore real-time data tools such as occupancy tracking
- Align tourism EM initiatives with territorial and community planning processes

Delivery options

Option A: One dedicated coordinator plus targeted contracts

Likely the most balanced option if implementation is proceeding well.

Option B: Shared territorial-industry model

Cost-shared coordination and delivery between TIAY, YG and partners.

Option C: Program model with dedicated staff and contribution funding

More formal program structure, appropriate only if long-term investment is secured.

Costing

Basic integration model: \$200,000–\$350,000 annually

Coordinator, targeted contracts, applied tools and training

Shared program model: \$350,000–\$600,000 annually

Broader delivery, regional engagement, stronger communications and recovery supports

Expanded program model: \$600,000+ annually

Includes dedicated funding streams, grants or significant seasonal staffing supports

Budget vs. time

This phase is **budget dependent** and should only proceed once foundational governance and implementation capacity are functioning.

Costing by Priority Actions (based on quotes)

Development and Delivery of Crisis Communication Training and Workshops:

- Single workshop: approx. \$3k - \$6k
- Multi-session series or seasonal training pathway: approx. \$15k-\$35k
- Ongoing annual training program with refresh/materials / light follow-up: approx. \$35k - \$65k
- Key cost drivers tend to include the level of customization, the number and type of participants, in-person vs. virtual delivery, travel, and the expectation of supporting materials, coaching, or integration with emergency management partners.

Development of Tourism Guides and Guidance

- adapting existing emergency tools to local realities - \$30k-\$80k. (this work usually involves some combination of research, collaborator engagement, contextual translation, tool development, and implementation guidance, so the range can vary depending on how applied vs conceptual the end product is intended to be).

For seasonal or ongoing sector support (e.g., situational awareness, messaging guidance, operator support during events)

- Light advisory model: approx. \$4k-\$6k per month
- Active emergency season support: approx. \$7k-\$11k per month
- More embedded program leadership or full-year role: approx. \$95k-\$150k annually

These ranges reflect work that sits somewhere between advisory, coordination, and sector capacity-building, rather than purely communications delivery.

Closing note

Many of the early recommendations in this report do not require major new program spending, but they do require intentional coordination, staff time, leadership and modest resourcing for facilitation, training and relationship building. In the short term, a hybrid model that combines internal leadership with targeted contracted expertise is likely the most realistic approach. Over time, if tourism is to play a more formal and effective role in preparedness, response and recovery, more dedicated capacity and longer-term investment will be required.

Appendix 3: Issues Brief Example – Kootenay Rockies Tourism

The screen shot from a KRT Issue brief is the opening page to a detailed over view of issues, strategies and key messaging for operators related to the issues. This is a great way to get clear information out to impacted stakeholders and proactively align messaging to ensure safety and reputation management.

1



August 1, 2025, Issues Brief

This Issues Brief provides a summary of current and emerging conditions affecting the Kootenay Rockies region as of August 1st, 2025. Tourism partners are encouraged to check and amplify official messaging. Kootenay Rockies Tourism has compiled this brief and reflects the best available information at the time of release.

Included in this brief:

- **Natural Hazards:** Southeast Fire Centre Wildfire Status Update summation
- **Wildfire Updates:** Mount Field Wildfire – Yoho National Park; MacLeod Wildfire – near Nakusp
- **New Issues Under Observation:** Grizzly attack near West Creston

Tourism operators and community collaborators are encouraged to stay informed and adjust communications accordingly to ensure accurate, timely, and visitor-safe messaging throughout the region.

Appendix 4: Alignment of Recommendations with Canada’s Emergency Management Strategy

The table below illustrates how the recommendations proposed in this report align with Canada’s EM Strategy, thereby contributing to a whole-of-society approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction.

EM Strategy Priority	Focus	Aligned Recommendations	How Tourism Contributes
1. Enhance Whole-of-Society Collaboration and Governance	Strengthening coordination, partnerships, and integration across sectors	Recommendation 1: Establish a tourism emergency management working group Recommendation 2: Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships Recommendation 4: Invest in training and exercises	Establishes governance structures and partnerships that integrate tourism into emergency management systems. Builds relationships with governments, First Nations, and community partners, and clarifies roles and responsibilities.
2. Improve Understanding of Disaster Risks Across Society	Enhancing data, situational awareness, and risk-informed decision-making	Recommendation 3: Improve tourism data and situational awareness	Improves understanding of visitor movement, exposure, and economic impacts, supporting better risk assessments, evacuation planning, and evidence-based decision making.
3. Increase Focus on Disaster Prevention and Mitigation	Reducing risks before disasters occur	Recommendation 5: Develop a tourism emergency preparedness / climate readiness program Recommendation 8: Integrate future risks into tourism strategy	Supports proactive risk reduction by equipping operators with tools, training, and funding to mitigate hazards. Embeds climate adaptation and resilience into long-term tourism planning.
4. Enhance Disaster Response Capacity and Coordination	Strengthening response systems and capabilities	Recommendation 2: Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships Recommendation 6: Develop a strategic approach for emergency communications	Enhances real-time coordination and communication. Positions tourism organizations and assets to support response efforts, improve information flow, and assist visitors and communities during emergencies.
5. Strengthen Recovery and Build Back Better	Supporting recovery and long-term resilience	Recommendation 7: Strengthen tourism recovery planning and capacity	Strengthens economic recovery planning, improves post-event data collection, and integrates tourism into broader recovery efforts to support community wellbeing and long-term resilience.

This preliminary assessment was led by KM Resilience & Foresight Services with guidance from TIA Yukon. Katie McPherson is a Whitehorse-based resilience practitioner and emergency management professional with more than twenty years of experience in the field. Recommendations and actions for consideration have not been prioritized. They are provided for the consideration of TIAY and its partners, and should be analyzed and prioritized alongside other priorities for the sector and with input from key stakeholders.

Information and recommendations reflect the insights from study participants and available literature, however not all stakeholders were included.



Report author: Katie McPherson, MA Disaster & Emergency Management.
KM Resilience & Foresight Services
17 MacPherson Rd, Whitehorse, YT
www.resilienceandforesight.ca
katie@resilienceandforesight.ca