

RCM Presentation

Slide 1 – Thank you for that introduction. Today I am talking about Tip and tricks for reception centre manager in a small town.

Slide 2 – About presenter

Hi, my name is Sonja Krug and I am from the Lax Kw'alaams Band and live, work and play on Tsimshian territory in Terrace. I have been a volunteer with ESS for 10 years and a volunteer ESSD for 4 years with the Skeena Valley Team. I am one of three pod leaders, which is how we divide on call time with three groups within our team. We serve two firehalls for the City of Terrace and Regional District of Kitimat Stikine. My job is a bookkeeper for a company that I co-own which is similar to documentation and why I enjoy that role so much. I have been an RCM a few times, one I shared with another pod leader for a five month activation. I was deployed to PG in 2017, I haven't been deployed recently due to the pandemic. Going back to the opening slide, I picked it because I feel like opening an RC is like jumping out of a plane as you never know what to expect but it is done with a team so I feel like it was the perfect symbolism.

I figure I'd go for honesty, so I haven't presented since university so I am out of practise and a bit nervous but assure you I will do my best. I am not saying I have all the answers but I can speak from my own experience and want to encourage discussion. Regarding the format, I will go through a few slides and then we will go into break out rooms and then come back as a group to discuss and then I will finish with a few more slides. And at the end we can have more discussion time, I want to encourage you to share your experiences as well.

Before I start there are 5 documents that are relevant for being the RCM that you can access in Whova under Resources which is at the

bottom left on the menu then select Documents or click on this session in Whova and scroll down to access the documents.

- 1) PDF of billeting invoice – unfortunately Whova can only have PDF files so if you want the fillable word document, please email me and my email will be shown at the end of the presentation
- 2) JIBC – Quick Reference Guide, still says Emergency Social Services but does have relevant and useful information
- 3) My teams Registration & Rreferral statistics record in PDF format as well, please email if you want this one in Excel format
- 4) The blurb – which is what we give to evacuees and there will more on that in the presentation
- 5) RCM function checklist

Slide 3 – Before you open a RC

Planning, one of the most important topics for any emergency. First, there are floor plans, we will see an example on the next slide.

Remember to include where the electrical outlets are especially if you are using ERA. I heard some communities talk to their fire chief about the building they are going to use to ensure it is a good fit and safe. In Terrace, we use RDKS or COT buildings depending on where is being evacuated so we know they have been inspected by the fire department. Also, know who to contact, even after hours, to get the keys for the building.

Exercise – can go to reception centre site with your team. We have done this a couple of ways due to time constraints. At the site we have talked about where the team thinks each station should go. We really encouraged discussion while looking at everyone's angle. I find some out of the box thinking can come from this. We have also actually set everything up following a floor plan. I find it too hard with time (we meet for two hours monthly) to do both in one meeting, it gets rushed and the point gets lost. So we do one or the other to exercise our

plans. Another aspect of exercise is to set up your computers, printers and any other computer related equipment. Then in another meeting we do a mock exercise using ERA. All the computer equipment would be set up prior to the meeting.

It is a good practise to assign roles ahead of time. I would assign a couple people per role as people may be unavailable or on holidays when you go to open an RC. Unfortunately, evacuations happen when most people want to take their holidays in the spring and summer. This is done by knowing your team and what each person is good at. You don't have to assign all the roles; I would start with the key ones. RCM, documentation, logistics (who is going to call the hotels?) and R and R supervisor.

Slide 4 – our floor plan

This is our floor plan for Thornhill Community Centre in Terrace. This was done in 2019 by my wonderful husband who measured everything and put this into a computer program. It was done prior to ERA, this floor plan was used with paper R and R and was successful but we have set up in this building with ERA and it looked quite different so that R and R are close to the plug ins and for covid precautions. For some reason it is hard to read when I transferred into the power point, my apologies. But documentation and logistics are on the stage at the right of the screen with RCM in front of them and 5 R and R tables in front of the RCM station. The u shape we have used in another building with paper R and R and was liked by our team, I don't want to assume everyone is using ERA so I thought I would discuss both options.

Slide 5 – Picture of Thornhill Community Centre

The following 6 slides are of a RC we set up last June for flooding. We ended up using rope and tape to get the sign up there and you can't see the whole sign but it at least marks it as a RC and luckily in a small town

most people know where to go if you have set one up before in the same location.

Slide 6 – Picture of waiting area

This was our waiting area and we had a sign in for covid purposes with hand sanitizer and we had yellow tape on the floor indicating six feet apart and that was in the hallway as well. On the right of the picture is the main entrance.

Slide 7 – Picture of station

This is an R and R station. There's a laptop, pad of paper with notes (task number, what to print for documentation, envelopes to give to evacuees and post its)

Slide 8 – Documentation

On the right is my husband manning the documentation table with Debbie and Ester. You can see our ESS trailer through the open door. We used the wifi from our trailer as there is no wifi in this building.

Slide 9 – Stage

There's a large printer on the left of the stage and it has wifi capability so everyone was able to print from that. It is kept in our trailer normally. On the right of the stage are the totes, that roll thankfully, that all our computer equipment is kept in. I wasn't sure about the wifi so I brought boxes of R and R to be safe. Our task sign in sheet is kept on the stage as well and any supplies that maybe needed.

Slide 10 – Here we have a couple of R and R stations with Susan, Val and Elsa modelling. We only have two smaller printers which are with the two pod leaders. In our team they can ask my husband, Bob in documentation and if he doesn't know the answer, he will ask the RCM. They can also ask the other pod leader and the RCM. There are usually two pod leaders at a RC at one time and we figure out who amongst us

is the RCM so we job share and it works for our team. It takes good communication though to do a proper hand off. For us it's like having an RCM and a deputy RCM.

My station was right at the front and I greeted people and let them know someone will be with them shortly. Luckily, we didn't end up with any lines and most people only waited 5 minutes to get registered.

Slide 11 – break out rooms

We are going to go into break out rooms now for 15 minutes. I am asking two questions, what are you or your teams' strength and weakness (needs improvement) in a RC? I want you to think about yourself or your team so you have something from the presentation to bring back to your team. Also, to share once we are back so we can talk as a group after the break out rooms so please be prepared to share your strength and weaknesses with the group, if you are comfortable doing so. If you don't know everyone in your group please introduce yourself and where you are from. If you haven't been in a RC think of your planning process or listen to others.

Slide 12 – Tips for getting ready to open RC

-When calling people to the RC remind them to wear their ESS shirt/jacket/hat etc and to bring their ERA login and password, if that's what you are using. I find that is the most forgotten items.

-Have good signage letting evacuees know where to enter and what the covid protocols are. Hopefully your signage is up to date and says Emergency Support Services and not Emergency Social Services which is our old name, but I understand that signs are expensive.

-The RCM should wear the green vest, our team up until now hasn't done this and we will be going forward. Not for our team as they know who is in charge and who to ask questions but for the evacuees and anyone else that enters the RC, so they know. I have had team members ask me to explain to an evacuee, usually a crappy answer,

either because they weren't comfortable giving it or the evacuee needed to hear it from leadership.

My crappy answer usually goes like this: Say they are asking if there are any fuel referrals. I would say "I am sorry, at this time we are not authorized to provide those but feel free to ask if you return to the RC as what is allowed to be given out can change"

-When having your team meeting prior to opening, remember to put teammates where their strengths are. I thankfully have a team member that enjoys calling the hotels to check for availability, so I put her in charge of that and everyone goes to her. I have found that is one of the least liked jobs so to find someone is a bonus.

-After three days, it is my understanding that the task number automatically retires from ERA. For an RC you will need to call the regular EMBC number and they will need the RDM's (Regional Duty Manager) permission to put it back into ERA. So it's a good idea to check that before opening your doors.

-Have a pad of paper at each station but especially for the RCM as you will get a lot of phone calls, email correspondence and answering questions on site and will lose track of what you were working on with each interruption. Also on the pad of paper at each station I write the task number, reminder to print evacuee summary for documentation, what to write on the summary and what to enter local areas if it doesn't come up in the drop down menu (more on that later).

Slide 13 – ERA Considerations

-Before opening a RC ensure that all the technology is functioning, it helps to either have access to local authority IT personnel or better yet have a tech savvy person on the team.

-We have a fillable billet invoice in word which is handy. Each laptop has access to Teams and we have documents in there that for RC.

-Start on documentation right away. In Teams we also have the spreadsheet for Registration and Referrals statistics record and we save

one for each day. I email the daily totals to the ESS branch coordinator, in the absence of that role I email to the EPC, local authority finance person and local EMBC office. They want to know how many volunteers were there that day (use the sign in sheet), total amount spent that day, how many evacuees were registered, how many evacuees are in hotels, billeting and RV.

-To have the information to put into that spreadsheet the volunteers that are registering will print an extra evacuee summary page and write on it how many evacuees were registered per family and their ESS file number. Otherwise, you will need to go into ERA to check that for each file and only superusers have the easy search function doing this takes time and is harder to do with only one screen so we find printing the extra summary easier for documentation. Now, all of this can change when 2.0 is released but for now I am using my experience with 1.0.

-Once the evacuee summary and referrals are printed you can use an iPhone to email that to evacuees if needed using the notes app. Once in notes press the square with a pencil in it at the bottom right. Then select the camera and then select scan documents. This is especially useful if you register and/or renew over the phone, some evacuees continue to work and can't take time off to come to RC.

-When entering into ERA where evacuees are from within your local area, if it doesn't come up in the drop down menu decide what everyone should be entering. This information needs to be consistent so you can find a group of evacuees if needed by pulling a report in ERA. Especially if evacuees from a certain part of town can go home and you need to reach all of them.

Slide 14 – Opening an RC

-Don't open the doors until you are ready. I have opened them just to let people sit and let them know we will be with them shortly and have found the evacuees keep track of who is first.

-Set up RC hours as soon as you can and get the evacuees to come when it's good for you. I find on about day 3 you start to set hours, the

first couple will be long days. You especially want to set hours when doing renewals and things have quietened down. Quite often we are open 1-5pm, we display our hours in the RC with our on call number, on social media and let the local authority know so they can post it as well. Remember, quite often the evacuees have nothing to do so they can come when you set hours.

-Don't panic if evacuees have to wait, as long as they have been greeted and know someone will be with them shortly. I've had fellow team members feel badly that they had to wait and get anxious about it. I told them that they don't have anywhere else to be and we want to properly service the evacuee that is in front of us. I advise them not to look if there is a line as everyone will get served.

-Have an area that volunteers can put their personal belongings, ensure cell phones aren't left at stations unattended. Personal cell phones can be used for calculations and if they need to call hotels.

Slide 15 – Picture of folder cover

Here's a picture of a folder that we hand out to evacuees. I like this as it has our duty phone on it and reminds the evacuees that we volunteers, it looks professional, was economical and is better than the brown envelopes we were handing out before.

Slide 16 – Picture of inside folder

This is the inside of the folder, one side is for the evacuees copies and other side is the referrals to give to the suppliers. We did this after our last RC in June as we had evacuees that wouldn't give the referral to the supplier so they copied them so that they would get paid. Any pamphlets you want to give the evacuees can be included in this, how to prepare for an emergency, what to do after an evacuation and we also have a document with what to buy for incidentals if someone has lost everything.

Slide 17 – the blurb

We have created what we call “the Blurb” (read it). This helps the evacuees as they often don’t remember what is told to them and it is in easy to understand language as we took what Kat Eddy said to heart at last year’s NESST. This also helps the ESS volunteers so that each evacuee is being told the same information and helps the them remember what to say. This is given out for any level of activation in Terrace and it is put in the folder. It reminds the evacuee to give the referral to the supplier or they won’t be paid as I mentioned this was an issue during the last RC.

Slide 18 – During a RC

-One thing that we learned from last year’s RC is to check with suppliers especially as they get used to ERA. We had restaurants charging evacuees as they thought the limit was 3 people so I explained how to read the referral. And we didn’t find out until after the fact about evacuees not wanting to hand over their referrals.

-As RCM, I wouldn’t register evacuees unless it is renewal time and things are under control. Otherwise you will be interrupted with phone calls and questions while serving an evacuee.

-In my experience it doesn’t hurt to let the evacuees know we are volunteers. It changed their attitudes as most expect we are paid government employees, they are nicer/courteous and you only need to tell a few and it goes through the evacuee network quickly. Of course, only if that is the case with your team.

-Have extra supplier agreements on hand as you never know when you will need them, during our last RC we signed up 3 more suppliers. Also have RV suppliers already signed up, that seems to be asked for frequently now a days.

-Thank the volunteers as they leave and I like to acknowledge at least one thing that they did well during their shift that I appreciated. This makes me pay attention to what volunteers are doing and helps me discover what their strengths are. I find the volunteers light up when I

tell them what was noticed and appreciation goes a long way and is cheap.

Slide 19 – during a RC part 2

-Communication is key at the RC and with the EOC (emergency Operations Center). We didn't have a ESS branch coordinator in the EOC during our last RC and on Saturday we found out that the EOC decided on Friday to re-evaluate the flood on Monday morning and didn't let the RCM know which meant we could have been extending evacuees referrals all day Saturday. I ended up putting on FB to get the word out to evacuees to come back to RC Saturday or Sunday to renew. Remember to get permission before posting on social media. For internal communication, we have a binder or even a bunch of papers at the front by the task sign in sheet to put updates so volunteers can read it upon arrival and we have found that helpful.

-It is important for you as the RCM to take breaks, eat and drink plenty of water to set a good example and make certain volunteers are doing the same.

-Make sure volunteers don't express judgement in front of evacuees, we can do that in private. As ESS, evacuees shouldn't feel judged by us no matter what they decide to do. We are there to support them.

-If an evacuee is particularly upset or emotional I have checked on the volunteer to see if they need any help as the evacuees emotional state can affect the volunteer (this can be done non verbally to not interrupt the interview). And I like to check with the volunteers involved after the evacuee has left to confirm that they are ok and to give them a chance to talk about it. I encourage them to take a break or go for a walk if needed.

-One question we get asked by evacuees is if they can back home once they are evacuated. We let them know that they can't go back unless they have a pass which is normally coordinated with RCMP/EPC and local authority or they are escorted. Roads are normally blocked off

once an area is evacuated which is supposed to help with looting. You can confirm this information with the EPC or ESS Branch Coordinator.

-As RCM please remember to delegate, you don't need to do everything which I have learned the hard way. I find when a volunteer is asked to do a task that it makes them feel included and important. I am also guilty of going with what I have instead of asking for what is needed up the chain of command. At one point we only had two staplers at a RC and I was too busy to look for another stapler as I knew there were more. If I had asked another volunteer to look it would have made our lives easier or if we didn't have them to then send a request for more.

Slide 20 – Covid considerations

-Have two tables between you and the evacuee at each station. This helps with separation and makes it so the evacuee can't touch what is at your station.

-Have hand sanitizer at the door and at each station. The greeter can ensure people use the sanitizer upon entry

-Disinfect each station and public areas at regular intervals.

-Evacuees don't need to sign R and R, put COVID at the signature instead which is approved by EMBC. If you want to have them sign then you can either wipe the pens after or give them an ESS pen that they use to sign and keep.

Slide 21 – questions and discussion

At this time, I would like to open the floor for any questions or discussion. Please feel free to share your RC experiences. My email and cell number are on the screen if you wish to contact me. Thank you.