

Message from North Zone Leadership

Whether it is a flood, wildfire or COVID-19, North Zone teams are prepared and equipped to respond.

In 2020, multiple AHS teams in the North Zone responded to spring flooding in Fort Vermilion and Mackenzie County, where hundreds of residents were forced to evacuate their homes. Fort McMurray experienced significant flood damage at the same time, with more than 12,000 residents evacuated from their homes. As part of the response, AHS worked closely with municipal and provincial partners to support all northern Alberta residents; including patients and staff who were impacted.

“While already facing a healthcare challenge in responding to COVID-19, I’m incredibly proud and grateful of our healthcare teams across the North Zone. Our staff responded quickly to affected flooding communities, ensuring displaced residents had the healthcare support and services they needed,” says Gregory Cummings, Chief Zone Officer, North Zone. “It’s heartening to see that in the most challenging of times, our healthcare teams and staff come together to help those in need.”



Respiratory therapist Huan Zhang receives a COVID-19 vaccine at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Grande Prairie. Photo by Chris Beauchamp/AHS.

Flood evacuations presented a unique challenge for the North Zone who were in the midst of responding to COVID-19. Staff worked on multiple fronts to protect Albertans and minimize the risk of transmission. This included assessing, screening and testing Albertans for COVID-19, surge planning, fit testing, providing support to community outbreaks, providing support, engagement and resources to municipalities, and implementing and ensuring infection prevention and control measures were being followed at all AHS facilities.

“Our AHS staff and teams successfully worked together, alongside several community partners, to support evacuees and minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission during this challenging natural disaster,” says Dr. Albert Harmse, Acting Zone Medical Director, North Zone.

“I thank our AHS staff and teams for their passion, commitment, dedication and teamwork. Our North Zone staff and teams always rise to every occasion, and these efforts are another testament to their hard work and resiliency.”

In Fort McMurray, staff from Early Childhood Intervention, Street Connect, Public Health, Home Care, Indigenous Health, and Addiction and Mental Health supported evacuees including families, prenatal and postnatal mothers, and vulnerable populations at both the registration and evacuation centres (Oil Sands Discovery Centre, Casman Centre and Anzac Recreation Centre, respectively). Public Health nurses provided COVID-19 assessments and swabbing at the Casman Centre, while also continuing to swab residents at Fort McMurray Community Health Services, and in nearby work camps.

Zone staff focused on supporting evacuees, while ensuring their continued response to COVID-19.

Gregory Cummings
Chief Zone Officer, North Zone

Dr. Albert Harmse
Acting Zone Medical Director, North Zone

