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## Health & Safety Inspection Program

### Introduction

The purpose of this fact sheet is to describe the Health and Safety Inspection Program and how it helps property owners to safely reoccupy their homes after an emergency or disaster.

### Overview

New Brunswick, as part of its approach to disaster recovery, has developed an inspection program. In the days and weeks following a disaster, teams of inspectors visit affected properties and ensure that risks and hazards are known and understood.

The purpose of the inspections program is to ensure that property owners have the information they need to make their home or business safe for reoccupation. The inspection team provides the property owner with a report detailing what has to be done to make it safe for occupation.

If a property is occupied but deemed to be unsafe, inspectors will advise occupants to leave, where to find temporary accommodations and the necessary actions to make the home safe. Similarly, if people have been forced to evacuate, the inspectors detail what must be done before reoccupation.

### Recovery Call Centre

As part of government's post disaster communications, property owners are asked to register by calling the toll free number 1-888-298-8555. Registration triggers the inspection and provides clients access to a number of recovery services, including health and safety advice, electrical permits, electrical reconnections, well-water testing and disaster financial assistance (when offered).

### Management

The inspection process is managed by the Department of Public Safety, through the Technical Inspection Services Branch, in accordance with priorities set by the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization.

### Inspection Teams

Teams comprise of a fire inspector, an electrical inspector, environmental inspector, public health inspector and a building inspector. Gas or plumbing inspectors may be called in as needed.

Team members are drawn from the Fire Service, the Department of Environment, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Health and the Department of Public

Safety. Teams may also include contracted services (electrical inspections) and professionals from local or federal agencies.

## Inspections Process

The Fire Inspector is the first team member to enter. Using gas detectors, he checks for explosive or noxious gases from propane tanks, overturned oil tanks or gas that has leaked into floodwaters elsewhere and been transported into the building.

The next team member in is the building inspector who looks at structural damage, things like the foundation, sills and joists, load bearing walls and the overall integrity of the building.

This is followed by the electrical inspector who checks the wiring and the main electrical panel. He determines if the power needs to be disconnected, and if it was disconnected as a precautionary measure, then he can make the recommendation to reconnect.

Next, the health inspector looks for mould and sewage that may have backed up in the basement and elsewhere in the building. He also inspects the well and the septic system. Advice is offered on how to treat water and ensure that well-water is safe. The health inspector also looks at the contents of fridges and freezers and offers advice on what to keep and what to throw away.

The environment inspector checks for upset oil tanks inside or fuel tanks outside that may have been punctured, as well as for chemical contamination from hazardous materials. In the event of spills, the inspector can arrange for a spill response team.

## Inspection Reports

Inspection reports serve three purposes: they provide specific advice to property owners on how to be safe; they are used as part of the provincial damage assessment process, to prioritize government services to the most seriously affected; and they can be used to substantiate the need for urgent financial assistance to clients.

Each inspector files a report for their respective discipline and they are collated by the team leader. The summary report is retained on file with a copy given to the client.

## Financial Assistance

When government offers disaster financial assistance, the inspection report can be used to substantiate the need for immediate financial assistance. Those eligible can request an advance on their claim. When damage is substantial (\$10,000 or more), the inspector can approve an advance payment of up to \$4,000 to assist the property owner with clean-up or urgent repairs.

Inspection teams carry copies of the request form with them; clients can complete the form and the inspection team leader can approve the request on the spot. One receipt of the inspection report and request form, office staff can usually process the request within 2-3 business days.