

# Department of Emergency Management Updates

NSFM April 30, 2026

The Department has addressed significant challenges while bringing renewed focus to Emergency Management.

REMO Standards

REMO Grants

ESPF Increased

Fire Services Modernization

Public Alerting

Rural Cell Coverage

Long Lake Fire

2026 Outlook

# Resiliency



Each investment, plan, and partnership helps create a future where impacts are reduced, services are restored more quickly, and social and operational cohesion is strengthened.

Resiliency reflects:

- the ability to maintain essential functions during a crisis,
- the capacity to recover quickly and equitably, and
- the adaptability to improve and evolve based on lessons learned.

# Updates

Cellular Service in Rural Areas

Alerting

Fire Services

Vulnerable Persons Registry

# Cellular for Rural Nova Scotia



In 2023 the Cellular for Nova Scotia initiative was launched by BuildNS



\$69 million has been allocated to this project.



Phase 1: Government contracted with Rogers to install cellular equipment on 27 existing tower sites



An additional tender has been issued for further phases of enhancement, with evaluation still underway.

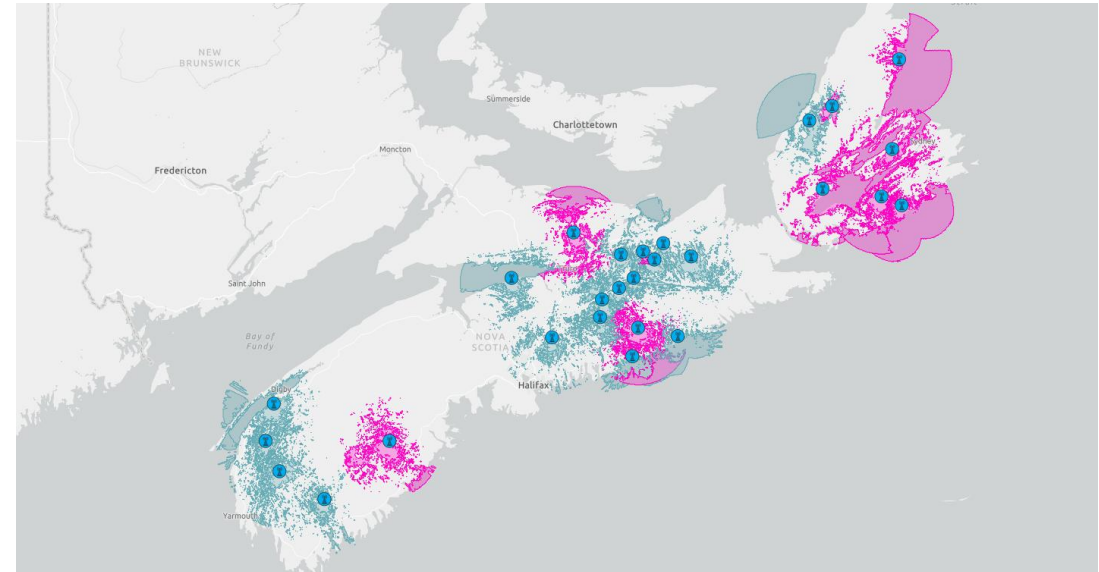


## The \$69M investment aims to provide:

- Basic voice coverage to 99% of areas where Nova Scotians live, work, learn, and travel on primary roads.
- Standard definition data coverage to 95% of these areas providing service suitable for basic video and internet browsing
- High definition data coverage to 85% of these areas

# Cellular Work Underway

- Pink shows where install work is underway
- Blue shows where new sites are already online



# NS Alert App connects more Nova Scotians

- NS Alert launched in August 2025 and is available for free download on Apple App store or Google Play store
- The current national Alert Ready system requires LTE or 5G networks, which are not available in parts of rural Nova Scotia.
- The NS Alert App works with mobile phones connected to 3G networks or Wi-Fi, providing critical information to more Nova Scotia's during events like floods, hurricanes, wildfires and public safety risks.
- Ability to receive advisory notices like frost warnings, major road closures and re-entry after an evacuation.
- All alerts issued via the National Alert Ready System will be redistributed on the NS Alert App.
- NS Alert App can translate the alert into 32 different languages.

<https://novascotia.ca/nova-scotia-emergency-alert-app>



# Ongoing Alerting Investments

- Federal investment of \$55.4 million over four years which shows the commitment to the National Public Alert System.
- NS is co-chair of Public Alerting Governance (PAG) which is one of the first tasks of this funding commitment.
- Addresses key recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission.

## Governance Model and Implementation Roadmap

### Fire Services Governance Study

Fire Services Association of Nova Scotia



# Fire Services Modernization

## Key findings:

- Fire services in Nova Scotia are highly fragmented and inconsistent across municipalities.
- Over 300 fire departments operate under multiple governance models with no single legislative framework.
- Training, dispatch, equipment standards, and firefighter health supports vary widely.
- Heavy reliance on volunteer firefighters is becoming unsustainable in many areas.

[www.fsans.ns.ca/governancereview](http://www.fsans.ns.ca/governancereview)

## Bill 186 – Support for Fire Protection Services Act



- Bill 186 creates provincewide leadership and standards for fire services. It improves training and safety oversight and supports municipalities and volunteer departments while preserving local service models.
- Creates a provincial Office of the Fire Commissioner.
- Confirms the Minister of Emergency Management as responsible for fire protection services province-wide.
- Enables provincial oversight of firefighter education and certification.
- Requires municipalities and fire service providers to review and assess local risks and determine appropriate service levels.

# What Bill 186 does *not* do

- It does **not** immediately restructure fire departments
- It does **not** mandate municipal amalgamation or full regionalization
- It does **not** impose instant compliance; implementation is phased and regulation-based



# VVPR Update

The Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry (VVPR) is a voluntary, self-referral program **administered by municipalities** for residents who may require additional support during emergency events due to their personal circumstances. It will provide important information to Emergency Management staff, volunteers and First Responders to respond appropriately to the resident's needs during emergency events such as severe weather (hurricanes, rain/snowstorms), flooding, wildfires and more.

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# What we know about VVPRs

It's a very limited group of residents using the VVPR—specifically those who have no 24-hour support and face significant barriers to safely responding on their own. Eligibility is intentionally narrow. Most people with disabilities or health conditions are supported through family, friends, home care, long-term care, or other funded service providers and are not eligible to register. VPRs are not a general registry of “at-risk” residents; they are a targeted, last-resort measure designed to assist those who would otherwise have no assistance during an emergency.

Municipality	Population (2021)	Number of People on VVPR	% of Population
HRM	417,847	350	.08
Kings Co	62,914	67	.10
Richmond Co	8,914	7*	.08
Truro	12,954	Not available	

Most municipalities with mature VPRs report registrations in the range of ~0.1% to 0.5% of the population. Even in high-risk or urban areas, registries rarely approach 1% of residents. This reflects strict eligibility criteria, not under-enrollment.

# VVPR Work Underway

- DEM supporting the following activities:
  - explore a common criteria for eligibility, application, and review processes
  - consult with legal on "Consent and Release of Information Form" and practices
  - set expectation of services when on a VVPR from municipality, REMOs, First Responders etc.
  - explore an IT platform (functionality and reports)
  - explore training needs
  - understanding roles of others during emergency events – critical infrastructure partners
  - create a Communications strategy



# DFAA Improvements

Focus on timely, transparent processing of municipal DFA claims.

Additional resources directed toward advancing outstanding claims from 2016–2021.

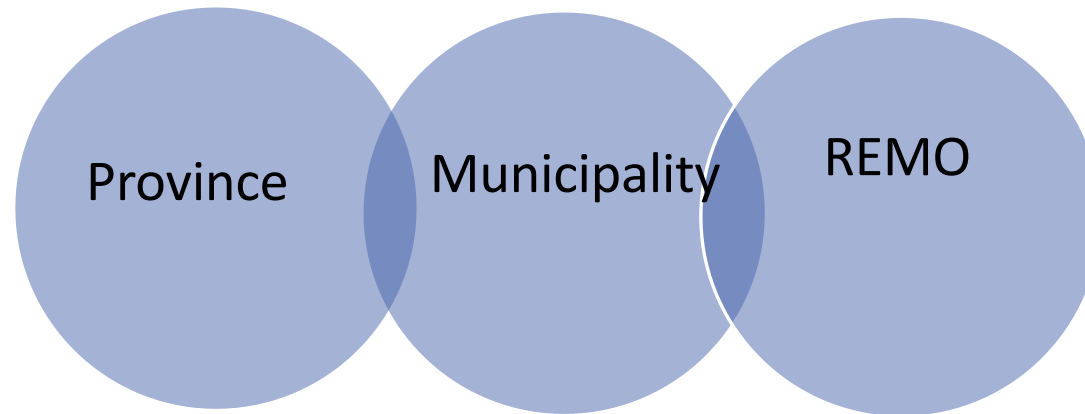
Developed improved processes to accelerate file review and decision-making.

Ongoing monitoring of all open municipal claims to ensure continued momentum.

Planned cadence of scheduled check-ins between the Disaster Recovery team and municipalities.

Commitment to proactive communication.

# REMO Standards



REMO requirements and standards are set out in legislation and regulations. The standards are intended to clearly define roles and responsibilities.

# REMO Grants 2025-2026

The purpose of the REMO Capacity Grants Program is to support and strengthen Regional Emergency Management Organizations (REMOs) by funding initiatives that build long-term capacity.

Organization	Project Summary	Amount
Colchester REMO	Funding for staff position to assist with outreach, engagement, planning, and operational readiness.	\$60,000.00
Cumberland Co. REMO	Funding for outreach position, expansion of emergency coordination centre, addition of communications and power infrastructure.	\$60,000.00
Digby REMO	Funding for generator installation to enable municipal office to be a secondary emergency coordination centre and TMR radios.	\$60,000.00
Guysborough Co. REMO	Funding to establish REMO and hire an emergency management coordinator.	\$60,000.00
Lunenburg Co. REMO	Funding for a community readiness coordinator position, training and exercising programs and equipment purchase.	\$100,000.00
Pictou Co. REMO	Funding to update operating procedures, develop training, and hire full time REMO director.	\$120,000.00
Shelburne Co. REMO	Funding to hire full-time emergency management coordinator.	\$56,250.00
HRM REMO	Develop strategic emergency management plan and program.	\$70,312.00
Western Cape Breton REMO	Funding to support REMO formation and hire full-time coordinator.	\$80,000.00
Yarmouth REMO	Funding a full-time coordinator position.	\$60,000.00
Annapolis REMO	Funding for generator for back-up server and animal care facility and equipment, technology, and supplies for emergency coordination centre.	\$49,077.90
Kings REMO	Purchase and install equipment to enhance King REMO ECC. Computers for ECC workstations strictly for REMO during ECC activation and table top exercises. This will develop and implement training and exercise program to prepare for an emergency.	\$55,000.00
\$830,639.90		

# Highlights of 2026

- NS Guard membership grew to 1,479 deployable members.
- 13 new staff hired to support regional Emergency Management Capacity.
- Over 246,700 calls for service managed by Shubenacadie Radio Communications Centre.
- 64 days of straight deployment of department resources.
- 3600 Disaster Financial Assistance claims closed.
- To help communities access their eligible funding faster, DEM has engaged an accounting firm to accelerate outstanding municipal DFA claims.
- Six type two SPU Trailers - a mobile sprinkler and pump trailer designed to help fire crews protect homes, buildings, and critical infrastructure from wildfire. It does not fight the fire front directly; it's used to defend structures ahead of or alongside a wildfire.

# Funding 2025-26

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ESPF 2025-26 Spring Campaign (Individual Organizations applications), supported 146 applications totaling **\$4,057,726.58**.

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134 applications from Volunteer FD, \$3,825,574.80

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11 GSAR applications \$202,151.78

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1 Hazmat Team \$30,000.00

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ESPF 2025-26 Fall Campaign (Regional Stream), supported 14 applications totaling: **\$1,831,963.04**

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11 supported through the ESPF funding pool \$1,267,609.54

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3 supported through the FTAC funding pool \$564,353.50

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REMO Capacity Funding Program, paid out **\$830,639.90** in project programming, supporting 12 applications.

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11 Level 1 Firefighting Training Programming applications totalling **\$397,277.00**

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Bottled Water Distribution Program supported 18 municipalities and reimbursing them at total of **\$1,094,679.87**.

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# Ground Search and Rescue Review



- Teams now support a broader range of civil emergencies beyond traditional missing-person searches, including evacuations, wellness checks, and community response.
- Launched a review to clarify roles and responsibilities and strengthen system-wide consistency, coordination, and accountability.
- Aligns with other public safety initiatives such as the Fire Services Governance Review, the Policing Review, and the Firefighters School Value-for-Money Audit.
- Engagement with 23 GSAR teams, NSGARA, HRM, municipal police, RCMP, and other emergency-management partners highlighted key themes: governance, training, equipment, and funding.
- Modernizing emergency response requires shared responsibility across the province, municipalities, partners, and volunteer responders.



# Ground Search and Rescue

Nova Scotia has 24 GSAR teams across the province. The province provides baseline annual funding and offers significant equipment and capability funding through the ESPF.

The Spring 2025 ESPF GSAR funding support totaled: \$147,468.97.

Other supports including training and search expenses totaled: **\$145,407.08.**

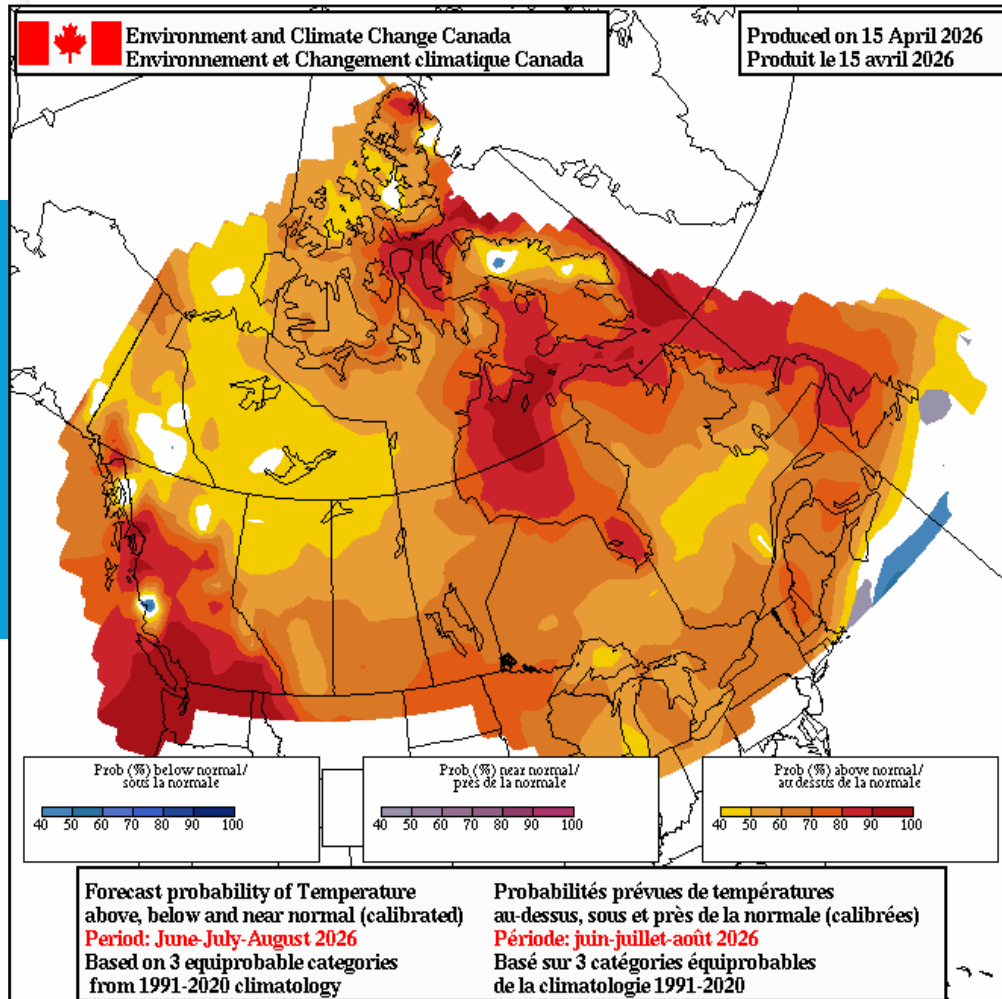
# Long Lake Fire

- Structure Protection Units (SPU) – used in Long Lake for the first time, saving more than 80 structures.
- Unified communications – DNR, DEM and the Municipality working together to address communication needs and timing.
- 37 members from the Nova Scotia Guard volunteered for 34 days/728 hours to support evacuees.
- 500 households evacuated.

Long Lake fire was our first significant test as a Department. Utilizing all three branches, we were put to the test on how we were meant to coordinate assistance while working closely with DNR, the lead department.




# Summer 2026 - Outlook



**Dryness is already widespread early in the season.**

As of April 2026, about **24% of Nova Scotia is classified as being in drought**, with an additional **46% considered “abnormally dry.”**

Conditions are most pronounced across large parts of southern and central Nova Scotia.

A photograph of a forest fire. In the foreground, there are green pine trees. In the middle ground, a fire is burning, with bright orange and yellow flames visible. Thick white and grey smoke rises from the fire, filling the upper half of the image and obscuring the background trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

# Summer 2026 – Wildfire Outlook

- No major fires right now, but conditions are primed for fast ignition and spread
- Nearly half the province is already abnormally dry  
Province-wide burn restrictions are fully in effect today
- We are very cautious, given last summer's severe wildfire impacts