

Edmonton opens hearts and hands for McMurray evacuees

A City of Edmonton Reception Centre has helped more than 8,000 evacuees forced out of their homes this week by the devastating wildfire that has engulfed Fort McMurray and region.

Tens of thousands of evacuees from the northern city and nearby communities streamed into Edmonton by air and by road. Most found refuge with friends and family or in other destinations, but many headed for the City's Reception Centre. Since the centre opened at Northlands Expo Centre May 4:

- 8,000 evacuees have visited the centre
- 2,000 of those evacuees required clothing and other items and services
- 1,800 of those evacuees are staying at the centre

The University of Alberta is also providing accommodation for some evacuees, but to ensure the response effort is coordinated, all evacuees needing lodging are asked to go to the City's Emergency Reception Centre at Northlands where they will be looked after.

The City of Edmonton and its employees are front and centre with a full range of support for Fort McMurray and the evacuees.

Edmonton Fire Rescue Services

- Two deployments with a total of 57 firefighters and support crew have been working alongside Fort McMurray crews since early morning May 4.

Assistance at the Emergency Reception Centre

- Free short-term shelter and care for pets, and arrangements for longer-term care. Also pick-up and care of animals that cannot stay in the owners' hotel rooms.
- Entertainment and activities for children.
- Coordination and distribution of purchased and donated clothing, hygiene kits, car seats and much more.

Other City Supports

- Digital road signage to help drivers find their way to the Emergency Reception Centre
- Buses to transport evacuees from Edmonton International Airport
- Free ETS bus passes
- Free admission to recreation centres and some major City attractions
- Coordination of donations from cities across the country
- Liaison and information-sharing with eight other concerned Alberta municipalities
- Liaison with partner agencies, including Red Cross and Edmonton Emergency Relief Services

Citizens and organizations have also stepped up en masse with donations of everything from money and clothing to discounted hotel rooms and restaurant meals to free orchestra concerts and children's activities.

For more information:

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