

REVELSTOKE.

TOURISM TALKS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

As we write this column, California is suffering from severe flooding in the wake of wild winter storms, another extreme weather pattern for a state that has been hit with droughts and wildfires over the last few years.

The Think Revelstoke podcast recently had an opportunity to speak with Dr. Mike Flannigan, British Columbia Research Chair in Predictive Services, Emergency Management and Fire Science at Thompson Rivers University.

According to Dr. Flannigan, wildfire is a risk for almost everywhere in British Columbia. "I was expecting to see a lot of fire, but I wasn't expecting to see it this quickly." The patterns of wildfire and extreme heat we have seen over the last few years are not isolated. We can expect more weather of that nature going forward.



"No one has a completely accurate crystal ball; we have guesses of what may be happening, but it's changing more rapidly than we first thought."

Dr. Mike Flannigan, British Columbia Research Chair in Predictive Services, Emergency Management and Fire Science at Thompson Rivers University.

Dr. Flannigan was pragmatic in his advice and insight, and these are a few of our key takeaways from the conversation:

- A robust emergency management plan and risk assessment is necessary for our community. This plan should look at disaster risk reduction as well as ensuring that new developments and infrastructure are properly adapted for climate change.
- We need to ensure travelers are aware of risks and that our emergency communications are accessible to visitors. According to Dr. Flannigan, "Informing the traveler of what to do in the case of emergency is critical." It's important to consider communication systems that don't rely on technology or power, like community sirens. As Dr. Flannigan says, "A lot of things we rely on fail [in the event of emergency], power, water pressure, cell towers can be overloaded or burn down. You need to have a plan that's somewhat resilient to the potential emergency."
- The increased risk from wildfires is inevitable, but there are things that we as a community can do to mitigate the risk of losing our homes and community infrastructure. If we pursue the Fire Smart guidelines and undertake some key steps to deal with fuel surrounding our community, our wildfire outcomes will be better.
- In terms of our tourism economy, it would be prudent to focus on our winter and shoulder seasons. Smoke and heat may limit our ability to enjoy and share the things we love in the summer: stunning mountain views and the opportunity for outdoor activity.

To this end, Tourism Revelstoke plans to direct more of our resources towards emergency communications and planning to alleviate some of the visitor pressure on our city in times of crisis.

While the City of Revelstoke has a plan in place and a number of resources for dealing with emergency management, we intend to work with the City and other partners to develop more robust plans that account for our residents, our visitors, and our uncertain future.

Catch the full episode with Dr. Flannigan by searching for Think Revelstoke wherever you get your podcasts.

To read previous Tourism Talks columns and to learn about destination management in Revelstoke, head to destinationrevelstoke.com.