



# Fort McMurray Wildfire Emergency Communications

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# Converso Case Study

## Fort McMurray Wildfire Emergency Communications

It was the costliest natural disaster and second-largest mass evacuation in Canadian history: the Fort McMurray wildfire of 2016. The Government of Alberta needed a way to communicate directly with more than 80,000 evacuees who were scattered across the country. How did they do it?

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### The Solution

In collaboration with Converso Inc., the Government of Alberta initiated a series of 17 telephone town hall events from May 9 to June 8. These sessions brought together Alberta Wildfire, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, the Canadian Red Cross, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the RCMP and many others who were part of the response effort. Speakers included top-level government leaders - Premier Rachel Notley, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Sarah Hoffman, Minister of Municipal Affairs Danielle Larivee and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry O'Neill Carlier, among many others.

During this time, the government connected with over 161,000 total participants during seventeen, 90-minute events. By contacting evacuees on their mobile phones, or on landlines where they had relocated, the government and its partners were able to communicate up-to-the-minute information from Fort McMurray, answer evacuees' most pressing questions and, most importantly, make subject matter experts with the most up-to-date knowledge available on each event.

In an effort to protect the wireless network infrastructure, the events were concurrently live streamed over the web to desktop, tablet and mobile devices. Audio recordings from each event was also posted online, further spreading vital information and increased accessibility. The events provided correct, critical information in real-time and the interactive, personal contact from Alberta leaders and emergency experts resonated with evacuees.

During the series of events, 8,044 questions were asked by evacuees (522 were answered live) who participated for an average of 31-minutes across telephone and streaming technologies. The response from evacuees and media was highly positive and they praised the Government of Alberta and its partners for their effective communication in a time of need.

"Thank you for holding this forum, it's outstanding for the people of Alberta that are displaced to be able to be contacted this way."

- Participant

"We set up these telephone town halls in order to provide evacuees with as much information as we could in an unfiltered way."

- Minister of Municipal Affairs

### The numbers are impressive:



161,233 Participants  
Avg. 9,484 Per Event

31 Minutes



Average Duration per Participant

8,044

Participant Questions