

**Date** April 28, 2026

**Author** Adam Smallwood; Emergency Program Coordinator  
cc: Christina Carbrey

**Subject** New Financial Standards for Emergency Response & Short-Term Recovery

---

## BACKGROUND

The Financial Assistance Guidelines for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs (2005, updated 2008) for local authorities and First Nations have been replaced by the new Financial Assistance Standards (FAS) for emergency response and short-term recovery, effective April 1, 2026.

The previous guidance was developed under the Emergency Program Act and administered through the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP). With the introduction of the Emergency and Disaster Management Act, the former guidelines were considered outdated. The new standards are intended to improve consistency, clarify eligible costs, and formalize reimbursement processes.

## INFORMATION

The new Financial Assistance Standards focus on response and short-term recovery only, and do not address medium or long-term recovery. Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) has been removed from this document and will be addressed separately.

The document places a strong emphasis on reimbursing incremental costs above normal operations. The new 2026 standards appear much stricter and more explicit about eligibility, with detailed categorical rules on many aspects of emergency response. Reimbursement will be less discretionary and more rules based, and not automatic. These parameters could potentially lead to slower response (waiting for approvals) or First Nations and local governments being stuck with non-reimbursed expenses.

Expense Authorization Forms (EAFs) are strongly recommended, or required, particularly where there is uncertainty or higher-cost expenditure. EAFs are now required for specific expense types, including standby, administration overtime, purchase of equipment, and certain specialized supports such as Community Recovery Managers and psychosocial supports. The province also plans to introduce an online system for submitting EAFs and resource requests. Wage eligibility reimbursement will be stricter and potentially more limiting.

## NOTABLE CHANGES

**Standby:** Standby (on-call) hours are now eligible for reimbursement for Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) staff, provided an approved standby policy is in place that meets the requirements of the new Financial Assistance Standards. This supports sustained operations, helps maintain readiness, and may reduce reliance on overtime during extended events.

The inclusion of standby as an eligible expense was strongly advocated by the RDEK emergency management team, and a business case was presented to EMCR in support of this change. Staff are currently developing an operational standby policy to align with the new standards and support future reimbursement eligibility.

**Overtime Wages:** Overtime pay policies that are created specifically to apply only during EMCR-eligible response events are not eligible for reimbursement under the new standards.

This change is not expected to affect unionized staff, as overtime provisions are established through the collective agreement. However, it may require a review and update of overtime policy language for exempt staff to ensure alignment with the new reimbursement standards during emergencies.

**Contractors:** Consultants and contractors remain eligible for reimbursement where they are engaged to provide required response services for surge capacity or relief staffing. A key change in the new standards is that, where the contracted service is similar to work performed by internal staff, reimbursable rates may be assessed with reference to a comparable local government position.

This change may create challenges for rural and remote local governments. Private-sector rates do not necessarily align with local government pay structures, particularly in areas where the availability of qualified contractors and consultants is limited. For some specialized services, regional supply constraints, travel requirements, and the small number of available providers can significantly affect cost. As a result, the use of internal local government comparators may not always reflect actual market conditions in different parts of the province.

**Equipment Rentals and Purchases:** The new Financial Assistance Standards allow equipment or other assets to be purchased, rather than rented, when a clear business case shows that purchasing is more cost-effective. Rental remains the preferred approach; however, purchase costs may be eligible for reimbursement where the cost-benefit rationale is well documented and approved in advance through an Expense Authorization Form (EAF).

This is a positive change in the new standards, as it provides more flexibility for asset procurement during emergencies when purchasing is the more fiscally responsible option.

Attachment: EMCR Financial Assistance Standards