



Information Bulletin

Bentley Grain Elevator Fire

Update January 13, 2023

On December 23, 2022, at approximately 1:30am, it was reported that the iconic Bentley Grain Elevator was on fire. The Bentley Fire Department and Lacombe Fire Department responded immediately. The fire engulfed the grain elevator quickly and firefighting efforts focused on containment, to ensure no additional spread to the community and other buildings. The cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

Mayor and Council, along with administration have been working with the property owner and insurer to address the issue and have the site cleaned up. As this is a structure fire and is an insured structure on private property, the property owner was waiting for the insurance company to provide clearance to undertake cleanup of the site. The property owner and the insurer have been working through the process to determine and settle on coverage as well as undertake appraisals and investigations.

The fire has been controlled to a safe standard that will not cause other structure fires or ember transmission. As this is a fire that contained a significant amount of grain and pellets, it continues to burn underground. Until the pile is excavated and opened, there is no way for it to be fully extinguished. The Town of Bentley should not undertake cleanup with taxpayer dollars, as this is an issue between insurance and a private landowner. Town administration has been in contact with the insurer, and we have spoken with Alberta Health Services regarding the matter. Alberta Health Services has also been in contact with the insurance adjuster and property owner to seek clarification and expedite the matter.

We have confirmed that the property owner has received clearance from the insurer to undertake cleanup efforts. To assist with cleanup efforts, we have offered in collaboration with the Bentley Fire Department to have the Fire Department on site when the clean up takes place to ensure that any underground fires, once excavated, can be extinguished. In speaking with the property owner, the only contents in the grain elevator was grain and pellets, no chemicals, or fertilizers.

It has been 3 weeks since the fire occurred, and we ask for your patience as the property owner works to schedule the cleanup effort in the next couple of weeks. In any insurance situation regarding a structure fire, it takes time to undertake investigations, claim assessment, make plans for cleanup, and obtain quotes and pricing. The Town of Bentley has put significant pressure on the insurer and the property owner to address the situation and expedite cleanup as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Marc Fortais
Chief Administrative Officer

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