

Subject: Niagara Emergency Management Program Annual Report

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Recommendations

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with an overview of the Emergency Management Program's activities in 2024.
- The program has successfully met all compliance requirements under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA).
- The Emergency Management Program continues to develop annual strategies and work plans with the oversight of the Emergency Management Program Committee.
- Activities in 2024 included emergency management training, emergency preparedness, hazard and incident response, expanding the Community Emergency Response Team, an emergency exercise and public education.
- The Region's Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) has been formally appointed by Council, as required by the EMCPA compliance guide.

Financial Considerations

There are no additional financial implications. All programming has been delivered within the approved budget.

Analysis

In 2024, Niagara Region's Emergency Management Program made significant enhancements in preparedness and resilience through several key initiatives. A comprehensive review of these activities demonstrates a well-coordinated effort to strengthen the Region's ability to respond to emergencies, collaborate with partners, and ensure community safety. Below is a detailed examination of the key components of Niagara Region's Emergency Management Program:

Emergency Management Program Committee

The Niagara Region Emergency Management Program Committee played a key role in shaping the Region's 2024 emergency management strategy through two meetings. Topics discussed included: program updates, emergency notification systems, solar eclipse planning, and hazard assessments. These discussions helped ensure alignment on preparedness goals among Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) members.

Training

Training was a priority in 2024, with EOC staff completing mandatory annual training and over 100 Regional and municipal employees participating in various emergency management training programs including IMS 100, IMS 200, BEM, and Scribe training. This training ensured that emergency management personnel were well prepared to handle emergency situations effectively.

Solar Eclipse Emergency Preparedness

The solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, was a major event requiring extensive planning and response. The Region developed a hazard-specific Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) and a comprehensive emergency plan tailored to the event. This involved more than 100 internal and external meetings, ensuring that all relevant partners were involved. The activation of the EOC from April 7-9 ensured real time situational awareness and coordination. Over 500,000 thousand visitors to Niagara safely observed the eclipse, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Region's preparedness efforts.

Hazards and Emergency Incidents

In 2024, the Region responded to 26 incidents, including several severe weather events like thunderstorms, floods, cold alerts and notably four tornadoes that caused damage but no injuries. The program coordinated timely communication and response efforts amongst the 12 local area municipalities, including activating warming centers and providing free transit rides during extreme weather.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

CERT expanded to 150 volunteers, including 10 specializing in communications. A key upcoming initiative is the integration of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), which will enhance situational awareness and response efficiency. This advancement

will further strengthen Niagara's leadership in volunteer-based emergency response and preparedness.

Emergency Exercise

A full-scale exercise tested preparedness for the solar eclipse, involving the Regional EOC staff, CERT volunteers, and the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA). The exercise validated response plans, enhanced operational readiness, and demonstrated the region's ability to manage large-scale events.

Public Education

In 2024, the program participated in 29 community events, with 82 CERT volunteers sharing preparedness messages. 30,000 solar eclipse glasses were distributed, along with eye safety information to protect the public from eye damage during the eclipse.

Alternatives Reviewed

The Niagara Region's Emergency Management Program continuously evaluates service delivery methods to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. The current strategic direction has demonstrated success in strengthening emergency response capabilities, enhancing community resilience, and ensuring a coordinated approach to emergency management. As a result, no alternative approaches were deemed necessary at this time.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Regional Emergency Management Program plays a vital role in advancing Niagara Region's strategic priorities of being an effective Region and a Green and Resilient Region. Through robust coordination with local area municipalities, the program enhances emergency preparedness, response capabilities, and operational efficiency, directly supporting the objective on Effective Region. The program's proactive management of climate-related hazards, including severe weather events and cold alerts, reinforces the region's resilience and sustainability, aligning with the Green and Resilient Region priority. This comprehensive approach ensures that the Region is well equipped to handle future challenges while safeguarding public safety and promoting environmental sustainability.

Other Pertinent Reports

None

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