
Subject: Niagara Emergency Management Program Annual Report

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, January 14, 2020

Recommendations

That Regional Council **APPOINT** the members of the Niagara Region's Municipal Emergency Control Group by position, as required by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management.

Key Facts

- The Niagara Emergency Management Program is required under the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management's *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act Compliance Guide for Municipalities* to provide an annual report to Council on its activities.
- The *Act* requires the formation and appointment of an Emergency Control Group (ECG) responsible to direct the municipality's response in an emergency, including the implementation of the municipality's emergency response plan.
- The program has had an ECG made up of key identified positions within the Niagara Region as part of its Emergency Plan, however these positions have not historically been appointed by Council.
- This report is intended to ensure compliance with the *Act* and to provide a brief summary of the key activities of the Program in 2019.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications to this report. Emergency Management programming is included within the 2020 Niagara Region Levy Operating Budget.

Analysis

The Niagara Emergency Management program operates in accordance with legislative requirements and staff continuously monitor our compliance with any changes. The Province now requires that members of the Region's Emergency Control Group (referred to as the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) by the Province) be appointed by Council. Section 12 of the *Act* states:

Municipal emergency control group:

12. (1) Every municipality shall have a municipal emergency control group. *O. Reg. 380/04*, s. 12 (1).

- (2) The emergency control group shall be composed of,
- (a) such officials or employees of the municipality as may be appointed by the council; and
 - (b) such members of council as may be appointed by the council. *O. Reg. 380/04, s. 12*

An annex to the Region's Emergency Plan has been developed to list these positions.

These positions (or their designated alternates) are:

- Niagara Region CAO
- Commissioner Enterprise Resource Management Services
- Commissioner Public Works
- Commissioner Community Services
- Commissioner Planning & Development Services
- Commissioner Public Health and Emergency Services/Medical Officer of Health
- Director/Chief Emergency Medical Services (serves as Chief Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC))
- Director, Transportation Services
- Associate Director Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

A recommendation is provided for Council to endorse this list and thereby appoint its members.

This past year the Region's Emergency Management Program participated in a number of emergencies that occurred across the municipality.

Incidents and Responses

As of November 25, 2019, activation levels for the Niagara Region EOC were developed. These activation levels include:

- Routine monitoring
- Enhanced monitoring
- Partial activation
- Full activation.

In 2019 (as of December 23, 2019), the following numbers of incidents required activation by Niagara Region:

- Enhanced monitoring: 39 incidents
- Partial activation: 5 incidents
- Full activation: 0 incidents

Assistance to Local Municipalities

Niagara Region Emergency Management provided assistance as requested to local municipalities for a variety of purposes including emergency response to the Greenhouse Fire in St. Catharines and the October 31st windstorm that affected Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Fort Erie. Emergency information was provided to the Community Emergency Management Coordinators of the 12 municipalities for a number of potential hazardous events to ensure that they were supported. In addition, support to local municipalities was provided in training, public education and the development and review of hazard identification and risk assessment materials.

Emergency Management Committee

With the formation of the new Regional Council in early 2019, Councillor Tom Insinna was appointed as Council's representative on the Emergency Management Committee. This Committee met on three occasions on the following dates; January 15th, May 21st, and September 24th. Topics of discussion included the Region's Emergency Management Program, emergency notification software, incidents experienced in Niagara in 2019, the Building a Disaster Resilient Niagara Symposium, training, public education, flooding, and the Province's request for Host Communities. Minutes were circulated to all Committee members.

Training

The Province has created a new Instructor Certification Program for teaching Provincial Emergency Management Courses. The Emergency Management Program Specialist was identified as part of the Province's pilot project for instructor training to provide input and has been fully certified. The new Emergency Management Program Advisor is participating in the process to become certified up to Incident Management System (IMS) 200 level.

All Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) staff are required to attend annual training under the *Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)*. A variety of training opportunities were held for both new and experienced EOC staff members with the goal of enhancing emergency preparedness and response. The number of total staff trained increased in 2019 with more than 97 regional staff receiving training by taking at least one of the multiple courses offered. A basic introductory online course to emergency management was developed and rolled out to staff. This course is targeted at staff who are new to filling an EOC position. Three sessions of IMS 200 training with fifty people from both the Region and the Municipalities were held on March 25th - 26th, September 18th - 19th, and October 22nd - 23rd. A single session of Basic Emergency Management (BEM) training was held on May 8th - 9th, as requested by municipalities. A combined exercise and training session was held for all EOC staff to ensure familiarity with the Everbridge notification system and the Facility Closure Plan. While a new in-house

scribe course is being developed, Niagara Region Emergency Management partnered with the Ontario Association of Emergency Managers to run two sessions of scribe training as a temporary measure until the new training is ready for release. Both sessions were sold out and a total of 48 people attended. More than 202 people attended at least one session of Emergency Management training in 2019.

To advance the training program forward and to ensure a quality learning experience, in addition to a new scribe course, the province's IMS 200 course is undergoing a redesign by Niagara Region Emergency Management to better meet the needs of Niagara. This redesign will be submitted to the Province for approval.

In addition, a training schedule for 2020 has been developed to help guide EOC staff in achieving the desired level of training.

Public Education

Public education is a key function of emergency management programs and is mandated under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. A variety of public education initiatives were undertaken in 2019 intended to reach more people. Initiatives included:

- A two-page article on Preparedness and Hazards in Niagara featured on the front page of the Welland Tribune on April 30th.
- Emergency Management booths at Regional Headquarters, Niagara College and the St. Catharines Market on May 6th, 7th, and 9th. More than 225 people were engaged and the outreach was well received.
- Partnering with the Red Cross to provide Household Emergency Preparedness presentations and hand out 72 Hour Guides to retirement home residents, families, and staff. An additional 80 guides were provided to the Respite Caregivers for clients and families.
- Hosting an Environment Canada CANWARN Storm Spotter Training session on May 8th. More than 100 people attended this session. In addition to hosting, Emergency Management also had a display and distributed 72 Hour booklets.
- 72 Hour booklets were given out to the municipalities and were available to the public and staff year round at Regional headquarters.
- Additional emergency management presentations were given to other partners including schools, universities and others upon request.
- The Emergency Management Program website was refreshed with the help of Strategic Communications & Public Affairs and now contains information on preparedness, hazards in Niagara, and the emergency plan.

Symposium

The Region's Emergency Management Program continued to co-chair the Building a Disaster Resilient Niagara Symposium, which was held on January 18, 2019 with more than 250 people in attendance. Presentation topics included the emergency responses to the Ottawa Tornadoes, the Humboldt Broncos Bus Crash, the Casino Vehicle Intrusion Incident, and the joint exercise between Grimsby and Lincoln. This event provided education on emergency management in Niagara for emergency managers, first responders, senior management, and other important emergency management stakeholders. Work has been ongoing in 2019 to plan for the 2020 symposium, which will be held on March 13, 2020.

Planning

The former Severe Weather Plan was reviewed and redesigned into the Emergency Facility Closure Plan based on the needs of the Region and best practices. This plan was a key component of the training and exercise requirements for EOC staff in 2019. The Emergency Drinking Water Plan was finalized with input from multiple Regional departments including Water/Wastewater, Emergency Social Services, and Public Health. The Niagara Region Emergency Response Plan was reviewed as required for annual compliance.

EOC Readiness and Annual Exercise

A discussion based exercise approach was selected for the 2019 exercise requirement. Four exercise sessions were made available to all EOC staff (primaries and alternates). All EOC staff actively participated in a session. The exercise explored the needs of staff to respond virtually during an emergency that prohibited them from traveling to a physical EOC (e.g. a snowstorm). The exercise was well received and opportunities to strengthen EOC processes and increase resiliency.

Due to the activities mentioned above, the Region's Emergency Management Program is well on track to meet and exceed the compliance requirements under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* for 2019. The program continues to strive for excellence in emergency management.

Alternatives Reviewed

The Emergency Management program is constantly assessing priorities and best methodologies for service delivery. With the completion of the provincial municipal review, it is essential for the Emergency Program to best understand the role and support required for each local municipality relevant to the Region's provision of such support. In Q1 of 2020, a recommendation will be made to the Regional Emergency Management Program Committee to undertake a full program review focused on an

evidence-based approach and best practices for the continuance of emergency management services at both the regional and local levels. This review will enable Niagara Region to become a leader in emergency management in Ontario and will increase Niagara's resilience to disasters and emergencies. The 2020 review will help to guide the way to a fully operational program based on best practices.

Other Pertinent Reports

PHD 14-2016 Amendments to the Niagara Emergency Management Program

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