

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –  
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE DECEMBER 10, 2013

Notes of the tabletop exercise held on December 10, 2013 in the O'Connor Community Centre.

Present: Mayor Ron Nelson  
Councillors Gwen Garbutt, Jerry Loan, Bishop Racicot  
Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob  
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Linda Racicot  
Emergency Measures Organization - John Coupland  
Fire Chief Henry Mattas  
Deputy Fire Chief Ian Hamilton  
Fire Department and First Response members – Leanne Coderre,  
Willy Coderre, Greg Biloski, Mike Carli, Rich O'Loughlin, Sheri Zaporzan,  
Tom Gratz, Dennis Delyea  
Road Department – Kelly Johnson, Brent Dennhardt  
Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) – Bill Pottruff  
North West LHIN – Heather Gray  
Ministry of Transportation – John McClelland

Ontario Provincial Police – Sergeant John Reppard stopped in at 7:10 p.m. and informed Mayor Nelson that the OPP had an emergency and he would not be able to stay for the exercise.

Mayor Nelson called the exercise to order at 7:05 p.m. Attendees were welcomed and thanked for attending the Emergency Tabletop Exercise. Introductions were made around the table. Mayor Nelson then turned the exercise over to Mr. Coupland from the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO).

Mr. Coupland gave a short review of why we are holding this exercise. This is both an exercise and an educational session and that it is mandatory that the municipality holds one exercise a year. It was noted that the exercise also brings people involved in an emergency together so you get to know who you might be dealing with if you require outside help.

Mr. Coupland informed the group that tonight's education session will be some general information on large dangerous goods spills. The importance of assessing the situation at a safe distance was discussed. Making reference to the Emergency Response Guidebook as the initial resource for those involved and then contact with CANUTEC via their 24 hour number would be the next step. A hazard zone would be established and the area secured. Discussion with regard to a train incident with multiple dangerous goods on board was discussed. The Township of O'Connor does not have any trains running through the Township; however our Fire Department or First Responders could be called for assistance in the surrounding areas. It was noted that trains with serious dangerous goods on board have a train speed limit of 35 mph in all large communities.

It was noted that only the Head of Council or the Acting Head of Council can declare the emergency and they do not have to be present at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to make the declaration. There is funding available from the Province through the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) for emergency expenses. It was noted that the municipality does not have to declare an emergency to apply for this funding. In a recent incident the Minister declared the area a disaster area and funding was available. If in the case of a dangerous goods spill the company would be responsible for the expense and would have to reimburse for all expenses incurred. Everyone involved must keep all of their receipts. Volunteers would also be paid at an hourly amount.

It was noted that when an emergency has been declared a list of all volunteers should be made to cover them under Workers Compensation (WSIB) and to prevent them from being sued individually if anything were to go wrong.

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Mr. Coupland also informed those in attendance that the Emergency Management Ontario and the Office of the Fire Marshal have amalgamated and have become the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management. Some of the top positions have been done away with. The new representative for the Amethyst Sector is Alex Lawless. Changes continue to be made to the organization.

The Table Top Exercise scenario was read. A school bus and a propane truck have sideswiped on Highway 595 at Pitch Creek. 18 of the 22 students have been taken off the bus, however 4 are unconscious and still on the bus. The propane truck is on fire. The Fire Chief has contacted the OPP and the Mayor and the O'Connor Emergency Plan has been activated and the Community Control Group (CCG) have been called out. For the purpose of the exercise all members of the CCG have assembled in O'Connor's primary EOC.

It was noted that breakdown of communications with people at the scene is a problem. It is important to get the information out to the press and people of the community as quickly as possible.

Mr. Coupland asked each organization what they would be doing in this incident. Each group or organization then gave comments on what they would be doing or how they would be dealing with the situation or for those who may not be directly involved in this type of incident what they would do in a different emergency situation.

The Fire Department would call for Mutual Aid immediately due to the time of the call and the number of people involved. The patients would be moved out of the area as quickly as possible and the area would be evacuated for a one mile radius. This would include approximately 40 homes in this area. It was noted that the majority of people who have to be evacuated do find their own accommodations. The fire department would deal with the fire as best they could without putting themselves in danger under the circumstances. This could mean leaving the fire burning but keeping the tank cool.

The Ministry of Transportation Traffic Operation Centre could assist with the traffic control, blocking the highway and creating detours.

It was noted that legally the OPP can only close a highway but in an emergency for public safety it would be allowed. The Township would be responsible for blocking their own roads.

Public Health would normally in an emergency send someone out to the EOC. Their assistance could depend on the number of people in the evacuation centre or the air quality at the scene of the accident or in the area. Also if the fuel is going into the creek, a drinking water advisory would be sent out. It would also depend on how far the fuel would travel and whether or not they would be dealing with the Ministry of Environment. At this point they would play a secondary roll.

The Mayor would meet with the CCG and declare the emergency. The EOC would be setup and opened for people who have to be evacuated and possibly some of those involved in the accident if they have minor injuries to keep them warm until further assistance becomes available. The appropriate resources would be called in. The accident area should be accessible from both directions on Highway 595. The road department would assist with road patrols and detours but keep a safe distance away. The Clerk-Treasurer or Deputy Clerk-Treasurer would be taking notes and journalizing the situation, including date, time, names, department and status. The Mayor would make a live media communication to keep as many as possible aware of the situation. The fax would be sent to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre declaring the emergency. The school would bring in their own evacuation centre to keep track of the students. While some students had major injuries and would have been accessed first and taken to the hospital, it was agreed that all students should be taken to the hospital for a full assessment prior to being released to their parents or guardians.

There was a concern that in this scenario that someone would have to go door to door to inform every one of the incident and to see if anyone would need assistance leaving their homes. It was noted that there would be no authority to make people leave.

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The North West LHIN noted that in this situation they would be two or three steps away from the situation. If there was an influx of students at the hospital there would be a connection there with them but fairly hands off. For other situations they would work closely with the Public Health. They would deploy to the communication centre and be in constant communication to ensure that they are there in a supportive roll. If costs were extreme they may also be there for assistance if the Province doesn't cover them all.

The Clerk-Treasurer would have a public education line setup for people to call into for more information. The Township's website would be updated with information from the emergency. The CANUTEC team would be contacted. Thunder Bay Fire is trained in this type of incident and they could attend and assist in the situation rather than having someone read the book. They can input data into a computer program with regard to volumes of propane, wind conditions, evacuation requirements, etc. and provide advise.

It was noted that the Township's plan is a jump start, it does not have each and every scenario. It has contacts and information to get the right people in the right place and use their common sense.

Mr. Coupland thanked everyone for attending and participating in the exercise.

Mayor Nelson also thanked everyone for attending and for taking time out of their schedules. He informed those in attendance that the Township is grateful for all the people in the Township and the work well together and we also have great relationships with outside agencies. It was recommended that the exercise be held earlier in the year next time as it was very cold outside tonight. On behalf of Council and staff he wished everyone a Merry Christmas and adjourned the exercise at 8:14 p.m.

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer