

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE JUNE 24, 2014

Notes of the tabletop exercise held on June 24, 2014 in the O'Connor Community Centre.

Present: Mayor Ron Nelson
Councillors Gwen Garbutt, Jerry Loan, Jim Vezina
Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Linda Racicot
Thunder Bay Area 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, Edward Charette,
Road Department – Kelly Johnson, Brent Dennhardt, Catriona Earl
Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) – Bill Pottruff
Ontario Provincial Police – Staff Sergeant Jim Graham and Sergeant John Reppard
Superior North EMS – Jason Stewardson
Sunset District CISM & SNEMS – Chris Millington

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 thanked Mr. Coupland from the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) for creating the interesting scenario then turned the exercise over to him.

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 hold 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. He did inform everyone that there will be a test at the end of the exercise but it will not be marked individually, answers will be requested.

The Tabletop Exercise scenario was read. The event occurred between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., calls are being received via 911, at the municipal office, the school board and at the OPP Detachment and via radio communication from police, fire and EMS. All schools are still open. A school bus was hijacked by two males and driven to the west end of Loghrin road; each is armed with a semi-automatic rifle and handgun. They have barricaded themselves behind steel plates in the bus and the use a police sniper is out of the question at this time. The school bus has 14 students, 1 of which is wounded and laying on the ground just outside the closed side door of the bus. The bus driver is dead about 100 metres from the side of the bus. The weather has been hot and dry and a grass/bush fire has started near the bus and is burning towards the woods with the potential for evolving to a forest fire. Parents are frantic and want answers but it is impossible to communicate with them in a timely and accurate way at their homes on an ongoing basis. All agencies and the municipal office are being inundated with media calls. For the purpose of the exercise it is now 9:00 a.m. and the Community Control Group (CCG) have been called out by the Clerk and staff and have assembled at the principal Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) after the OPP and the Fire Chief decided to activate the municipality's Emergency Response Plan.

Mr. Coupland then 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. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) started the discussion. They would bring in the Emergency Response Team (ERT) for this level two incident, an inner and outer perimeter would be established and maintained by the OPP.

The Fire Department would be staging at the Fire Hall or designated intersection, Mutual Aid would be called for First Responders, however they would have to wait for OPP clearance to enter the area. The Ministry of Natural Resources would be notified to be on call for the fire situation.

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The Community Centre would be opened up for the parents of the children to gather for easier communications with them.

The senior management of the Emergency Medical Services would be called and they would stage wherever the OPP instructed. It was noted that the ERT team would have their own medics as well. Ornge could be notified.

The Road Department would be waiting at the garage for further instruction, assembling barricades and having equipment ready if needed.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit would start their internal process with a possible evacuation centre, they would also assist with the air quality if a fire did occur.

The First Response would be staging at the Fire Hall. Leanne and Willy Coderre, do to the location of the event, if possible, would stay where they are and setup a triage at their home. They would wait until the area is safe and the OPP have given clearance to attend to the students.

The Clerk-Treasurer would ensure that the Control Group has assembled, opened up the community centre, contact the outside agencies as required, including the Red Cross for assistance and to wait with the parents. The Salvation Army could also be called if the event continued on for a period of time to bring in food. Keep the communications open as best we can, including recording all details of the event.

The Mayor would most likely not declare a state of emergency unless the fire got out of control. He would have the OPP update information for the parents and the Group. The traffic would be rerouted; he would ensure that the staging area is setup. Keep the media up to date but away from the scene.

It was noted that communication with the people at the scene and forwarding that information as quickly as possible to the media and the parents is very important.

The discussion then continued once again throughout the group explaining what would be happening as the next steps.

The OPP reported that their immediate staffing would include 2 sergeants and 6 constables.

The question of air space was discussed. The OPP could ask that there be no flying over the area but it would not be an immediate concern in this area.

The stress management team has a child specialist that could talk to the children after the experience. Four paramedics with SNEMS through the Sunset District CISM have this training. It was noted that it is very important to get everyone together three or four days after the incident with an outside agency for a group defusing. It was noted that you would have to go through the school board for counselling of the children or permission to do so as they have their own emergency plan.

The employees of the business at the end of the Loghrin road would be contacted and instructed to stay inside the building until the OPP evacuated them or the incident ended.

The school board would have to be notified to confirm which students would be on the bus and ensure that the parents are notified, however you cannot let the children leave the school with parents.

A media centre should be setup, in this incident possibly at the Conmee Community Centre.

The Township's website would be kept up to date of any important information that had to be provided.

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A question was asked with regard to the trail that runs out the back of Loghrin road and where it comes out if the hijackers tried to escape. It was noted that the ERRT team has a canine unit which would be used to track them.

If the fire was between the inner and outer perimeter no fire fighters would be allowed in the area. If it is spreading the MNR water bomber would be called in. If it was only a threat to the forest the fire fighters would not be allowed in, if the fire was threatening homes or people in their homes they would be allowed to assist. All based on public safety.

Mr. Coupland made note to the group that no matter what the scenario is each department or agency's duties remain the same. Everyone has to work together. Debriefing after every incident is important however it doesn't take care of the mental state and this also needs to be followed up upon and should be with someone from the outside coming in that doesn't work with the people involved.

Mayor Nelson explained to the group that the Township does have an emergency generator which will power all of the Township's main buildings in the event of a power outage. The Township also has dried food stored here in case of an emergency. The kitchen in the community has also been renovated and could be used in an emergency to prepare a meal.

Mr. Coupland then went on to ask the group eleven questions with regard to emergency management. Each participant was asked to write down their answer to the question and then the answers were shared with the group following.

Mr. Coupland then thanked everyone for all of their input into the exercise.

Mayor Nelson thanked everyone for participating and taking time out of their schedules. In 2008 we had to declare a state of emergency due to the flooding and it makes you realize the importance of holding this exercises. We are a small community and everyone works well together.

Mayor Nelson also thanked everyone for attending and the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer