

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE NOVEMBER 7, 2011

Notes of the tabletop exercise held on November 7, 2011 in the O'Connor Community Centre.

Present: Councillors – Bishop Racicot, Jim Vezina, Jerry Loan
Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Linda Racicot
John Coupland, Emergency Measures Organization
Fire Chief Henry Mattas, Deputy Fire Chief Mike Styles,
Fire Department and First Response members – Greg Biloski, Stefan Derech, Randy Turk, Leanne Coderre, Willy Coderre, Josh Turk, Mike Biloski, Dennis Delyea, Thomas Gratz
Road Department – Kelly Johnson, Brent Dennhardt,
Superior North Emergency Medical Services (EMS) – Ted Neill
Ontario Ministry of Agricultural Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) – Rudy Buitenhuis
Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) – Ken Allan
Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – James McMahon
The Salvation Army – Merv Halvorsen

Acting Mayor Racicot 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. Acting Mayor Racicot 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. This exercise allows everyone the opportunity to work together and in case of a real emergency feel more comfortable in the situation. He reassured those present that this is not a test, just a practice. Ultimately one person is in charge, the Mayor and operationally the Clerk-Treasurer. Mr. Coupland informed the group that for tonight's education session the Salvation Army will be doing a presentation on the services they provide and they will be providing refreshments and showing their trailer facilities that they would bring into the community in an emergency.

Mr. Coupland explained that in an emergency there would be two stages, the first would be the activation of the plan by calling the Community Control Group (CCG) together and stage two would be dealing with the emergency. The Township of O'Connor would use the council chambers and office as the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), allowing for the community centre to be used as a reception centre.

The Mayor or Acting Mayor is the only person who can declare an emergency. They do not have to be physically present at the EOC to declare the emergency. Once an emergency has been declared the declaration would be signed and faxed to Toronto. There is no down side to declaring an emergency. If it turns out not to be as serious as first expected it can be cancelled at anytime.

The scenario for this exercise is two days of heavy rain having left the area saturated with water. Severe localized thunderstorms have caused swollen streams and rivers and they are overflowing their banks in places. Several basements are flooded. Fire Services has asked these residents to leave their homes, at least until the power is shut off, as flooding could cause electrical shock. Several side roads are impassible. Recently a severe thunderstorm has struck the area and wind sheer and flat winds have destroyed seven homes. A house on Blaikie has been hit by lightning and is on fire. The Hydro lines on Hwy 595 are down but not crossing the road. Power is out in about half of the Municipality including the office, hall and fire hall. The Fire Service has called and there are apparently two deaths from lightning strike. Municipal leaders have spoken and have decided to activate the plan. For the purpose of the exercise it is now 3:00 p.m. and the CCG has assembled in the primary EOC.

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. The Fire Department would be responding to

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE NOVEMBER 7, 2011 (con't)

the 911 calls that have come in and calling in Mutual Aid for assistance. Superior North EMS would also be responding with their Conmee ambulance and because of the multiple situations contacting the City of Thunder Bay ambulances for backup. They would also let ORNGE, air ambulance, know of the catastrophic situation. The weather would determine if ORNGE would be able to assist. The road department would already be out dealing with the water situation, closing roads were necessary, with assistance from the Ontario Provincial Police. They would also be trying to keep emergency access open where possible. The Clerk would be making sure that all necessary resources and residents affected have been contacted. Ensure that a log of all actions being taken are recorded. Good two way communication is very important to ensure that everyone knows what is going on both with the EOC, the CCG and those in the field, as the different groups cannot communicate between each other. The TBDHU would be on standby, ready to help assist with the setup of the recreation centre for food safety and potable water. The Thunder Bay DSSAB would also be on call for the reception centre and calling out the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. OMAFRA would also be on standby for any animal issues, including evacuating the animals as needed. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) were not present during this exercise to inform the group of their participation.

There would be two scenes, one short term, dealing with each incident and then the CCG dealing with the long term, which could run all night. In this situation you would have to prepare for relief of workers and volunteers.

As the situation continues, a fire fighter is injured and later has died. The Salvation Army has called and offered its services. The time being 5:00 p.m. again each organization explained what their roll would be. As part 2 of the exercise, due to the severe damage the EOC and the reception centre they have to be moved out of the Township. The alternate location outside of the Township would be in Oliver Paipoonge at the Murillo Township hall and municipal office.

It was noted that there is no specific law that says a person must leave their premises in an emergency evacuation. It was also noted that during this exercise there would be children in school or on school buses on their way home from school. Councillor Loan who is a school bus driver explained the communications that they have on the buses and the procedure that they would follow should an emergency arise. There are currently two main school bus companies in the area, each with their own radio dispatch, however the radios that are in the buses have three channels, one for each company and the third for emergencies used for all buses. If the bus could not continue on their route or the children could not be dropped off safely at their home the bus with the children would return to the school.

Mr. Coupland explained that in the rural areas if a home was destroyed, 80 – 90% of the residents would be able to arrange for their own accommodations so for this exercise we will have one family to look after. The TBDSSAB would look into whether or not this family would need a hotel room.

It was noted that a lot of the residents would be out of the Township during the day and the participation of the media would be very important to keep everyone aware of what has happened. Also there could be a lack of volunteers at this time.

The social media is an important part of any emergency. With all the electronic media out there it is better to get a familiar face or voice on the radio or TV early to reassure the residence of the truth and the situation at hand. A media release can be written up and forwarded to the Province for approval and possibly rewritten with the facts that are the most important. The OPP would then take over as the media person.

Mr. Coupland then turned the meeting over to Mr. Halversen from the Salvation Army. Mr. Halversen gave a presentation on the service they provide. This division serves the whole of Northwestern Ontario. Their shield continues to be a beacon of compassion and of immediate aid to individuals and families whose lives have been disrupted or shattered by forces beyond their control They have been serving since 1882 and are available 24/7, 365 days a year. As they are mostly a volunteer group the response time would be approximately 45minutes. They provide compassion & comfort, through addressing the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the individuals they are

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE NOVEMBER 7, 2011 (con't)

working with. They provide feeding and hydration, blankets and clothing, toys, Critical Incident Stress Management as well as emotional and spiritual care, death notification accompaniment, emergency communications and they have a disaster warehouse. Upon the completion of his presentation, Mr. Halverson invited everyone outside to check out the unit that they would bring to a scene and enjoy some refreshments.

Acting Mayor Racicot also thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the exercise at 8:15 p.m. to allow those present to head outside to tour the Salvation Army's trailer.

Mayor

Clerk-Treasurer