

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –  
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE SEPTEMBER 18, 2012

Notes of the tabletop exercise held on September 18, 2012 in the O'Connor Community Centre.

Present: Mayor Ron Nelson  
Councillor Jim Vezina  
Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob  
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Linda Racicot  
Emergency Measures Organization - John Coupland  
Fire Chief Henry Mattas  
Deputy Fire Chiefs Mike Styles and Ian Hamilton  
Fire Department and First Response members – Greg Biloski, Josh Turk, Mike Carli  
Road Department – Kelly Johnson, Catriona Earl  
Superior North Emergency Medical Services (EMS) – Jason Stewardson  
Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) – Ken Allan  
Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) – Shelley Stenlund  
O.P.P. – John Reppard

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. Mr. Coupland informed the group that tonight's education session will be reviewing a debriefing of the Township of Conmee's emergency, which occurred on May 27 and 28, 2012 when heavy rainfall hit the Township of Conmee, the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge and the City of Thunder Bay. Conmee received 106 mm of rain in a short period. There were 2 major washouts on the Trans Canada Highway and 75% of the Conmee roads were impassable, three of their five bridges were washed out with a total of approximately \$800,000.00 in damage. It took nine days for the Trans Canada highway to reopen.

During the debriefing it was noted that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs was very helpful with assisting with the disaster. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) maintained the road blocks to keep traffic to a minimum. The Township of Conmee was very appreciative of the other municipalities who volunteered their staff and equipment to assist with their cleanup, however none were used. Their Clerk handled both the emergency and the day to day work well and the Reeve did a good job of communicating with everyone. A discussion was held on how they would be able to contact all their residents if needed. It was decided that the only good way would be door to door with a handout message. A couple of years ago Conmee had considered getting an emergency generator but as not all of Council were in favour of it, it was not purchased. They will be looking into purchasing one now. It was also noted that extra people should have keys for the buildings in case the key people are not available. During the emergency it was noted that the Emergency Management Ontario did not have anyone available to come out and check on the emergency. It was also noted that the media were not concerned with the rural areas at all. They were basing all of their news report covering the flood on the City of Thunder Bay. It was noted that in a wide spread disaster Township would have to be self sufficient because others resources are not available to help. It was also noted that the Emergency Operations Centre meetings should only include the Community Control Group. If others are in attendance it slows down the meeting too much.

The lesson's learned from the emergency was that the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) failed. They did not put up enough road closure signage. Both the OPP and the Township requested more signage however the Ministry was concerned with the liability of rerouting people and them getting lost or causing accidents. When Mr. Coupland spoke to the Ministry office in Toronto they didn't even know that there was a problem. It was agreed that the Ministry of Transportation needs to be trained and it was agreed that they will be invited to our next exercise. During the debriefing no one from the

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Ministries attended in Conmee, which was disappointing as the main workers who were involved already knew what they did. In the early hours of the emergency the Township was using the fire trucks to check on the roads and it was agreed that this was not a good idea in case they had gotten stuck. Volunteers were used for flagging.

Mr. Stewardson from SNEMS noted that he lives in Kakabeka Falls and there was nothing on the websites giving any information with regard to the roads closures. He did hear a little bit on the radio but not a lot of information was available.

The 211 service will soon be Province wide and will be available to municipalities for a cost for emergency situations.

Mr. Coupland concluded that from this experience it was noted that the shorter the plan the better fit, it needs to be flexible, use minimum specifications and that big long plans are not effective.

Mr. Coupland then handed out the scenario for the emergency tabletop exercise. Ultimately one person is in charge, the Mayor and operationally the Clerk-Treasurer.

The exercise held this evening is a situation with unseasonably mild temperatures with freezing rain for the last two days, weather takes a turn to very cold with strong north winds and heavy snow causing many hydro and telephone lines to collapse with the previous weight of thick ice on the wires. This has caused extensive power outages in the area. Heavy snow has accumulated with large drifts. All schools are closed and main highways are closed. Only half the municipal roads are open.

The Emergency Response Plan has been activated by the Mayor and Clerk-Treasurer. The Community Control Group (CCG) has been activated and they have assembled at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Hydro One estimates power will not be restored for at least four days and possibly up to seven days in some areas.

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 Road Department would have been already dealing with the situation for the past several days. They would be doing their best to keep the main arteries open in case of an emergency. They would try to ensure that there was enough fuel for the trucks and generator. The sand supply could be an issue. They would have also contacted extra emergency road crews to come and relief their regular staff.

As the Fire Chief lives outside of the Township he would be depending on his Deputy Chiefs and members of the Fire Department to respond. They would be willing to assist in anyway as there currently is no fire emergency. They would be in contact with the EOC to see what they could do. They would also make sure that there was access to the fire hall and that the trucks had fuel in case an emergency should occur. Fire Chief Mattas would be using cell phone and radio communications while he tries to get to the Township. They would also be contacting the road department to see what they could do.

The OPP would also have a fuel issue and they would not be attending any non-emergency calls. Any welfare calls they received would be turned over to the Fire Department. They would be requesting addition equipment be air lifted in. They would be keeping their members safe and their buildings warm.

The EMS's response would depend on the time of day and what shift it was, if the attendants were at home or already at the station. If there was no power they would not be able to stay at the station as there would be no heat. They could possibly stage in another location. They no longer have any wilderness equipment – so if patients are not accessible by road then they would be counting on others to bring the patients to them.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit would be called in if there was a health issue, possibly for food safety or technical advise, and the Ministry of Health would participate through the EOC.

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The Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) would cover basic needs and shelter. They would assist people who needed to be moved for heat or shelter to hotels or another location and any extra benefits they might need. They could also assist with contacting other agencies and they could help by volunteering.

The Clerk would be making sure that everyone in the CCG has been notified of the emergency and anyone else who needs to be, ensure that accurate records are being kept, that communication between the EOC, employees and residents is occurring, check through emergency survey listing to see who has requested help in an emergency and contact the necessary support services.

The Mayor would meet with the CCG and declare the emergency. He would ensure that the Fire and First Response Department would be contacted to see which members would be available to assist, ensure that the website is current with information for our residents, contact Council to see if they could assist, however they would be asked to leave the room during CCG meetings. The police and EMS would be notified of the Township's status. The Mayor would ensure that the Community Centre would be set up for residence to use if needed for heat or shelter. Meetings would be called with the Road Department and Fire and First Response Department to check on their status and to see who might need help. If not plowed the Township Road Department would be instructed to open up Highway 595 for emergency purposes. Regular update meetings would be called to make sure everyone is looked after. If power lines are down this could be a concern if they are live.

The Clerk-Treasurer noted that currently the new office, which is to be used as the EOC, does not have power in a power outage, however a backup system will be installed soon and it will tie into the current emergency generator.

It was noted that the helipad should be kept clear if possible. If a call were to come in at night ORNGE can only land at a helipad. If landing during the day the pilots can determine where it is safe to land. It was also noted that if EMS staff were moved to a patient on a private snowmobile they must wear helmets.

It was noted that in an emergency neighbours would be helping each other. New residents to country living need to be educated on being self sufficient.

Mr. Coupland also noted that a public information line should be opened. The State of Emergency form should be filled in and submitted by fax. By this point we would know who needed assistance and volunteers would be arranged to assist.

Each group then again discussed, as the event went on, what they would continue to do. The main arteries would be kept open to the best of our Township's ability, extra equipment would have been brought in for the OPP if needed. Communications between car to car for the OPP is about 20km on a good day otherwise they would use satellite phones. EMS would have crews ready to go with relief crews. Satellite radios in the ambulances would be used to stay in touch with Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC). The Ministry of Health would participate in the business cycle and respond to any health issues. The Medical Officer of Health would contact the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). The LHIN assist by finding nurse practitioners and arrange for the moving of resources, etc. It was discussed and decided that the LHIN should also be invited to participate in these exercises. The DSSAB would open communications if there was a need for extra benefits for their clients. The Clerk would ensure that everyone is communicating, the website is as up to date as possible, CACC is notified of emergency routes, ensure that things are being recorded as they are happening, make sure that if evacuees are using the community centre that everything is ok there. The Mayor would have regular communication or meetings with crews. He would not pull people off what they are doing but have hourly updates. He would ensure that the Highway is kept open, keep track of people who are here. Call in Deputy Mayor after 12 hours. Do media releases to keep everyone up to date.

Mr. Coupland commented that rural people tend to be more equipped and self-sufficient. The new emergency plans for the websites will be done up soon. This plan

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will include information on how to look after yourself in an emergency. Mr. Coupland noted that the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) covers natural disaster but it does not cover draughts.

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

Mayor Nelson also thanked everyone for attending and for taking time out of their schedules. He concluded that the Township appreciate their support and adjourned the exercise at 8:15 p.m.

Let it be know that during the exercise, at 7:40 p.m., a 911 page came in for a first response call and five Fire and First Response members left the exercise.

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Mayor

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Clerk-Treasurer