

TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR – NOTES –  
EMERGENCY TABLETOP EXERCISE NOVEMBER 19, 2019

Notes of the Tabletop Exercise held on Tuesday, November 19, 2019 in the O'Connor Community Centre.

Present: Mayor Jim Vezina  
Councillors Alex Crane, Wendy Handy, Jerry Loan, Bishop Racicot  
Clerk-Treasurer Lorna Buob  
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer & CEMC Linda Racicot  
Administrative Assistant Erin Laforest  
Deputy Fire Chief and Alternate CEMC Monica Budiselic  
Alternate CEMC Morris Douglas  
O'Connor Fire Department and First Response members –  
Leanne Coderre, Willy Coderre, Greg Biloski, Michael Carli, Paul Phillips,  
Randy Turk, Christal Huneault, Jarryd Parker, Chris Currie,  
Shane Thorne, Brendan Byers  
Road Department – Kelly Johnson, Brent Dennhardt, Richard Pitton  
Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) – Inspector Allan Gordon  
Superior North EMS – Jason Stewardson  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF)- Trent Mann

Mayor Vezina welcomed everyone to the exercise at 7:10 p.m. and thanked those present for attending the Township of O'Connor's Emergency Tabletop Exercise. Introductions were made around the room. Mayor Vezina then turned the exercise over to Ms. Racicot, the Township of O'Connor's Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC).

Ms. Racicot explained why the Township does an annual Tabletop Exercise. The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, Section 12(1) states that every municipal shall have a Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG). The MECG is also a part of the Community Control Group (CCG), which includes members from outside agencies, depending on the need of the particular emergency. The MECG is required to conduct an annual practice exercise for a simulated emergency incident in order to evaluate the municipality's emergency response plan and its own procedures, this being the reason for this exercise.

Ms. Racicot proceeded with the slide presentation explaining the objective of the exercise and the scenario. The exercise is to improve the readiness and to build local capacity for dealing with emergencies and disasters that could occur in the Township of O'Connor.

Every Municipality shall also have an Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC). This group is responsible to ensure that the Township's Emergency Plan is updated and relevant. The Committee also addresses any deficiencies that may arise after a Tabletop Exercise. The Committee consists of the Mayor, Councillors, Clerk-Treasurer, CEMC and alternate CEMC's. A meeting has been set for the Committee on Tuesday, November 26<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Racicot went on to explain that following the exercise, a Hot-wash session will be held. This is an informal debriefing of the exercise to allow an immediate feedback from controllers and evaluators. Ms. Laforest will be the evaluator for this exercise.

The scenario for this exercise is a Wildfire. The slide presentation part of the scenario was read aloud with the group. The scenario played out as follows: that being a wildfire on July 1<sup>st</sup> late at night with limited Fire Department members responding. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) had issued a fire ban due to dry conditions. The Township of O'Connor's Wildland Fire Potential map was also provided on the wall to clarify the wildfire risk levels in the area. Those in attendance then moved into groups, based on their department and they each discussed what they would be doing in this particular emergency. Each group then reported to the group what they would be doing at each particular stage of the emergency.

Points which were made during the scenario included the Fire Department calling for Mutual Aid assistance from more than one Department. MNRF also would be called,

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however would not be flying water bombers at night to assist, but they could bring in ground crew. The smoke would be interfering with the safe landing at the helipad and therefore Ornge would not be able to land there if required. Residents in the area would be evacuated and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) would establish an outer perimeter to keep curious people away from the fire. They could also assist with evacuation and bring in school buses to move people if necessary. The OPP also have a drone which could be flown over the area to identify the extent of the damage and the size of the fire to assist the fire fighters in their decision making. The Road Department would also assist with moving of equipment or water supply or putting up barricades as required. The Township's office, community centre, garage and fire hall are all in the path of the fire. It would have to be determined where the Emergency Operations Centre would be located. As the risk to the municipal infrastructure increased, equipment and assets would have to be moved out of the path of the fire, if possible. It was noted that no department would send their officers or members into the danger zone as they do not have proper fire protection.

A question was asked with regard to incident command when both fire department members and Ministry firefighters are involved. It was noted that the Ministry staff would account for their own firefighters and the Township would account for their own. If the Ministry was called in, they would take over incident command.

As the fire was extinguished the recovery procedures were discussed. Two houses were lost to fire. An investigation would take place, with the assistance of the MNRF, to determine the cause and confirm if there were any casualties. There would be an overall mop up and cleanup of the area. Confirmation as to whether or not anyone still needs assistance of any kind and determine when it is safe for them to return home. If assistance is required, the Red Cross or St. John's Ambulance could assist. Once the scene has been released the barricades could be removed. A door to door canvas would take place to confirm who had any losses and if so what. It was noted the Township would be paying the MNRF for their services and we would want to release them from the scene as soon as possible.

Ms. Racicot then continued the exercise with a Hot-wash and asked Ms. Laforest for her evaluation of the exercise. Ms. Laforest proceeded to comment on the exercise. Issues arose that will need to be addressed. The CCG was not initially notified once the emergency was declared nor was the EOC established. Communication with the EOC is very important, however it was noted by a Fire Department member that if the EOC was out of the Township in either Oliver Paipoonge or the City of Thunder Bay, the radios may not work at the EOC as the Fire Department and Roads Department work off the O'Connor and Gillies Tower. It was not clear as to who called the evacuation order or who would authorize the evacuees return to their homes. Utilities would have had to be notified to shut down power. It was not determined during the exercise if the Township would have declared a state of emergency in this situation. It should have been determined if a debriefing would take place. Due to the time of the incident social media would not be as effective as most people would have been sleeping.

The OPP were asked if their drone footage would be available to the EOC or the media. It was noted that possible still shots could be shared with the media but not video. Video could be viewed in the EOC. Their drone does have an infrared camera.

The Deputy Fire Chief Budiselic asked if the Township has a Self-Deployment Policy. The Township does not, and she recommended that one be established.

It was noted that nothing ever goes as planned in an emergency, but a test gets everyone thinking about what might happen.

Ms. Racicot thanked everyone for attending and participating and the exercise adjourned at 9:10 p.m.