

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Recommendation

That the August 15, 2024, Office of the City Manager report EFRS02542, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	N/A	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Conditions for service success
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw 19091 - Emergency Management Bylaw • Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan • Edmonton's Community Energy Transition Strategy 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 8, 2023, Office of the City Manager report OCM01913, Emergency Management Agency Update - Verbal report • January 23, 2024, Office of the City Manager report OCM02287, Emergency Management Program Annual Update 		

Executive Summary

- The City's Emergency Management Program relies on the relationships between three primary stakeholder groups: the Emergency Advisory Committee, the Emergency Management Agency and the Office of Emergency Management.
- While plans and mitigations are in place to reduce the current risk to the community, a broader Emergency Management Program review is underway to confirm the program will continue to meet the evolving needs of Edmontonians and a changing climate.
- The purpose of this report is to provide Emergency Advisory Committee with a program update and an opportunity to ask questions of Administration.

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REPORT

Complying with the Government of Alberta's *Emergency Management Act* and Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation¹, there are three City of Edmonton bodies that govern, lead and operationalize the City's Emergency Management Program:

- Emergency Advisory Committee - The Mayor is the Chair and all Councillors present at a meeting are members of the Emergency Advisory Committee. In addition to regular meetings of the Emergency Advisory Committee, the Mayor and the City Manager have the option to call special meetings of the Committee as emergencies² arise. The Emergency Advisory Committee approves the City of Edmonton's Emergency Management Plan³.
- Emergency Management Agency - The City Manager is the Director of the Agency, which consists of the Assistant Deputy Fire Chief of Emergency Management and Communications, the Deputy City Managers, the Chief People Officer and City Solicitor, the Chief Communications Officer, the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief.
- Office of Emergency Management (OEM) - The Office of Emergency Management is situated within Edmonton Fire Rescue Services and creates, implements and maintains an all hazards emergency management program that prepares the City to respond to and recover from major emergencies and disasters⁴. During a major emergency or disaster, the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), a function of OEM, operationalizes the Emergency Management Plan.

City of Edmonton Emergency Management Program

Under the direction of the City Manager as the Director of the Emergency Management Agency, the OEM manages the City's Emergency Management Program. OEM identifies risks, develops strategies and coordinates operations in line with the four pillars of the emergency management cycle (prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery). Through OEM, the City of Edmonton receives intelligence from, and is often called upon for support, by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency through the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre.

Prevention and Mitigation

OEM coordinates and connects work in Administration and external agencies towards prevention and early detection of potential risks. OEM conducts hazard identification through a collaborative effort with the corporate Enterprise Risk Management to annually review the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment program.

This process involves:

1. Identifying potential hazards and threats that could impact the City of Edmonton;
2. Assessing the likelihood and potential impact of each hazard; and

¹ Government of Alberta. Emergency Management. <https://www.alberta.ca/emergency-management-legislation>

² From the *Emergency Management Act* an emergency is "an event that requires prompt co-ordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the safety, health or welfare of people or to limit damage to property or the environment"

³ OCM02287 - Emergency Management Program Annual Update - January 23, 2024 Emergency Advisory Committee Meeting - Attachment 1

⁴ From the *Emergency Management Act*, a disaster is "an event that results in serious harm to the safety, health or welfare of people or in widespread damage to property or the environment"

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3. Ranking hazards based on their probability, impact and changing risk factors.

This process provides Administration with a comprehensive understanding of risks and threats and enables effective mitigation strategies and emergency response plans. Using the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment program aligns the City of Edmonton's approach with that of the Government of Alberta.

Evolving risk due to climate change

In fall 2024, Administration will bring forward a report to Audit Committee, FCS02497 2025 Corporate Strategic Risks, that discusses the effects of climate change on weather, environment, economy and health. According to the World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024⁵, extreme weather events rank as the second highest global risks over the short term and environmental risks are expected to encompass five of the top 10 risk trends over the next decade. An Edmonton specific study finds that the impacts of climate change could cause direct annual costs of approximately \$1 billion by the 2050s, and up to \$4 billion by the 2080s⁶. Unless there are significant local and global efforts⁷ to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, climate change will have serious and continued impacts on Edmonton, and processes (including emergency management) must adapt and evolve. For instance, with a higher risk of wildfire this season, a drone program was launched in spring 2024 to provide surveillance and early identification of fire hazards in the river valley. This work has led to faster response times and safer approaches for first responders.

Learning from other jurisdictions

The City of Edmonton also learns from the emergency experiences of other communities. In June 2024, the City of Calgary experienced a large water main break in a critical transmission line that carries water from a treatment plant into the water distribution network. EPCOR and Administration are participating in the provincial incident review from an engineering and asset management perspective. EPCOR provides public reporting on the City's utilities via Utility Committee and the executive teams of EPCOR and the City of Edmonton are in regular contact to ensure that there is an integrated response to any shared civil engineering matters.

Preparedness

Standards and Training

To enable a structured and effective response during an emergency or disaster, there are established adaptive and clear policies for handling emergencies, including Standard Operating Procedures and Operational Directives. Training exercises, from tabletop simulations to full-scale operations with individual Incident Command Systems training, prepares multidisciplinary professionals to handle emergencies. The training scenarios include floods, fires, labour disruptions, encampments and water shortages. By diversifying training experiences, employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to a wide range of potential emergencies.

⁵ [The Global Risks Report 2024](#), 19th Edition, World Economic Forum, pg 8.

⁶ Boyd, R. 2022. Costs of inaction: Economic impacts of climate change on Edmonton.

⁷ The City of Edmonton's two climate strategies, the Energy Transition Strategy and the Climate Adaptation Strategy chart the path forward for Edmonton to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change risks and impacts. The City of Edmonton has taken steps over the past year to advance these strategies. Council approved an additional \$376 million of capital and operating spending related to the Energy Transition Strategy and \$5.5 million related to Climate Adaptation over the 2023-2026 budget cycle.

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Service Agreements

In spring 2024, and based on lessons learned from 2023, a number of measures were proactively put in place to manage an anticipated higher than normal wildfire season. For instance, Executive Committee approved a 2024 emergency response activation agreement with the Canadian Red Cross for up to \$9 million (EFRS02433 - Single Source Request - Canadian Red Cross for Emergency Support Services) noting that if this agreement is leveraged to address a Request for Assistance, there is a financial settlement process that occurs to recover eligible costs. As another example, to reduce the dependency on recreation centres and conference halls when a reception centre is needed to receive evacuees, a City facility in northeast Edmonton is temporarily serving as a Rapid Emergency Support Terminal for 2024.

Partnerships

Mutual aid agreements and joint initiatives, such as the Alberta All-Hazards Incident Management Team and M10 agreements enhance compliance and operational effectiveness through regional partnerships and resource sharing. As discussed in the following section, the EOC is currently facing staffing challenges that impact its ability to respond to and sustain responses for major emergencies or events. To mitigate these challenges, partnerships with other stakeholder agencies are leveraged to maintain a base level of operations, including the Edmonton Police Service, North Central All Hazards Incident Management Team and Alberta Health Services.

Public Education and Communications

To increase community awareness and preparedness, communications and public education campaigns are also shared around such topics as wildfire prevention. In 2024, a public education campaign was launched to improve the public's awareness of the actions that they can take from around their property and when outdoors anywhere across Edmonton, to mitigate fire risk and their potentially devastating consequences. The public is also invited to preparedness events and activities like "Get Ready in the Park." This awareness and engagement event provides Edmontonians with emergency preparedness tips and information about available resources during a major emergency. It also allows residents to meet the people who work on the frontlines during emergencies, provides opportunities to discuss personal preparedness strategies, and enables Edmontonians to explore emergency vehicles and equipment in a fun, safe setting.

Business Continuity Planning

OEM works across the corporation to identify critical functions and establish protocols to maintain operations under adverse conditions. Corporate business continuity plans are reviewed annually, which confirms that these plans remain current and effective. By regularly updating and testing these plans, OEM supports the City's vital operations and services to withstand and quickly recover from disruptions. To manage its own business continuity, OEM developed the Emergency Management Augmentation Program which will supplement staffing at the EOC from across the corporation in emergency situations. This complements the Emergency Support Response Team which focuses on supporting the public during events. While this program will allow EOC to increase emerging capacity needs on a temporary basis, it will not address the needs of day to day operations.

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Response and Recovery

The EOC brings together representatives from the City of Edmonton and the emergency response community to coordinate resources in support of response and recovery activities. There are more than 300 staff (from within Administration, partnering organizations and agencies) that are Incident Command System trained to staff the EOC during a major incident, disaster or emergency. Attachment 1 provides data on the Emergency Operations Centre from 2014 to 2024.

Due to a confluence of significant events and emergencies, the EOC is activated with increasing frequency. In 2024, the EOC experienced a prolonged activation to coordinate a multi-agency encampment response, multiple activations to support public safety during the Oilers Playoff Run and, most recently in July 2024, a multi-week activation to support the displacement resulting from the Jasper Complex Fire. Many of these activations were concurrent, requiring additional teams to be seconded away from other City duties to meet the functions and resource hours required to fulfill the City's obligations. Although seconding specialized teams supports an integrated response for emergencies and other coordinated efforts, this practice compromises the City's ability to deliver service levels in other programs.

Emergency Management Program Review

Repeated activations cause strain on existing resources and focus OEM staff effort into the response and recovery phases, rather than the prevention and mitigation work required to adapt to a changing climate and social landscape. A consultant is reviewing the people, budget, time and equipment required for the City of Edmonton to deliver an emergency management program that meets the City's legislated requirements in the context of evolving hazards. After the review is complete, the Emergency Management Agency will review the findings and determine if a funding recommendation should be brought forward for Council consideration during a future Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment.

Community Insight

The City of Edmonton's approach recognizes that a successful emergency plan and response is informed by coordinated action between individuals, communities, industry, government and other mutual aid partners. Although there are general standards on how events are managed, stakeholders work together to confirm that the response is appropriate for the particular event or emergency.

GBA+

Specifically considering the risk to Edmonton for climate change-related events, Administration understands that the impacts are magnified for specific populations including seniors, children and youth, Indigenous peoples, racialized populations, people with disabilities, people who are pregnant, frontline emergency responders, residents of northern and remote communities, individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged and people who are

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immunocompromised and those living with pre-existing illness.⁸ Understanding who is most at risk allows the City of Edmonton's approach to be planned appropriately to varying needs.

When displaced due to emergencies, people are also disproportionately impacted, with more significant impacts felt by those who have disabilities, speak languages other than English, have limited access to immediate emergency funds and those who have experienced previous trauma. The Emergency Management Program is adaptable and has responded to many different needs and works with partners to provide people with the most appropriate support given an individual or community's situation. The Emergency Management Program adheres and aligns with the Indigenous Framework and the Corporate Accessibility Guidelines and continues to look for ways to deliver an inclusive and compassionate response to Edmontonians and any other individuals requiring the City's assistance.

The consultant who is reviewing the Emergency Management Program will use these considerations to inform their analysis and recommendations.

Attachments

1. Emergency Operations Centre Activations 2014 to 2024

⁸ Government of Canada. "Who is most impacted by climate change?" <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/climate-change-health/populations-risk.html>