



Emergency Management Program Strategic Plan

2024–2027



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Successful emergency management is rooted in collaboration, respect and trust.

Director's Statement

The City of Ottawa's Emergency Management Program is people-centric. We work together with a range of partners for the greater good of our community.

Residents of Ottawa have unfortunately experienced their share of emergencies. The City of Ottawa has learned from these events and can benefit through the knowledge that we have acquired along the way. We know, for example, that prevention is better than cure. This means that we must continue to prioritize emergency preparedness and climate adaptation measures.

We also know that there are opportunities to harness data, technology and innovation to help Ottawa residents be better informed. Further, we know that residents are interested, care about their community, and want to make positive contributions.

Most importantly, we know that we achieve better outcomes when we understand the unique needs of all Ottawa residents and neighbourhoods. Successful emergency management is rooted in collaboration, respect and trust.

We hope that residents take the time to read through this Strategy. We look forward to implementing it through a true Team Ottawa approach.

Beth Gooding

Director, Public Safety Service

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Introduction

Purpose

The City of Ottawa's Emergency Management Program Strategic Plan 2024–2027 (EMP Strategic Plan) guides the City's emergency management activities with the goal of building stronger, safer, and more resilient communities.

The plan sets out our main priorities, directs our efforts and resources, and ensures we work together with partners toward shared goals. It is built on the understanding that by strengthening the key pillars of emergency management — prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery — communities will be better equipped to address any type of disaster or emergency.

The City of Ottawa is prone to different types of hazards including flooding and severe weather. While there are personal and community-level measures that can be taken to better prepare, we are cognizant that the City has a crucial role to play in providing information and guidance, as well as in connecting residents to the supports they need.

Noting the above, this plan not only guides us toward a more resilient Ottawa but highlights a multi-faceted approach with a focus on communications, partnerships, innovation, and adaptability in the face of new and changing risks.

Assumptions

- The plan depends on the City and its network of emergency management partners prioritizing emergency preparedness and climate adaptation work.
- Following the plan will help to reduce the damage caused by emergencies and will lessen the overall impact on our residents and communities.



Our Commitments

Environment and Climate Change

As part of the EMP Strategic Plan, we will integrate climate change considerations into all aspects of our emergency management work. We will ensure alignment with the City of Ottawa's Climate Change Master Plan, with a particular focus on activities that contribute to climate change adaptation and resiliency. Additionally, we will continue to: incorporate climate risk into emergency planning; work with internal and external partners to strengthen infrastructure resilience; and, enhance community preparedness through education and awareness initiatives. By adopting this climate lens, the EMP will remain proactive in addressing climate-related challenges.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

We are committed to embedding equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) into all aspects of our work. We understand that a diverse and inclusive approach is essential to building stronger, more resilient communities. We also understand that some communities face systemic barriers to opportunity. By prioritizing EDIB, we aim to engage with individuals and communities in a collaborative and respectful manner, prioritize both physical and psychological safety, recognize the unique needs of the diverse members of our population, and build trust. Our goal is to help communities in a manner in which everyone feels respected, valued, and supported.



Our Organizational Focus

The City of Ottawa conducts its emergency management activities as part of a broader ecosystem that includes other levels of government and a range of external partners. We recognize that our role can be strengthened by enhancing our internal systems, refining our processes (especially based on lessons observed), and fostering collaboration across City departments and with our partners.

Our key internal areas of focus are:

Build stronger inter-departmental collaboration

Utilize innovation and technology to modernize the EMP

Streamline emergency plans and processes

Build relationships with partners and the community

Foster a culture of continuous improvement, training and exercise

Enhance the identity of the City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM)



Strategic Plan Development

The EMP Strategic Plan was developed in collaboration with both internal and external emergency management partners. Staff and partners provided valuable insights; while lessons observed from past events were also carefully reviewed to ensure that the Strategy's goals and objectives were informed by our experiences. In addition, the development process considered exercise after-action reports, feedback from partners, relevant legislation, as well as latest best practices.

The plan's success and its ongoing efforts depend on the collaboration of key City services, emergency management partners, and the active participation of the community.

The plan contains three overarching goals, along with the objectives to be achieved over a four-year period.

Strategic goals



Goal 1 – Community-level resiliency

Ensure the City's Emergency Management Program focuses on community-level resiliency that is inclusive and reflects the diverse needs of the whole community.



Goal 2 – Communications

Strengthen communications to residents and communities to improve preparedness and enhance disaster resiliency at the local level.



Goal 3 – Partnerships

Expand partnerships and initiatives that promote a whole-of-society approach.



Plan Vision and Mission



Our Vision

An emergency ready and resilient Ottawa

Our vision for the City's EMP is to build An Emergency Ready and Resilient Ottawa, where our residents have the knowledge and support they need to make informed decisions and be as prepared as possible for any potential emergency.



Our Mission

To lead collaborative, inclusive and innovative emergency management efforts that sustain a culture of preparedness within the City and maintain public confidence

Our mission is focused on building a strong and effective emergency management program for the City of Ottawa. We strive to sustain a culture of continuous improvement and to build meaningful partnerships through which we work together to mainstream emergency preparedness as a part of everyday life.



Strategic Goals, Objectives and Milestones



Strategic Goal 1:

Ensure the City's Emergency Management Program focuses on community-level resiliency that is inclusive and reflects the diverse needs of the whole community.

Why is this important?

This is crucial because it helps to build a foundation of preparedness that addresses the diverse needs of the entire community. All individuals – regardless of age, ability, socioeconomic status, or background – have access to the resources, information and support they need before, during, and after emergencies.

Objectives and Milestones

1.1 Improve how we identify and prepare for risks that may affect Ottawa

- Regularly assess the hazards most likely to lead to emergencies and incorporate appropriate risk mitigation strategies into the City's emergency plans.
- Work with key partners, including critical infrastructure providers and non-governmental organizations, to identify and address vulnerabilities.
- Share our hazard-risk assessment results with individuals, families, communities, businesses, and other local organizations to help them with emergency planning.



1.2 Increase public education and preparedness efforts to reach more people

- Use creative and accessible methods to make emergency preparedness resources available for individuals, families, businesses and communities.
- Strengthen relationships at the local level to actively involve community groups in emergency preparedness, such that they can offer support to neighbors during emergency events.
- Focus outreach on underserved and priority populations, providing the necessary tools and resources to individuals and families most in need.

1.3 Update our plans to ensure they address the needs and concerns of all communities

- Work with partners and community groups to better understand the needs of underserved and priority populations before, during and after emergencies.
- Continue to update our emergency plans to ensure that they address the diverse needs of the communities we serve, and that they prioritize physical and psychological safety.
- Exercise our plans with partners to assess their robustness and to identify gaps.

1.4 Incorporate a climate change lens to our emergency preparedness work

- Work with partners to understand climate change risks and their potential impact on communities.
- Update emergency plans to incorporate climate-related adaptation measures.
- Maintain and expand external partnerships to ensure adequate resources are available to help individuals, families, businesses, and communities during severe weather events.



It helps to build a foundation of preparedness that addresses the diverse needs of the entire community



Strategic Goal 2:

Strengthen communications to residents and communities to improve preparedness and enhance disaster resiliency at the local level.

Why is this important?

Clear, timely and accessible communication ensures all residents are informed about risks, resources, and services, empowering them to take proactive steps in emergency preparedness. The City of Ottawa will continue to strengthen communications with residents, businesses, and communities.

Objectives and Milestones

2.1 Leverage technology to keep people informed during emergencies

- Implement a public emergency notification system to deliver timely and accurate information to all residents and communities before, during, and after emergencies.
- Actively promote the system to ensure as many residents as possible are registered and ready to receive important emergency guidance.
- Regularly evaluate the system based on community feedback to ensure it continues to meet residents' needs.

2.2 Improve online platforms to provide the community with access to important emergency management information and resources

- Continue to update the City's website to make it a true "one-stop shop" for emergency preparedness information. Focus on relevant content, user-friendly navigation, and accessibility.
- Where possible, incorporate new modes of data, including geographic information system-related content to make the user experience as helpful as possible.
- Continuously promote the platform as a trusted source of information for residents, including ahead of severe weather events.



2.3 Improve the breadth and depth of emergency communications to ensure they can effectively reach all residents and visitors

- Work with City partners serving under-represented and equity-denied groups to ensure that these crucial service providers get the information they need, and in the most appropriate format.
- Update communications materials to ensure they provide clear, concise, relevant and tailored information to diverse groups, in multiple languages.
- Inform the community on where and how to access emergency information through workshops, events, and public awareness campaigns.

2.4 Strengthen and expand the emergency preparedness program

- Review and update the City's emergency preparedness guides to ensure they address the information needs of our residents.
- Develop engaging and accessible resources, on both broad (e.g., all-hazard emergency preparedness checklists) and specific (e.g., how to prepare for and recover from flooding) topics.
- Explore new and innovative approaches to help residents understand and contextualize risk, including through machine learning-based modeling and simulation techniques.



The City of Ottawa will continue to strengthen communications with residents, businesses, and communities.



Strategic Goal 3:

Expand partnerships and initiatives that promote a whole-of-society approach.

Why is this important?

Maintaining and developing new partnerships is essential for a stronger, more united response during emergencies. By working together with other levels of government, businesses, community groups, and non-governmental organizations among others, we can share resources, knowledge, and efforts to better prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Objectives and Milestones

3.1 Strengthen emergency response and recovery through strategic partnerships

- Build strong partnerships with community groups, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities to improve response and recovery support.
- Review and update emergency plans in collaboration with partners to identify gaps.
- Formalize roles through formal agreements and/or procedures to strengthen coordination and foster ongoing collaboration amongst key partners.

3.2 Strengthen training and capacity-building initiatives with partners

- Review and align emergency management training with partners across the National Capital Region (NCR) and beyond to ensure a coordinated response.
- Build more training opportunities for staff and external partners, focusing on enhancing skills and knowledge to improve response and recovery efforts.
- Organize joint emergency exercises to test and improve coordination, collaboration and readiness amongst partners.

3.3 Build strong private partnerships to improve community resilience in emergencies.

- Engage key external partners (businesses, private critical infrastructure providers, school boards, non-governmental organizations, community groups etc.) on emergency planning.
- Develop a collaborative strategy with clear roles, responsibilities, and action plans for emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts.
- Establish communication platforms and monitoring systems for ongoing coordination and long-term collaboration with all private partners.



Highlights

Key milestones of the EMP Strategic Plan:

Evergreen risk assessment:

Identifying and evaluating potential hazards and risks in our community.

Building new partnerships:

Working with a broader range of external partners to support emergency response and recovery efforts.

On-going climate change efforts:

Contributing to local climate adaptation initiatives.

Private partnerships: Creating the framework and platform through which targeted and regular collaboration can occur between the City and a range of external entities to work together on emergency management.

Enhanced emergency management webpage:

Launching an updated webpage on the City of Ottawa's site to be a one-stop shop for emergency management information.

Updating the EMP Strategic Plan: Starting the process to update our Emergency Management Program Strategic Plan for the years 2028–2032.

Public emergency notification system:

Implementing a system to send information and guidance to residents before, during and after emergencies.



List of Acronyms

The following are acronyms used in this document.

EDIB	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
EMP	Emergency Management Program
EM	Emergency Management
NCR	National Capital Region
OEM	Office of Emergency Management