Community Emergency Tool Kit

A guide to community preparedness

- Roles and responsibilities
- Guidance and planning
- Resources and training

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Introduction

Emergencies can happen to anyone at anytime. Do you have an emergency plan to make sure that you, your family, and your community are ready when something happens? Community Associations and other organizations / groups play a key role in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Everyone has a role to play in preparing for emergencies. We all need to work together to reduce the potential impact of hazards. This document includes information, guidance, and resources to help communities get started in developing a community emergency plan.

For individuals and families, the City of Ottawa has a number of useful resources including a guide to helping others, a video guide to building an emergency kit and steps to emergency preparedness.

Hazards and risks

Knowing what hazards could affect your community is an important part of being prepared. Hazards are dangers that can damage property, disrupt services, harm the environment, or cause injuries and / or loss of life.

Severe weather events, like flooding or snowstorms, happen at different times of the year. Where you live, work or play, can impact the likelihood of being affected by certain hazards and risks. For example, people who live in a flood plain should be aware of their increased risk of flooding in the spring.

Climate projections indicate that the City of Ottawa will become warmer and wetter. This favours an increase in storms, tornadoes, and wildfires, and could result in flash flooding, smog, or severe power outages.

The Government of Canada – Hazards and Emergencies and Province of Ontario – Emergency preparedness provide information on the most common hazards that can occur. The City of Ottawa has identified the hazards that are most likely to happen in our city that could have significant impacts. These include:

- Active Threat
- Cyber attack
- Civil disobedience

- Drinking water advisory
- Earthquake
- Extreme heat, cold, smog
- Flooding
- Power disruption
- Public Health emergency
- Tornado
- Transportation incident
- Winter weather

Think about how each of these hazards could impact you. The hazards that have a higher chance of happening in your area should be a priority for your community.

Roles and responsibilities

When an emergency happens, the City of Ottawa works with other groups and levels of government to keep people safe. Everyone has a role to play, and it is important that you know what to expect during an emergency situation.

Site level response

Emergency responders can include services such as Fire, Paramedics, Police, Public Works, and/or Water Services. They have specialized training and oversee activities at the emergency site.

Local response

During an emergency situation, the City of Ottawa looks at the possible risk to people, property, and the environment, and decides how to respond. Just as communities should have a plan in place, the City has a Municipal Emergency Plan.

City of Ottawa Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

For some emergencies, the City of Ottawa may mobilize the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). This is where City staff and external partners coordinate resources, communications, and other response and recovery activities.

Elected Officials

Elected Officials represent their communities and help keep people informed. You might see them when they visit a site, use social media to share information, or speak to the media. Elected Officials stay connected with the City's EOC and can provide information updates to your community.

Provincial and Federal response

The City of Ottawa can ask the Province of Ontario for assistance when needed. This could be in the form of advice, using subject matter experts, and/or requesting resources and equipment. When additional help is required, the City of Ottawa will work with the Province to ask for assistance from the Federal Government.

Community Associations and other groups

Community Associations and other organizations / groups have an important role in emergency management. They can help get their members and their community prepared for emergencies, as well as provide them with support during and after an emergency.

Emergency management activities

There are many activities that Community Associations or other organizations / groups can do before, during, and after an emergency. The list below can help you get started on planning ahead and knowing what to do.

Before an emergency

- Identify your community:
  - Consider who belongs to your community, and which communities you belong to.
  - Identify local relationships that already exist and encourage others to get involved.
  - Identify who in your community is the most vulnerable and may need assistance.
  - Determine how you will get in touch with others in your community during an emergency, including during a power outage.
- Identify risks that could affect your community:
  - Social risks, such as people with limited mobility, groups that may find it difficult to understand emergency information, and people without transport.
  - Environmental risks, such as areas that are more impacted by weather events.
  - Infrastructure risks, such as bridges or main roads.
- Encourage others to get prepared. Visit Emergency preparedness to learn more.
  - Have individuals and families review the Checklists for emergency preparedness.
  - Have individuals and families practice what to do in case of an emergency.
- Encourage others to get trained.
  - Take a first aid course.
  - Take emergency management training.
- Develop an emergency plan specific to your community – use the Community Emergency Plan Checklist at the end of this Toolkit as a reference guide. It can include:
  - A list of hazards most likely to occur.
  - An assessment of which parts of the community may be most vulnerable.
  - Activities designed to reduce the impact of hazards.

        - List of people, buildings, and supplies available in your community.
        - List of people with specific skills that can help during an emergency.
        - List of local businesses that could donate food, supplies, or provide a place of refuge.
    - Consider gathering supplies that could help your community during an emergency such as water, blankets, and generators.
    - Talk to your Elected Officials about your community concerns.
    - Make emergency preparedness an item at your Community Association or group meeting.
    - Encourage people to volunteer with an emergency response or support group.
    - Identify leaders in the community for emergency preparedness and response.

During an emergency

- Activate your emergency plan.
- Report life threatening emergencies using 9-1-1.
- Report non-life threatening situations and important information to the City using 3-1-1.
    - Based on the emergency, you can report things like debris, flooding, and infrastructure damage. This will assist the City in obtaining a better picture of what is happening across the impacted area.
- Pick a leader to be the point of contact for City officials.
- Make sure to follow the direction provided by City staff.
- Volunteer where possible to help with response activities (e.g., by filling sandbags).
- If safe to do so, work together to check on members, friends, and neighbours (especially those who may live alone or need assistance).
- If available, encourage members to attend Emergency Information Sessions or other supports provided by the City.
- Work together to use your resources to help others.
- Use your plans or documents to look at what resources, skills, and people you have to help others.

After an emergency

- Encourage members to volunteer to help clean-up and support other recovery activities.
- Encourage members to attend Town Halls / Special Information Sessions to provide feedback to the City.

- Learn about support services and how to access them. Encourage and help others access those services.
- Look at how the emergency can impact others in the long term. Work with other organizations to get members' support if they need help.
- Review and update your emergency plan.

Remember: Emergency management is a continuous cycle. There are always things you can do before an emergency to prepare, during an emergency to keep safe, and after an emergency to recover. This cycle repeats for all hazards and potential emergencies.

Training

Training is an important part of being prepared. City staff have specialized training that allows them to carry out their roles. Do you know what training your community members have? Will this training help them in an emergency?

First aid

First aid is a great skill to have in an emergency. Until First Responders (Fire, Paramedics, Police) arrive, being able to help someone who is hurt could make a big difference. Remember to encourage everyone to take some training and keep track of those who have. In an emergency, this knowledge could save a life, including your own.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Many non-governmental organizations rely on volunteers. These groups train their volunteers to help those affected by an emergency. Some examples of volunteer roles are listed below.

- Emergency Management Volunteers
- Safety and Wellbeing Responders
- Emergency Disaster Services Volunteer

Click on the following organizations to find out more:

- Canadian Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Sauvetage Bénévole Outaouais-Ottawa Volunteer Search and Rescue

Emergency Management Ontario

Emergency Management Ontario offers courses on Emergency Management and the Incident Management System. Here are some basic courses you may want to explore:

- IMS 100: Introduction to Incident Management System
- EM 131: Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders

Resources

There are more resources you can use to make sure you and your community are ready. Learn more about emergency management and how to be prepared below:.

- Emergency management in Ontario
- Public Safety Canada - Get Prepared
- Canadian Red Cross - Emergencies and Disasters in Canada
- Enbridge Gas - Safety
- HydroOttawa - Outages and Safety
- HydroOne - Power outages and safety
- Sauvetage Bénévole Outaouais-Ottawa Volunteer Search and Rescue
- Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services
- United Way East Ontario - Community crises

Annex: Community Emergency Plan Checklist

Emergency planning steps and tasks

1. Determine the plan components
   - Articulate the plan objectives
   - Complete an inventory of existing plans and other documents
   - Identify and obtain the necessary resources
2. Identify partners and their roles
   - Create a partners / network list
   - Identify what roles members within your group will play
   - Create a contact/engagement plan (e.g., how will you reach each other during a power outage)?
   - What partners in the community should be a part of this plan?
   - What assets are available to you within the community? (e.g., food supplies, fuel, vehicles, power tools, first aid kits….)
3. Review Community Hazards
   - Review community hazard / risk history (note: it can be helpful to start by planning against a prolonged power outage)
   - Assess potential community impacts
   - Identify potential response gaps (e.g., generator, fuel, supplies)
   - Identify who might be most vulnerable and how you could assist them
4. Determine Community Response Actions
   - What emergency preparedness and response activities can you take on?
   - How will you do so?
   - Does it make sense for you to stockpile some emergency supplies? If yes, which ones and where will they be held? Who will have access to them during an emergency?
   - Do any group members need training?
5. Obtain feedback and approval
   - Obtain feedback from partners
   - Integrate feedback into plan
   - Socialize the plan within the group; exercise it
6. Maintain the plan
   - Develop a maintenance and update schedule