

For Information Only

Every year in May Canadian municipalities recognize Emergency Preparedness (EP) Week. EP Week occurs this year from May 5th-11th. The theme of this year's EP Week is "Are You Ready?"

This report provides an overview of City of Greater Sudbury's responsibilities in being prepared for emergency situations that may occur within our boundaries. The report also highlights how residents can become prepared for emergencies thus building a disaster resilient community.

Background

Disasters can cause significant, even devastating impacts to communities when they strike. Impacts which include loss of life or damage to property are often measured as being social, economical, environmental or infrastructural. For this reason, the importance of building communities that are resilient to disaster has received global recognition (*United Nations, Internal Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2015*).

At the municipal level, the importance of preparedness and resilience is of particular significance. Disasters are most often local events; meaning they are experienced and managed locally by municipalities. It is estimated that municipal governments are the first line of response in more than 90% of all emergencies that occur Canada-wide, thus municipal employees play a critical role in emergency preparedness and response (*Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2006*).

The City of Greater Sudbury (CGS), like all communities, are vulnerable to numerous hazards. These hazards can be natural such as extreme weather, human caused as in the case of sabotage, or technological such as those involving hazardous materials or utility/power failures. Regardless of the type of emergency, CGS has an all-hazard Emergency Response Plan which, when activated, details the methods in which the City mobilizes its resources and makes decisions. The Plan also ensures all internal and external stakeholders are aware of their respective roles and responsibilities and provides an operating structure during times of crisis.

While major response to the emergency is primarily that of municipal agents, it is equally important that families and individuals have their own emergency response plans to help them respond on a more micro level and to enable them to recover from emergencies in an efficient manner. By being prepared, residents too can take steps/actions that can help to reduce the impact of emergency situations on their families, property, the environment and the community at large.

CGS Emergency Management Responsibilities

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)* requires all Ontario municipalities and provincial ministries to develop, implement and maintain an Emergency Management program. The Act establishes the minimum standards for Emergency Management programs required by municipalities and specifies the requirement in the Act for mandatory Emergency Management programs. According to the legislation Emergency Management programs require several key elements including:

- Conducting annual Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)
- Establishing a Municipal Emergency Control Group
- Identification of Critical Infrastructure
- Preparing an Emergency Response Plan
- Establishing an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
- Conducting an annual exercise and training for Municipal Emergency Control Group
- Public Education and Awareness
- Appointing a Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMEC)

The aim of Emergency Management programs in Ontario is to create disaster resilient communities. City of Greater Sudbury's Emergency Management Section (CGS EM) is responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining Greater Sudbury's Emergency Management program. Through this mandate, the Emergency Management Section improves the safety of all residents and visitors by:

- planning and preparing for hazards that may occur within our boundaries (HIRA)
- responding and working with internal and external stakeholders to ensure the continuity of essential services during an emergency
- activating the Emergency Operations Centre and Municipal Emergency Control Group when needed and
- engaging stakeholders to help the city recover after an event.

Are You Ready?

Past emergency situations and statistics have shown that the more prepared residents are for emergency situations the greater their chance of surviving the event and the likelihood of reduced damages to property and the environment. Being prepared for an emergency can make a critical difference to the outcome of an event and this can be applied to individuals and families as well.

A survey completed by Statistics Canada in 2014, states fewer than half (47%) of all Canadians are living in households with an emergency preparedness kit. This means citizens are less likely to have available essential items such as food, water, medication, flashlight and cash on hand during emergency situations or a disaster. The survey also stated that only 42% of Canadians indicated that their household had participated in one or two emergency management planning activities such as having an exit plan, an emergency preparedness kit, extra copies of important documents and an emergency contact list.

Whether you live or work in the City of Greater Sudbury, it is essential that residents and visitors both embrace the fact that personal preparedness is an individual responsibility. During times of emergency, there may be many people in need of assistance and it may take up to 72 hours or more for emergency services to reach you. Being self-sufficient for at least 72 hours allows emergency responders to assist the residents in greatest need first.

While most emergency situations are unpredictable, there are a few steps residents can take to ensure they are prepared for emergency situations when they occur thus reducing the impact on vital resources.

1. Know the Risks

It is important for residents to be aware of the potential hazards that may occur in their home, workplace or neighbourhood. CGS EM conducts an annual review of hazards (HIRA) that may occur within our boundaries. By learning about the different emergencies and how to respond, residents can mitigate the effects of the hazards. In CGS it is important for residents to be prepared for emergencies such as:

- Power outages
- Severe winter/lightning storms
- Floods
- Hazardous material release events

2. Make a Plan

Emergencies can strike when you least expect them, often when your family is separated. The best way to be prepared for any emergency is to make a Family Emergency Plan. A Family Emergency Plan will help you and your family know what to do in case of an emergency. Your Family Emergency Plan includes; having an emergency contact list, developing a home escape plan, having a plan for pets as well a plan for members of your family with special needs. Once you've created your family emergency plan it is important that it be communicated to all members of your household.

3. Get a Kit

In an emergency, you may need to evacuate or conversely stay in your home for long periods of time. By preparing a kit in advance containing basic supplies such as food, water, medications, a battery-powered/crank radio and flashlight, just to name a few items, residents can become self-sufficient during and after a disaster.

4. Stay Informed

During an emergency, every minute counts. Timely and accurate information from a reliable source greatly enhances public safety in the event of a municipal emergency or natural disaster. CGS is responsible for communicating emergency information to residents as part of the Municipal Emergency Management Program. During emergency situations, CGS will use traditional "mainstream" media (radio, print, television), its website and social media accounts as well as Sudbury Alerts to notify residents of any imminent threat to public safety. Sudbury Alerts is the City's public emergency mass notification system that will be used to notify residents of any imminent threat to public safety. Residents are encouraged to sign up via the City's website to receive this service.

Conclusion:

Community safety is our top priority. Everyone has a role to play in making sure we all stay safe during emergencies. City of Greater Sudbury continues to work with our community partners and residents in building a disaster resilient community. If you would like to learn more about how you can be prepared, please visit;

<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/live/emergency-services/emergency-management/>.

Resource Cited

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. 2006. *Emergency: Municipalities Missing from Disaster Planning*. (accessed March 19, 2019).

Taylor-Butts, Andrea. *Emergency preparedness in Canada, 2014*. Statistics Canada. (accessed March 19, 2019)

United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. 2015. *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. Geneva, Switzerland. (accessed March 18, 2019).