

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Finance and Administration
January 14, 2021

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer

Emergency Management Program Annual Compliance Review

1. Recommendations

Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

This report provides an update to Council on activities undertaken by York Region to comply with annual requirements of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 in 2020 while actively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to legislative requirements, this report also provides an overview of other emergency preparedness and response activities undertaken by the Emergency Management Program to enhance York Region's resilience.

Key Points:

- York Region has completed all of the annual regulatory requirements of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 in 2020
- The provincial Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) waived the requirement for an emergency exercise for all municipalities in recognition of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- The York Region Business Continuity Program enabled the corporation to identify and ensure continued delivery of high priority business functions and services during COVID-19 response
- York Region Emergency Management continues to support the northern six municipalities to deliver emergency management programs on a cost recovery basis (current agreement to 2022)

3. Background

York Region has consistently met the annual regulatory compliance for its Emergency Management Program since the legislation came into effect in 2004

Each year Council receives an update on York Region's Emergency Management program and any necessary updates to the bylaw and/or Emergency Plan. To fulfill the Province's requirements, municipalities must verify they have completed all the requirements outlined in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, which include

- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
- Identification of critical infrastructure
- An emergency plan
- Training and education
- Public education

York Region's past investments in emergency preparedness planning, training, exercises, public education, and business continuity planning, have enabled the corporation to meet the challenges of this pandemic

The scale of the COVID-19 pandemic is unlike any other emergency event previously encountered in York Region's 49-year history. On March 23rd, the Regional Chair signed an Emergency Declaration in response to COVID-19. Almost a year after activating the Region's emergency management structures, COVID-19 continues to impact all areas of the corporation, which are supported through the established emergency and crisis management structures.

4. Analysis

In addition to completing all mandatory elements for 2020, York Region partnered with local municipalities to assess and rank hazards and threats

Each municipality must conduct an annual Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment to ensure that Emergency Management Programs are based on the identification and assessment of local hazards.

In September 2020, York Region partnered with local municipalities, York Regional Police (YRP), and other stakeholders to conduct its annual Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment workshop. Regional staff, subject matter experts, and local municipal Community Emergency Management Coordinators reviewed the likelihood and consequences of the hazards most likely to affect York Region, paying particular attention this year to the impacts of COVID-19. The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment resulted in several hazards being elevated due to more severe consequences associated with the ongoing pandemic.

The top threats identified in 2020 through this exercise are noted in Table below.

Top Hazards on the 2020 York Region Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Hazard	Level of Risk
Infectious Diseases	Extreme
Electrical Energy Outage	Very High
Winter Weather	High
Cyber Attack	High
Flood	High
Water/Wastewater Disruption	High

The Emergency Plan has been reviewed and updated

Each municipality must evaluate and update its emergency response plan annually. The Regional Municipality of York Emergency Plan (the Plan) outlines how the Region will respond to emergencies. The Plan identifies the members of the Regional Emergency Control Group and summarizes their roles and responsibilities. In 2020, the Plan was reviewed, and minor editorial adjustments were made for clarity. When the pandemic subsides a more fulsome review of the plan will be undertaken informed by learnings from our response.

In coordination with local municipalities, the critical infrastructure database has been reviewed and updated

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* requires each municipality to review and update critical infrastructure within its jurisdiction. Critical infrastructure is defined as those Regional assets such as water, wastewater facilities and Paramedic stations, essential to meet vital human needs, sustain the economy, protect public health, ensure safety and security and maintain continuity and confidence in government. Updates identified in the critical infrastructure database better positions York Region in managing risk.

In 2020, York Region partnered with local municipalities and YRP to review the critical infrastructure database. York Region Data, Analysis and Visualization Services consolidated the updated database, providing maps to our municipal partners.

The Province's Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management waived the requirement to conduct an annual exercise due to the ongoing pandemic

Each Municipality in Ontario must conduct an emergency exercise to test its emergency plan and to train Emergency Control Group members. In recognition that most municipalities activated their Emergency Operations Centre's and Emergency Control Group members have been actively involved in responding to COVID-19, the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management has waived the requirements for municipalities to conduct their annual practice exercise.

In 2020, Emergency Management trained over 180 York Region staff and partners on their roles and responsibilities in emergency response and recovery activities

The York Region Emergency Management team offers the following emergency management training courses to staff and partners:

- Introduction to Emergency Management
- Introduction to Emergency Operations
- Introduction to Business Continuity
- Incident Management System Planning
- Incident Management System Operations
- Incident Management System Command
- Incident Management System Finance and Logistics

Pivoting to an online, virtual training early in the pandemic allowed York Region Emergency Management to maintain 80% of its course offerings.

Additionally, all Regional Emergency Control Group members (and Regional Emergency Operations Centre staff) received on-going and function specific training throughout the year which included all mandatory annual training requirements under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* as follows:

- Procedures used to activate and operate under the Emergency Plan
- Procedures to notify members of the Regional Emergency Control Group
- Contents of the Emergency Plan including roles and responsibilities of the Regional Emergency Control Group and response organizations
- Communications, infrastructure and technology employed in the Regional Emergency Operations Centre
- Components of the Emergency Management Program including Hazard Identification, Risk Analysis and critical infrastructure

Emergency Management partnered with all nine local municipalities, YRP and other community stakeholders to find innovative ways to continue to provide training and public education during the pandemic

The Public Education and Awareness Program provides public education on local hazards and personal preparedness for emergencies. Elements of the program include:

- Community Safety Village
- Emergency Preparedness Week
- The Emergency Preparedness Guide

The Community Safety Village (a partnership between the Emergency Management Program, YRP, Paramedic and Senior Services and the Regional Fire Coordinator) continues to teach students about fire life-safety and emergency preparedness. In 2020 as a result of the Pandemic all on-site learning was suspended. The Fire Education and Emergency Preparedness Program switched to an online learning platform and delivered public education to over 800 students.

Emergency Preparedness Week is recognized in the first week of May and is supported in partnership with YRP, Fire Services, Paramedic and Seniors Services, local municipalities and community agencies. In recent years, an event has been held at the Community Safety Village, attracting more than 3,500 residents.

In 2020, York Region and YRP cancelled this large-scale event to ensure the safety of both staff and residents. Instead, York Region recognized Emergency Preparedness Week through a media release, social media posts and a news story. The messaging was directed at all York Region residents and focused on personal preparedness tactics such as building a 72-hour emergency kit, creating a family evacuation plan and staying connected by downloading the York Region mobile application.

In the fall of 2020, York Region Emergency Management assisted in educating the public about flood-risk in support of the two conservation authorities within York Region. The two-week digital campaign included a campaign page and social media. It was successful in reaching 156,132 residents, supported by local municipalities and community partners sharing the messaging within their networks.

The Emergency Preparedness Guide continues to be an information source about emergency preparedness and is distributed throughout the Region by local municipal partners. A [downloadable PDF](#) of the guide is also available on the Region's website.

York Region's Business Continuity Program continues to support organizational resiliency and continuity of operations during the pandemic

Since 2015, the Region's Business Continuity Program has supported the organization to prepare for business disruptions and emergencies by developing business continuity plans and training staff in their roles and responsibilities during an emergency. In 2020, the Business Continuity Management policy was updated to ensure York Region continues to be

in a constant state of readiness to respond to business disruptions resulting from a loss of staff, loss of facility or loss of technology.

In response to COVID-19, York Region was able to adapt business continuity plans and leverage existing data to enable the continued delivery of critical services while helping to identify staff for redeployment to support the Public Health response.

York Region provides emergency management support to the northern six municipalities

Since 2017, York Region Emergency Management has been engaged through a Memorandum of Understanding, on a cost recovery basis, supporting the emergency management programs of the northern six municipalities (Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville). The agreement provides emergency management support through 2022.

In 2020, this program supported these municipalities through the following activities:

1. Emergency Management Program Compliance Support: this included reviewing and/or updating existing emergency plans and by-laws, hazard identification risk assessments, and critical infrastructure data.
2. Emergency Management Training: provided to municipal staff as required by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management. This included the expansion of traditional Incident Management System function specific training; as well as the development of new templates for Emergency Operations Centre documentation. This specialized training was completed with East Gwillimbury, Georgina, and Whitchurch-Stouffville in Q1 of 2020 and was deferred for King, Aurora, and Newmarket to 2021 due to COVID-19.
3. Support for additional programs in specific municipalities included:
 - Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's site-specific Flood Response Plans
 - Implementation of Business Continuity Planning
 - York Regional Police Run, Hide, Defend program

Between March and December, a total of 47 briefings were coordinated with local municipal Community Emergency Management Coordinators, Public Health, YRP, Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management and Department of National Defence

As a result of COVID-19 Emergency Management Guidance and Support was also supported via York Region's Regional Emergency Operations Centre Liaison function to all nine local municipalities. This provided local Community Emergency Management Coordinators with linkages to Public Health, regional departments, and external agencies providing situational awareness for a coordinated response.

5. Financial

Costs associated with implementing the York Region Emergency Management Program initiatives and meeting legislated compliance were included in the 2020 operating budget.

6. Local Impact

The ongoing key to success in emergency management is our partnership with local municipalities and key stakeholders. In 2020, York Region Emergency Management worked with municipalities to ensure a coordinated approach to the challenges posed by COVID-19, while partnering in Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, critical infrastructure data base updates, training, and public education activities to our residents.

7. Conclusion

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced the value of having a responsive Emergency Management Program supported by strong partnerships and key stakeholders. The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and Ontario Regulation 380/04 requires municipalities to maintain a program that can respond to major incidents.

Pivoting to online, virtual platforms early in the pandemic allowed York Regions Emergency Management Program to continue many initiatives, including continued training, public education and compliance related activities. York Region has completed all legislative requirements for emergency planning in 2020. The program continues to support all nine municipalities in emergency planning activities, hazard identification and risk assessment, critical infrastructure identification and mapping, and overall emergency response.

It is recommended Council receive this update for information on the annual regulatory compliance activities.

For more information on this report, please contact Morris Faccin, Manager, Emergency Management Program at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71212. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:

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