

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members Board of Health	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: January 13, 2014	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Public Health Services Emergency Management Program (BOH14001)(City Wide)	
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

The purpose of this report is to outline the requirements of Public Health Services (PHS) in achieving the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocols under the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocols are defined by the Emergency Management Branch of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Additionally, the OPHS require annual reporting of the PHS Emergency Plan to the Board of Health (BOH) and this report fulfils that requirement.

Historical Background

In 2008, the introduction of the Ministry of Health Emergency Preparedness Protocols required all Public Health Units to have an emergency management program in place to meet the required standards. The standards drive the components of the PHS emergency management program and include:

- The identification and assessment of relevant hazards and risks to public health,

- The development of a Public Health continuity of operations plan,
- The development of an Public Health emergency response plan,
- The development, implementation and documentation of a Public Health 24/7 notification protocol,
- A process for increasing awareness regarding Public Health emergency preparedness activities,
- The delivery of Public Health emergency preparedness and response education and training for the BOH,
- Ensuring officials are oriented on the BOH's emergency response plan, and
- Exercising the continuity of operations plan, emergency response plan and 24/7 notification protocol.

In order to support meeting these standards, the Public Health Emergency Planner coordinates an advisory committee within PHS. The Public Health Emergency Management Advisory Committee is an oversight body that guides and approves the program work. The committee consists of a representative from each division including the Director from the Health Protection Division.

Meeting the Requirements

Requirement #1: The identification and assessment of relevant risks and hazards was completed in 2011 by a joint municipal committee which identified and assessed the various risks and hazards that could give rise to emergencies in the City of Hamilton. The City coordinates mitigation plans with City departments to address these hazards. A review of these risks and hazards will be coordinated by the City Emergency Managers in 2014. The top ten identified risks for Hamilton are:

- Hazardous Materials and Explosions
- Energy Supply Emergencies
- Epidemics/Pandemics
- Terrorism
- Flooding
- Structure Fires (major)
- Tornadoes (windstorms and microburst)
- Transportation Accident – Motor Vehicle
- Ice Storms
- Earthquake

Requirement #2 & #3: PHS has an up-to-date Emergency Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan. Each year these plans are reviewed, revised and tested for operability. The Emergency Plan reflects the adaption of the Incident Management System as the municipal emergency response model. This internationally recognized

system is a standardized approach to emergency management encompassing personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures and communications, operating within a common organizational structure.

Requirement #4: The development, implementation and documentation of a 24/7 notification protocol has been operational for many years and is coordinated with the City Customer Contact Centre. Contact lists and after hour protocols have been developed and are maintained quarterly by the Public Health Emergency Planner.

Requirement #5 & #6: The process for increasing emergency preparedness awareness is delivered through education and training sessions for all staff. Last year over 16 training sessions were delivered by the Public Health Emergency Planner defining staff's roles and responsibilities during an emergency. Training was also arranged for PHS staff to attend the Health Canada Medical Emergency Treatment for Exposures to Radiation. Opportunities to increase emergency preparedness awareness are also provided through the PHS electronic website, where information on emergency response is readily available.

Requirement #7: The BOH is updated on all Public Health emergency management program initiatives, and during large scale emergencies such as the 2009 H1N1 event.

Requirement #8: In 2013, PHS had an opportunity to participate in the City wide exercise called Exercise Smoke. This was the first full scale exercise for the City Emergency Management Program since 2003; and involved the activation of the City Departmental Emergency Operations Centre. This exercise tested the communications between the emergency site, the City Emergency Operations Centre and Departmental Emergency Operations Centres. There were many lessons learned from this exercise which will strengthen the emergency response efforts within PHS and City departments.

Current Program: PHS Response to Emergencies

As with any emergency, it's a team approach to mitigating, responding and recovering from an emergency. PHS' role during an emergency is to provide up-to-date surveillance on all events; and to protect public health, the environment and property. The Health Hazard Investigation team are deployed to emergency sites, and will collaborate with Emergency Services to assess potential health hazards and the impact to the environment and health of the community. Communication is key to any response. The PHS Public Health Information Officer keeps the public and media updated on all large scale emergency events and mitigation strategies to reduce public health impacts. The BOH are kept informed of all major events and provide support to an emergency as a conduit to the community. Council is also updated on significant events so that the community are prepared and informed.

Incidents in 2013 that involved a PHS response included the Stage 3 Heat Alert in July followed by the severe wind storm that damaged trees and stranded residents with no hydro. PHS was the lead agency for the Stage 3 Heat Alert and provided public health information to assist the public in coping with the severe heat. Immediately following the severe wind storm, PHS sent a Public Health Inspector to restaurants and food premises without hydro to insure safe food handling and proper disposal of spoiled food. In the fall of 2013, PHS investigated a single case of measles which involved the contact of approximately 80 students. This investigation prompted the development of a Surge Capacity Plan to ensure adequate staffing and management for any large scale event.

Partnerships with Health Sector Agencies

In 2010, the Health Sector Steering Committee was convened as a high level advisory group that provides stewardship and support to the Health Sector Emergency Management Committee. This advisory group was formed to give advice and resources for a coordinated health sector response during an emergency. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed as a focus of governance and coordination to the members of the Health Sector Emergency Management Committee. The MOU ensures coordination of resources and response strategies during a large scale health emergency.

The Health Sector Emergency Management Committee includes representatives from Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Emergency Medical Services, Long Term Care Homes, primary care physicians, Public Health labs and the Community Care Access Centre and is under the leadership of the Medical Officer of Health. The committee convenes 3-4 times per year to discuss mitigation strategies to respond to a large scale event affecting health sector agencies.

In 2013, the Health Sector Emergency Management Committee convened to resolve the shortage of Tamiflu in the community during flu season. An alternative pharmacy was open on the weekend and stocks of Tamiflu were sent to this pharmacy to provide convenient access to the community. The Health Sector Emergency Management Committee convened on November 29, 2013 to participate in a scenario based exercise. The exercise titled 'Pan AM Preparedness' focused on two significant health risks identified during the upcoming Pan AM games. Food poisoning and extreme heat were discussed, including the potential impact and mitigation strategies for the Health Sector agencies of Hamilton. The exercise provided an opportunity for Hamilton's Health Systems to identify needs and determine how to best coordinate resources.

Pan AM Preparedness

The Pan AM Games will be coming to Hamilton July 10 - 26, 2015. Hamilton will be the host city for Soccer; one of the largest venues of the games. This high profile special

event will see an influx of athletes, officials and spectators into the City. Although mass gatherings are not emergencies, there is potential for impacts on Hamilton's health system. While unique onsite health and medical services specifically for the games will be available at the athlete's village; Hamilton's health system requires a coordinated planning process to ensure that any potential impacts are addressed. PHS is represented at the City Pan AM Operations Working Group to assist with the impact of the games on the community. PHS is also participating in the provincial Pan AM Games Health System Preparedness Steering Committee. This committee will focus on maintaining access, standards and continuity of health services across the health systems during the games. In response to this committee, the Hamilton Health Sector Emergency Management Committee has developed a sub-committee called the Pan AM Health Sector Committee. This committee will focus on health system coordination within Hamilton's health system agencies.

The partnerships within Hamilton's health system ensure congruence and connectivity of health care within the City of Hamilton. Working together within Hamilton's health system will build a stronger community of care. PHS will continue to provide leadership and guidance to these committees to enhance the response and coordination of health system preparedness.

Summary

PHS has implemented Public Health emergency preparedness and response that use proven methods and approaches which are integrated within the City of Hamilton's Emergency Response Program. These efforts appear well-aligned with the directions in the 2008 OPHS. Through this planning process and working together, the City, PHS and its partners will be well equipped to reduce illness and death in the City of Hamilton during the next emergency affecting the health of the community.