

# Best Practice

## EMO Manual

### CONTACT

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### THE PRACTICE

The flooding of Katepwa Lake in 2011 inspired the hiring of a professional EMO coordinator and the creation of an EMO plan designed especially for small communities. It is made to work for those with few staff and a volunteer base, as opposed to most existing plans geared to municipalities with many staff. The inclusion of volunteers in this plan is unique, and it also includes elements of volunteer safety.

### THE PROCESS

In the spring of 2011, the District of Katepwa got notice that they could expect some flooding, but the situation got worse quickly. At the time, they did not have an emergency management plan, consultant, or any personnel with experience in this situation. They hired an EMO coordinator, and after the flood, he was put on retainer and hired to write an EMO plan for the community. The resulting plan can be enacted by others. Since the initial flood, there have been courses on the plan and local volunteers trained in the process.

Council, the EMO coordinator, municipal employees, and the local Lions Club worked together at the local level. They worked closely with the Office of the Fire Commissioner to develop and implement the EMO plan and process. Provincial ministries and agencies in charge of health, environment, transportation, conservation and wildlife, and protective services were also involved. The Red Cross, local independent businesses, and nearby communities and their fire and police departments were key players in the success and future implementation.

### THE RESULTS

There is now a lasting EMO plan in place that can be used in the event of any emergency. There is a core group of trained volunteers familiar with the plan. Council has the tools they need to act on short notice. The plan was used during the 2011 flood, and again in 2013.

The District of Katepwa has also started to stockpile equipment such as a sandbag machine, pumps, and generators. They are available for various types of emergencies – not just floods. They plan to add more resources each year to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on others. The Lions Club is setting up a first responders program sponsored and supported by council.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Ensure timely communication to the residents – in person or online.
- Ensure site managers have communication between them and EOC.

- Provide the opportunity for key volunteers to be trained in basic emergency planning.
- Make sure your emergency plan is up to date and includes a detailed list of equipment available within the area and available by contractors, and a detailed list of mutual-aid contacts.
- Know and communicate frequently with provincial agencies, to find out the latest information, training opportunities and/or program opportunities for your area.
- Develop potential list of people that can fill the different roles in the EOC, site or incident command , and food and refreshment teams.
- Have updated list of residents (address, phone, and email addresses) accessible in electronic and hardcopy form.
- Ensure critical-incident debriefing opportunities are provided throughout event, and follow up.
- Depending on the length of your emergency, you must have a plan to provide a break for responders and volunteers. Transition can be difficult, but is extremely important.
- Provide medical stations and have an AED machine available.
- Council and administration still need to do their duties and make financial decisions. Daily updates are essential. Mayor and Emergency Planning Coordinator need to update council on status.
- Media management is essential. This can be very useful to communicate current conditions and needs.
- Have regular updates and a location for media to meet for updates.
- Safety of your emergency sites for volunteers, first responders, and the public is **critical** (personal protective equipment, identification of risks and signage stating them, proper clothing, gloves, barricades to keep public back from risks).
- Have a team that can determine what equipment you may need for the changing conditions (hip waders, latex gloves, warm boots, hard hats, gloves, first-aid kits, emergency lighting, generators, mosquito spray, liquid soap for washing hands at food site).
- Ensure you have a place to allow volunteers to get out of the weather and have shelter (trailers, garages, somewhere to sit down and get fluid and food).
- Document every decision, and log each day's process, aims, issues, and resolves. This is important for legal matters, ensures nothing has been missed, and helps during the debriefing process.
- Hold daily meetings with entire teams and provincial agencies. Discuss issues, daily aims, update on weather conditions, follow up with concerns, and provide positive reinforcement to the volunteers.
- Celebrate successes! Discuss processes that didn't go that well.
- Reinforce that the emergency plan is a process that can change (based on circumstances) and is the framework for response.
- Develop a web site to show pictures, provide latest conditions, make urgent requests for assistance or supplies, and report action from the EOC to residents that don't live in the area or out of the province/country.
- Thank and recognize the residents that helped or to the people and companies that donated (time, effort, food, financial assistance, equipment and support)!
- Don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Council does not lose control of their municipality during a Local State of Emergency. Provincial agencies are set up to assist and minimize impact.
- Humour is and was important, especially on very stressful, long days.
- Council needs to trust the emergency plan and let the EOC run the event. We must be all on side and can't be showing discontent.
- Share your updates with neighbouring municipalities (urban and rural).
- Ensure incident command is in place, if evacuation is being considered.
- Ensure area maps, secondary roads, and grids of the area are accessible for the EOC.
- The 80/20 per cent rule happens in this kind of event as well!!! You will please 80 per cent, and 20 per cent will be the doubters or may cause you grief.