

# OPERATION PLUGGED IN

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, we are working together as community partners to prepare for a major emergency. Although we have a specific type of emergency to discuss today, in Simcoe County we take an “all hazards” approach to emergency management. As a result, what we take with us today – the new partnerships, the new knowledge, the reaffirmation of existing plans – will strengthen our collective capacity to respond to any major community disaster. It will contribute to the strengthening of our communities’ disaster resilience and will become part of the community fabric that Canadians cherish.

The impetus for an emergency exercise of this magnitude resulted from the findings of “Operation Fever Phix”, a major tabletop emergency exercise held in December 2006 that simulated an influenza pandemic.

Dubbed “Operation Plugged In”, today’s exercise code name makes reference to the fact that the exercise will simulate an extended winter power outage, and draws attention to the criticality of emergency preparedness and emergency response partnerships.

## **EXERCISE GOAL**

To collaborate through an effective public and private sector training partnership to strengthen our community disaster resilience in the areas of preparedness, response and recovery.

## **EXERCISE OBJECTIVES**

1. Promote a common business continuity planning template and lexicon.
2. Promote a common Incident Management System; consider media relations, intra-agency & inter-agency communications.
3. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of each agency and identify how we come together as a whole during times of emergency.
4. Identify gaps and vulnerabilities in existing plans.

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## EXERCISE FORMAT

“Operation Plugged In” will be delivered in a tabletop format that will focus on points of discussion that address each of the four exercise objectives. Although there will be an over-arching background scenario, play will be divided into three distinct modules, each designed to provide training in three critical areas of emergency management: preparedness, response and recovery.

Each module will be preceded by an introductory video that will provide the context for the discussion points. Participants have been grouped by common functions and will be guided through the exercise by a facilitator who is an expert in the discipline of emergency management.

Each participant plays a critical role in their own organization and it is possible that an urgent matter could arise during the day. If an emergency does occur, please advise your facilitator who will call a **“NO DUFF”** emergency, stopping all exercise play.

## PREPAREDNESS

This phase of emergency management planning takes place prior to an emergency event. It consists of developing an emergency response plan that includes a clearly delineated command and control structure that includes detailed documentation regarding the roles and responsibilities of each member of your organization’s emergency response team, or emergency operations centre team.

In addition to a plan for responding to an emergency event, preparedness also includes a plan for how your organization will continue to deliver its core services, especially those services that safeguard human life or that mitigate against catastrophic environmental damage. Referred to as business continuity planning, consideration must be given to critical infrastructure, critical technology needs, critical business functions, and interdependencies with other departments, agencies or vendors.

Perhaps the most critical element of the preparedness phase is that of educating your staff, customers, partners, and the community on how you will partner to

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respond to an emergency and, more importantly, what steps they need to take to ensure they are personally and organizationally prepared.

## **RESPONSE**

This is the part of emergency management that we all think we do a very good job at. However, if you have inadequately prepared prior to the event you will waste precious time trying to figure out what to do when the crisis strikes. Emergency response should be the implementation of well-established plans that have been tested and refined over time.

Response relies on the personal and professional preparedness of every member of your organization. It consists of lessening the acuity of the event to safeguard human life, limit environmental damage and protect property. It requires a well-oiled command and control system that fosters unified command. It requires both operational tactics and strategic oversight with seamless interaction between the scene and the emergency operations centre.

Integral to the response phase is a sophisticated crisis communications plan, designed to provide timely and accurate information to those who need it and to protect the reputation of the organization as the event unfolds.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery begins at the exact moment that the emergency event occurs. In most circumstances, it continues long after the response efforts have concluded. Recovery planning focuses on two areas: human needs, and organizational needs – both are equally important. It is fundamentally about returning to normal or to a new normal.

Human needs in an emergency are first addressed through the attenuation of the event itself – for example, tornadic and storm activity has ceased, the chemical spill has been contained, the flood waters have receded. Basic human needs such as shelter, food, water, clothing, and medical care must be considered and are frequently addressed via the implementation of an emergency social services plan. Research resulting from 9/11 in New York City and from Hurricane Katrina in New

Orleans, shows that the most fundamental element to psychological recovery for those impacted by the event, including emergency responders, is the

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implementation of a critical incident stress management program that includes the early opportunity for individuals to meet with their pre-crisis cohort, such as co-workers, neighbours, faith groups or school groups.

The second element of recovery planning relates to organizational or business recovery. This may include rebuilding assets, recovering lost data or from data loss, reconciling manual processes with electronic processes, meeting the needs of employees, and re-establishing your brand.

## TOOLS

At the back of this manual, you will find some tools that will assist you as you continue to develop the emergency management program for your organization. For additional training, please feel free to contact any of the members of the **“Operation Plugged In” Design Team:**

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## ADVISORY TEAM

The members of the “Operation Plugged In” Design Team are grateful for the contributions and exercise development support of the following individuals:

Mike Bendell (Stevenson Memorial Hospital), James Besley (County of Simcoe Paramedic Services), Dorian Calvano and Carol-Ann Harkness (County of Simcoe Emergency Social Services), Lisa Garratt (County of Simcoe Long-Term Care), Allan Greenwood (County of Simcoe Corporate Communications), Captain Robert Hay (CFB Borden), Brenda MacPherson (North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre), Rebecca Orton (Simcoe Muskoka Health Sector), Inspector John Trude (Ontario Provincial Police Collingwood Detachment) and Kerry Woodward (Canadian Red Cross Simcoe Muskoka Branch).

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## BACKGROUND

The “Operation Plugged In” Design Team acknowledges the excellent after action reports prepared by the City of Cornwall and Queen’s University and we express our gratitude to them for generously sharing their findings.

In early January, 1998, eastern Ontario and south-western Quebec were hit with a devastating ice storm. Ice storms are a regular winter occurrence in Canada, most often striking in January or early February in those areas impacted by the lake effect snowfalls that are a prominent feature of the Great Lakes region. This storm was different. The amount of rainfall and the vast geographic spread of the storm resulted in significant infrastructure damage that impacted approximately 1,200,000 residents in Ontario alone - 600,000 of these were without power, many for up to three weeks. Emergency shelters received a total of 100,000 evacuees, many of whom were extremely vulnerable members of the affected communities: those with limited or no housing, those with complex medical and mental health needs, the elderly and small children. The human needs of this disaster were staggering and were further complicated by the extensive damage to the electrical infrastructure.

Between January 4<sup>th</sup> –10<sup>th</sup>, 1998 approximately 73 mm of freezing rain and ice pellets fell on Kingston, 85 mm in Ottawa, and 100 mm in areas south of Montreal. In addition to the human needs, the agricultural industry struggled to provide water to livestock and to milk dairy cows. The crisis drew emergency responders from across Ontario, Quebec, and neighbouring jurisdictions. The Canadian Armed Forces provided much needed assistance with the response, particularly in the area of sheltering those most vulnerable in more private settings. Many residents were reluctant to leave their homes and tragically several died as a result of trying to stay in their homes for too long and attempting to implement creative, but deadly, ways to stay warm or to cook food.

The City of Cornwall operated under a declared state of emergency until February 2, 1998, almost one full month after the onset of the event. The last residents of emergency social services centres – the homeless - remained in evacuation centres for up to six weeks, many remarking on the improved living conditions.

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Life slowly returned to normal, or to a new normal, for those who had lost loved ones, and for those who had sustained damage to their homes or business.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As we consider the discussion points during each module of “Operation Plugged In”, it will be helpful to consider some of the key lessons learned as a result of the 1998 Ice Storm. While there were many recommendations, those highlighted here reflect those elements of the event that most closely align with the objectives of this exercise:

### Preparedness

- An up-to-date community/organization emergency response plan is critical
  - ❖ Keep it short, simple and flexible
- Roles and responsibilities of emergency operations centre team must be clearly defined, trained and tested
  - ❖ Simply extending the day-to-day functions of managers does not adequately meet the demands of an emergency command and control system
- A comprehensive crisis communications plan must be developed as soon as possible – not when the crisis is already underway
- Develop and deliver a public education campaign related to family emergency preparedness
- Develop volunteer and donation management policies
- Develop a comprehensive emergency social services plan, identifying appropriate facilities for evacuation centres
- Develop an emergency power plan and an emergency fuel plan
  - ❖ Maintain all electrical generators in good condition at all times and ensure technical requirements for maintenance are followed
- Develop a comprehensive business continuity plan
- Develop an emergency training and testing program for all staff

### Response

- Consider multiple ways to carry out the crisis communications plan, for example Ham radios
- Have a strong technical spokesman and a strong and charismatic leader to instil hope and confidence
- Implement Unified Command and do not deviate from it

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- Use an operational cycle for emergency operations centre teams and continually revise the strategic and tactical incident action plans
- Document, document, document
- Do not be afraid to ask for help
- Staff safety is paramount – ensure appropriate hours of work and rest, provide and train for personal protective equipment, provide food and water
- Ensure cooperation between upper tier and lower tier municipalities and coordinate contact with the provincial or federal governments
- Communicate with all partner agencies
- Open a public inquiry centre and keep information current
- Consider legal options for forcing people from their homes
- Implement a generator tune-up process to keep generators functioning
- Visual identification for all responders and volunteers
- **LEAD:** Leave your Ego At the Door

## ✚ Recovery

- Meet basic human needs as soon as possible
  - ❖ Shelter management is critical
  - ❖ Implement process to track location of evacuees, i.e. which shelter are they using, have they returned home, etc.
  - ❖ Provide medical triage at evacuation centre sites
  - ❖ Implement rigid security protocols
  - ❖ Create opportunities for people to talk with their usual cohort
    - Facilitate “town halls” for people to share their experiences with others
  - ❖ Provide as much information as possible as early and as often as possible
  - ❖ Plan for closing the evacuation centres, considering repatriation needs and the specialized needs of the homeless
- Plan for disengagement of emergency responders
- Look after the families of responders and emergency operations centre team
- Assess asset damage and plan for repair or replacement
- Develop partnership with Insurance Bureau of Canada

*pssst....Don't tell anyone yet, but apparently weather happens around here!!*

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## MODULE 1

### PREPAREDNESS

It is October 6. In the past few months the Great Lakes have experienced higher than average water temperatures. Environment Canada meteorologists advise that elevated water temperatures in the Great Lakes result in greater amounts of snowfall and can create the perfect conditions for freezing rain. Prolonged freezing rain that damages power lines, transmission towers and transformers, and that brings down trees can have devastating impacts on communities.

The majority of ice storms related to lake effect snow occur in January. Since we have approximately 3 months to prepare for this possibility, let's make the most of it!

With your table group, please discuss the following:

#### **Business Continuity Planning**

1. Does your organization have a formal continuity of operations plan (public sector) or business continuity plan (private sector)?
  - a. If "yes", does your organization revise and train on the plan regularly?
  - b. Could you share the process used to develop the plan as well as the key elements?
2. Has your organization completed a risk assessment, business impact analysis, critical dependencies analysis and identified manual processes to replace automated processes? (Refer to Tools for more information)
3. Has your organization developed Human Resources policies for emergency events?
  - a. Work from home policy
  - b. Payroll guidelines if organization shut down
  - c. Issuance of payroll if automated payroll system disrupted
  - d. Overtime policies for non-union staff
  - e. Arrangements for staff who have caregiver roles (young children, elderly)

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## **Incident Management and Communications**

1. Does your organization use a command and control system for emergency management?
  - a. If "yes", is it the Incident Management System (IMS)?
  - b. Are all members of your emergency response team trained to understand their role in the command and control structure?
2. Discuss benefits and concerns regarding the use of the Incident Management System (please refer to Tools for more information)
4. Does your command and control structure have a single point of contact for communicating with other agencies/organizations?
  - a. If "yes", has that person received training?

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Does your organization know the role it would play in responding to a major community emergency event?
  - a. Please discuss the role of your organization with others at your table
  - b. Do all of your employees understand this role?
2. What other organizations would you need to partner or connect with?
  - a. Do you know your counterpart in each of these organizations?

## **Test Existing Plan**

1. Does your organization have an existing "all hazards" emergency response plan?
  - a. If "yes", does it include roles & responsibilities and notification procedure for control group?
  - b. Is the emergency response plan part of staff orientation?
2. If your organization does not have a formal emergency response plan, what will it take to develop one?

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## MODULE 2

### RESPONSE

It's now January 24 and the news is bleak. For the past 5 days, an average of 80 mm of freezing rain and ice pellets fell in Simcoe County. Similar amounts have fallen in Grey County, Dufferin County, Durham Region, York Region, and the District of Muskoka. Everything is covered with a thick, heavy layer of ice. The

silver lining: storm has ceased and although temperatures have plummeted to -15 C, sunny skies are on the horizon.

County of Simcoe has activated its emergency operations centre team and their briefing is summarized here:

- ALL power is out in Simcoe County and all of its contiguous upper tier municipalities
- Earliest date of any power restoration is February 15.
- Generators for water and waste water are not reliable and compromise of drinking water is a real possibility
- Major transformer and tower damage across the region – do not go near downed power lines!
- Falling ice and falling trees creating a safety hazard near trees and buildings
- Community health care clients struggling to remain in their homes
  - Community health care providers are referring an average of 50% of their home care clients to hospitals
- Hospitals beyond maximum surge capacity and operating only critical life-sustaining services
- Primary care physicians and after-hours clinics are closed
- Emergency response agencies still going strong but cannot safely navigate during the night, compromising response to medical emergencies
- Industries considering extended shut-downs
- Emergency evacuation centres must be established – estimates are that 75,000 will need shelter in Simcoe County alone
- Alternate arrangements for funerals and other faith ceremonies/services may be necessary

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- Barrie Winter Fest community events have been cancelled and ski hills have closed - most hotel reservations in the region have been cancelled
- Police challenged to maintain security at evacuation centres, respond to reports of looting and vandalism, and deal with traffic accidents and road closures
- Roads are salted and sanded where passable but downed power lines and trees make travel treacherous in some areas
- All schools and daycares have been closed
- Grocery and camping supply stores report diminishing stock
- Every municipality and emergency response agency in Simcoe County has an emergency fuel agreement with one of 3 bulk fuel providers – how will all needs be met
- All available fuel is being used by emergency responders, hospitals and Long-Term Care Homes – travel will soon be restricted for non-emergency personnel
- 9-1-1 system overwhelmed – immediate need for a public inquiry centre

With your table group, please discuss the following:

## **Business Continuity Planning**

1. Can your organization continue to deliver its critical business functions?
  - a. If “yes” are there other functions that you can defer?
  - b. Does your organization have the following:
    - i. Back-up power generator and a maintenance plan for continuous use?
    - ii. Emergency fuel agreement?
    - iii. Emergency agreements with vendors of critical supplies?
    - iv. Rapid implementation of manual processes to replace automated processes?
2. If you cannot maintain your critical business functions, what work will you defer and will you need to re-deploy staff in deferred functions to critical areas?
  - a. If re-deployment is required, have staff been cross-trained or is there a rapid cross-training process in place?

## **Incident Management and Communications**

1. Does your organization have an emergency operations centre?
  - a. If “yes”, is it a stand-alone site or a room that needs to be “re-purposed”?

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- b. Do control team members know where the location is and multiple routes to travel there?
  - c. If no emergency operations centre exists, where will the command team meet and is the facility adequate re: supplies, equipment, bathrooms, security, etc.?
2. Do members of your command team have alternates?
  - a. If "yes", do the alternates receive adequate training in their roles and responsibilities?
  - b. If "no", who will fill command team roles if some members are unavailable and how will they be trained?
3. Do you have a Logistics Section that plans and exercises their roles annually?
4. Do you have a Crisis Communications Plan?
  - a. If "yes", who will be your spokespeople and have they been trained in crisis communications?
  - b. Do you have pre-crafted Emergency Bulletin messages for staff and the media?
  - c. Have you considered how to integrate social media communication tools into your Crisis Communications Plan?
  - d. Have you considered how your key messages would align with the key messages of other organizations – e.g. the County, Medical Officer of Health?

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. How will your organization connect to the broader community emergency response incident action plan?
2. Does your Liaison Officer (single point of contact) know the Liaison Officers of other key stakeholders or partners?
3. How will you communicate with your key stakeholders throughout the event?

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## Test Existing Plans

**Questions 1 and 2 in this section relate primarily to public sector and community agencies.**

1. Does any part of the of your emergency response plan rely on the use of volunteers? This is one of the most complex elements of emergency response and requires a formal policy to implement effectively.
  - a. Discuss with the group how you may need volunteers and what policy you have in place to manage them.
  
2. Has your organization considered how it would manage donations of "stuff"? Generally, public sector organizations prefer donations of money.
  - a. If you believe you may receive donations of items other than money, do you have a policy in place for their management?
  - b. Do you have a policy and procedure for receiving financial donations?
  
3. Does your organization have a critical infrastructure assurance plan in place that identifies critical assets and considers how to best secure and protect them?
  - a. Discuss the types of critical infrastructure related to your organization and consider community-wide infrastructure that your organization relies on.

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## MODULE 3

### RECOVERY PART I

It's January 24. The freezing rain ended yesterday and indefatigable road crews have valiantly sanded or salted every road in the region. By end of the day today, all roads will be safely passable.

That is the good news.

In addition to the information received earlier at the County of Simcoe emergency operations centre briefing, the bad news is as follows:

#### **Human Needs**

- There are 80,000 people from across Simcoe County, including Barrie and Orillia who will require emergency shelter for up to three weeks
  - ❖ Those seeking shelter include frail elderly, community mental health patients, those with marginal or no housing, families with young children, and those with chronic medical conditions – how can this be accomplished?
  - ❖ Security concerns have been raised
  - ❖ Logistics of feeding, cleaning, maintaining hygiene supplies. Many seeking shelter have pets
  - ❖ Transportation required to evacuation centres
  - ❖ County's portable power program activated but limited
- Many people are insisting on staying in their homes with no heat
- There are not enough crisis counsellors to serve 80,000 people
- Integration with faith community essential element of critical incident stress management
- Consideration needed re: "town hall" style meetings to allow people to talk about their experiences, fears, solutions. Experienced facilitators are needed
- Need to access insurance information

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## **Business Needs**

- Many medium and large organizations have back-up generators and are running modified processes
- Those with natural gas generators will need to ensure a maintenance plan is in place
- Those with diesel generators will need emergency fuel plan – limited providers
- With schools and daycares closed, many employees cannot get to work
- Many organizations have sustained damage to physical assets
- Many organizations have suffered major data loss
- Small businesses with no generators have closed

With your table group, please discuss the following:

## **Business Continuity Planning**

1. What is the role of your organization in assisting employees who are impacted by this emergency?
2. Do you have a critical incident stress management plan for your employees beyond the traditional Employee Assistance Plan? Is it premised on compassion?
3. Do you have an asset and inventory damage process that can be implemented in the absence of electrical power?
4. Do you have a plan with your insurance provider re: restoration of damaged assets?

## **Incident Management and Communications**

1. 80,000 people need heated shelter. What role can your organization play in assisting with emergency social service needs?
2. Communications with your staff and clients are critical at this stage. How will you effect this communication?

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3. It is likely that your emergency operations centre will be running 24/7 for several weeks.
  - a. Are control team members prepared for shift work?
  - b. Can the emergency operations centre support the intense activities of the control team?

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. In an emergency of this nature, virtually every resident will require some degree of emergency social services support. What are the key elements of emergency social services?
2. What agencies play lead roles in the delivery of emergency social services?
3. Can your organization lead any aspect of “cohort communication” or “town halls” for members of your organization or the community that you serve?

## **Test Existing Plans**

1. Does your organization have a formal recovery plan?
  - a. If “yes” give yourself a huge pat on the back and share your expertise with others at your table.
  - b. If “no” consider what might be required to return your organization to normal or new normal operations and consider what supports your employees may have
  - c. Pay particular attention to the reconciling of manual and automated processes.

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## RECOVERY PART II

It's February 14. There is some good news! The power has now been fully restored across central Ontario. Environment Canada forecasts sunny skies for the remainder of the winter season. In Simcoe County, 80,000 people are being sheltered in approximately 300 different locations and must return to their homes. Those with marginal or no housing will require additional support through this phase.

Businesses are beginning to get operations back to normal.

With your table group, please discuss the following:

1. How do we make this "repatriation" a smooth process?
2. What additional supports will we need for employees as they return to the workplace?
3. If your organization has had significant down time, what will you do to reinvigorate your "brand"?
4. How will you begin to plan for the next major community emergency event?



