

Community Services Report to
Emergency Management Committee
2024 November 28

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
EM2024-1299

Status of Emergency Preparedness Focus on Risk - The Emergency Operations Centre

PURPOSE

This report will focus on impacts and internal risks to services at The City of Calgary when the Emergency Operations Centre is open for and recovering from a disaster response, as well as the strategies being used to address service delivery impacts.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

- The Emergency Management Bylaw 25M2002 requires the Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) to provide a Status of Emergency Preparedness Report annually to Emergency Management Committee. In addition, two reports and panel presentations are provided each year to ensure the Emergency Management Committee and Calgarians are well-informed on actions taken to address high risks for Calgary.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Emergency Management Committee recommend that Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, 2024 NOVEMBER 28:

That Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

GM Katie Black concurs with the content of this report.

HIGHLIGHTS

- As disasters become more complex, frequent, and costly, we have a 'new normal' for emergency management in Calgary, creating increasing risks and strain on City services.
- It is important to plan for the impacts of emergencies for all City programs and services, not just for traditional emergency services.
- The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a centralized location providing coordination and collaboration for large scale incidents, staffed by business units from across The City.
- This year, the EOC has been open for a record-setting 76 days, which surpasses last year's record of 54 days (outside of the COVID-19 pandemic).
- When the EOC is open for and recovering from a disaster response there are downstream impacts on regular business and service delivery at The City of Calgary.
- City business units and services work together to implement strategies focused on reducing risk and increasing resilience to ensure that The City is prepared for impacts when the EOC is open.

DISCUSSION

Disaster Risks in Calgary & Service Risks at The City

The City of Calgary completes a Disaster Risk Assessment to understand local risks and develop strategies to reduce and manage the impact of events on Calgarians. The Assessment is updated annually, and a detailed *Disaster Risk Report* is released every four years.

Status of Emergency Preparedness Focus on Risk - The Emergency Operations Centre

In addition to community risks, it is important to understand risks to City services when a disaster strikes. A significant disaster in Calgary or surrounding area can require response coordinated at the EOC, creating impacts to regular business at The City. The focus of this report will be internal service impacts when the EOC is open for and recovering from a disaster response, with examples from Supply Management and Customer Service & Communications, two enabling services teams that play a significant role during a disaster response.

The New Normal for Emergency Management and the EOC

As described in the *2023 Status of Emergency Preparedness in Calgary* report, there has been a transition to a 'new normal' of emergency management in Calgary, with disasters becoming more complex, frequent, and costly than ever before. This new normal includes both direct impacts to Calgary as well as the need for Calgary to support other regional disaster responses.

When disaster strikes, the EOC is the central location for the CEMA team and all 60+ Agency members including City business units and external organizations. This year, the EOC has been open for a record-setting 76 days, coordinating responses to the Bearspaw feeder main break in Calgary and evacuees from Jasper wildfires. In comparison, the EOC was open only 18 days for the 2013 Calgary flood, arguably the largest disaster in Calgary's history. This demonstrates that disaster duration, expectation, and complexity are changing.

When the EOC is open, the CEMA team (Emergency Management & Business Continuity service line) and representatives of the entire agency are directly impacted with long hours in a high stress environment, often requiring 24-hour coverage. Although the 25 CEMA team members can meet the minimum staffing requirement for a short period (16 staff required for coverage), a high-acuity, long-duration activation is not sustainable with current staffing levels and requires additional personnel from outside the CEMA team. These increasing demands are also being felt by staff from other City service lines who step away from their primary role to fulfil roles within the EOC, and then continue to have responsibilities after the closure of the EOC.

Impacts to Enabling Services when the EOC is Open

When open for disaster response, the EOC is staffed by a variety of subject matter experts from across The City. This goes beyond emergency services and includes enabling services such as Finance, Human Resources, Facilities, Information Technology, Supply Management, and Customer Service & Communication, as well as other sector-specific representatives. These groups juggle regular business with the added demands of their role at the EOC.

Impacts to enabling services at The City can occur during all stages of an emergency:

Impacts during an event (response stage):

- When an incident occurs, enabling services staff and available resources are deployed to the EOC to respond to the risk and ensure the incident is resolved as quickly as possible.
- For Supply Management, financial and other resources are reallocated to support staff at the EOC (up to 20 per cent of staff), impacting the ability to provide regular services.
- Communication campaigns for regular services can be postponed, paused, or cancelled to create room for emergency messaging and avoid potentially conflicting messaging.
- Employees from across The City who are part of the *Emergency Social Services* program are redeployed from regular work to help provide for the immediate needs of evacuees.
- Regular work might slow down or stop at this stage, but it does not go away.

Status of Emergency Preparedness Focus on Risk - The Emergency Operations Centre

- Employees working directly with those affected by a disaster can feel mental health impacts experienced by first responders, often without training.
- Psychological injuries and burnout from working in a high stress environment like the EOC can impact employee well-being, morale, and staff retention.

Impacts after an event (recovery stage):

- Initial work to plan for recovery begins while response efforts are still underway, often drawing on the same City staff involved with initial response efforts.
- For enabling services, the recovery stage can mean months of reconciliation work while getting back to regular business. For example, supply and finance resources are reallocated from operations for months post event to ensure procurement governance protocols were followed and reimbursement invoicing is completed properly.

Impacts between events (preparation and mitigation stage):

- With the frequency and duration of events increasing, there is less time between events for staff to return to regular business, psychologically recover, and prepare for the next event.
- City employees who participate in emergency response at the EOC must participate in emergency and disaster management training, exercises, and planning, which takes those employees away from regular business even when there is no emergency.

Preparing The City for Emergencies & an EOC Opening

The City's *Municipal Emergency Plan* provides an overarching plan to guide response and recovery to any type of emergency when the EOC is open. Depending on the nature of the emergency, additional plans can be activated to address hazards and establish actions, such as the *Crisis Communications Plan*. Attachment 2 summarizes the Municipal Emergency Plan and its annexes.

The City of Calgary implements a range of programs and training to prepare for and mitigate risk of service impacts when the EOC is open:

- The City's annual Disaster Risk Assessment informs operational response plans, mitigation projects, regular updates to City Council, and enhances collaboration within business units.
- Regular training and exercises are provided to employees who fulfil roles at the EOC.
- The Crisis Communications Team maintains about 100 trained staff with specialities in social media, web, media relations, marketing, graphic design, and issues management.
- The Municipal Emergency Plan has identified an expedited expenditure process that is triggered under the declaration of a State of Local Emergency (SOLE).
- Supply Management develops and continually improves these two process streams, one for events during a SOLE and one for non-SOLE events.
- Administration has a policy dedicated to business continuity planning, intended to ensure City services can continue operating during disruptions, such as when the EOC is open.
- After-action reviews are undertaken by CEMA and supporting services to review EOC processes and continually improve response capabilities.

Adapting for the Future

With the changing risk landscape in Calgary and increasing risk to City services and staff during disasters, The City is continuing to evolve and adapt to the future by:

- Exploring new staffing models and building bench strength for specific EOC positions.
- Working with provincial and federal partners to improve interjurisdictional response.

Status of Emergency Preparedness Focus on Risk - The Emergency Operations Centre

- Updating the Municipal Emergency Plan to align with the corporate realignment and incorporate recent lessons learned.
- Completing after-action reviews from the Bearspaw feeder main break and Jasper wildfire events and implementing recommendations. Findings for the Bearspaw feeder main event will be provided as part of the feeder main Interim Updates planned for Q1 2025.
- Increasing mental health supports for staff before, during, and after a response.
- Examining the need for future budget requests to address growing resource challenges.
- Continuing to collaborate with City Council to help collectively address emergencies.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> Public communication or engagement was not required |

The City engages 60+ CEMA member organizations in education, training, exercises, response planning, and communications. The Agency consists of City business units, government agencies, critical infrastructure operators, industry groups, schools and community service providers.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

An EOC opening has the potential to impact services due to the additional draw on City resources, including social services provided by The City. Emergency planning aligns with the *Social Wellbeing Policy* of prevention by working to ensure social impacts are mitigated before they occur.

Environmental

Disasters often have significant environmental impacts; however, there are no expected environmental implications from the EOC being open for disaster response.

Economic

Disaster events, which require the EOC to be open, have a significant financial cost. CEMA members' work addresses the *Resilient Calgary Strategy* to create a resilient economy. Preparation and mitigation efforts by The City can help reduce adverse financial impacts.

Service and Financial Implications

Existing operating funding - base

Disaster response planning and preparation exist in the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets.

RISK

When the EOC is open for or recovering from disaster response there are risks to City services such as delays in procurement of goods and services, postponement of City campaigns, miscommunication risks, as well as risks to staff wellbeing and retention. These risks can be addressed through planning and resourcing, such as implementing new staffing models, working with provincial and federal partners, increasing mental health supports, increasing resources, and continuing to improve processes through after-action reviews and collaboration with City Council.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Municipal Emergency Plan Annex Summary
3. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Iain Bushell	Emergency Management & Community Safety	Approve
Chris Arthurs	People Innovation & Collaborative Services	Inform
Les Tochor	Corporate Planning & Financial Services	Inform

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