

Program/Service Information Report

Emergency Preparedness

January 2020 – June 2023

To:	Board of Health
Meeting Date:	June 7, 2023
Report No.:	BH.01.JUN0723.C11

Key Points

- The Emergency Preparedness Program is based on the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) Emergency Management Foundational Standard and the Emergency Management Guideline (2018) to enable consistent and effective management of public health emergency situations.
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) is prepared emergencies using:
 - Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (HIRA)
 - Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
 - On Call 24/7 Program
 - Municipal annual emergency planning meetings and exercises
- WDGPH maintains compliance with the OPHS Emergency Management requirements through a comprehensive emergency preparedness program that enables the Agency to prepare, respond and recover from events such as:
 - community or municipal emergencies
 - public health emergencies
 - disruptions that may impact regular public health service delivery

Program Requirements

Compliance with OPHS and Accountability Indicators:

☒ In compliance

☐ Not in compliance. If not in compliance, provide additional information about the variance and how it will be addressed.

Highlights

Emergencies can occur anywhere and at any time. Public Health regularly experiences new and emerging events ranging from infectious diseases to extreme weather events and environmental hazards. Effective emergency preparedness ensures that Public Health is ready to manage threats or disruptions to public health programs and services. This is done through a range of activities carried out in coordination with other community partners such as member municipalities. Public Health is prepared to respond to and recover from new and emerging public health threats by maintaining a robust 24/7 on-call response capability and routine health protection surveillance of emerging or immediate public health risks to the community.

This report outlines key metrics for the 2024 program and provides a retrospective update on key emergency preparedness and response activities that occurred between 2020-2023. Throughout and 2020-2023 and into 2024 many emergency preparedness tools formed a part of managing public health emergencies including:

- Hazard Identification Risk Assessment
- Emergency Response Plan
- Continuity of Operations Plan
- On Call Program
- Municipal annual emergency planning meetings and exercises

2020 – 2023

The WDGP Emergency Response Plan (ERP) was activated in January 2020 to respond to the growing threat of COVID-19, and the Incident Management System (IMS) was used to manage the Agency's response to COVID-19. Each Health Unit in Ontario is expected to hold an emergency exercise at least once every three years unless a real event is declared. Since the lived experience from a three-year disruption

of normal health unit operations using the structure outlined in the Emergency Response Plan and by using IMS under a declared state of emergency; the requirement to hold an emergency exercise every 3 years as been fulfilled. Since WDGPH activated the ERP in 2020 and worked in an emergency environment through to February 2023, WDGPH has met its compliance obligation with the OPHS Emergency Preparedness requirements for this year.

Emergency preparedness lessons learned from the past three years include:

1. Expand emergency preparedness planning and training
2. Ensure training materials stay up to date and cross train staff where possible
3. Update internal administrative processes to prepare for future events
4. Encourage work-life balance to promote staff wellbeing at levels of the Agency

Successes from the last three years include increased public awareness regarding emergency management and public health through emergency awareness events, municipal emergency planning meetings, and emergency exercises. WDGPH continues to participate in municipal emergency preparedness, including:

- Annual Wellington County emergency planning meetings and exercises
- Monthly Dufferin County emergency management municipal round-table discussions
- Participation at the Dufferin County Disaster School
- Dufferin County Emergency Management Forum
- Participation with City of Guelph emergency exercise program
- Connectivity with Dufferin County Community Emergency Management Coordinator and member municipality leadership positions
- Connectivity with Wellington County Community Emergency Management Coordinator and member municipality leadership positions
- Connectivity with City of Guelph's Community Emergency Management Coordinator and Guelph municipal leadership positions

2023-2024 Operational Plan Objectives

WDGPH recognizes that a prompt, efficient response to emergency situations and disruptions is an important component of maintaining the safety of the communities we serve. WDGPH is committed to maintaining a comprehensive emergency management program and as a key Agency objective ensures readiness to respond effectively to a wide range of emergencies or disruptions, at any given time.

There are three key objectives for 2023-2024 program with several goals per objective:

1. Maintain municipal emergency management relationships and participation with municipal emergency management exercises and training opportunities.
2. Review the Emergency Response Plan to keep current to include:
 - a. Complete a new Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (HIRA)
 - b. Revise the Continuity of Operations Plan/Business Continuity Plan
 - c. Review internal administrative processes to prepare for future events
3. Identify new Emergency Management/Preparedness training for key staff:
 - a. Emergency Management and Incident Management System (IMS),
 - c. WDGPH Emergency Response Plan activation process, and
 - d. IMS roles of the Emergency Control Group.

The above operational goals will be monitored and developed by the WDGPH Emergency Preparedness Committee and working groups responsible to the Senior Leadership Team.

Through a robust on-call system and public health programs, WDGPH is well positioned to monitor and respond to emerging public health threats that may impact the community. The agency wide emergency preparedness program is designed to reduce the burden of negative outcomes on the community from emerging public health threats.

Related Reports

BH.01.FEB0718.C01 - Emergency Preparedness Update 2017 – Program/Service Information Report.

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