

Report To: Human Resources Committee, Board of Health
Submitted by: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO
Subject: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS HEALTH & SAFETY FRAMEWORK

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (a) That the Human Resources Committee makes recommendation to the Board of Health to receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

The disciplines of Emergency Preparedness and Health & Safety have been integrated into one role which is now the position of Emergency Preparedness Health & Safety Officer (EPHSO). The following report outlines the Emergency Preparedness Health & Safety framework detailing how the two disciplines complement each other now as a combined role.

Emergency Preparedness	Health & Safety
Goal:	
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) recognizes that a prompt, efficient response to emergency situations is an important component of maintaining the health and safety of all employees and the communities we serve. It is the goal of the WDGPH to have the necessary equipment and trained personnel organized and available to respond effectively to a wide range of emergencies.	WDGPH is committed to protecting the health and safety of all its employees. In fulfilling this commitment, WDGPH provides and maintains a safe and healthy work environment, which meets the legislated requirements and strives towards best practices.
Legal Framework:	
The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), <i>Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol</i> and the <i>Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)</i> provide the requirements for the emergency management framework. The Emergency Preparedness Protocol is a program and topic specific document which provides direction on how boards of health must operationalize specific requirement(s) identified within the OPHS.	The <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)</i> and Regulations provide the legal requirements for the health and safety framework. It sets out the rights and duties of all parties in the workplace. It establishes procedures for dealing with workplace hazards and it provides for enforcement of the law where compliance has not been achieved voluntarily by workplace parties.

<p>The Protocol identifies the minimum expectations for the emergency management program but boards of health have the authority to develop programs and services in excess of minimum requirements where required to address local needs. Boards of health are accountable for implementing the standards including those protocols that are incorporated into the standards.</p> <p>Under the OPHS, the Emergency Preparedness Standard lists eight key requirements that the emergency management program must meet¹:</p> <p>Assessment and Surveillance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify and assess the relevant hazards and risks to public health <p>Emergency Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Develop a continuity of operations plan 3) Develop an emergency response plan <p>Crisis Communications and Public Awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Develop, implement and document 24/7 notification protocols 5) Increase awareness regarding emergency preparedness activities <p>Education, Training and Exercises</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Deliver emergency preparedness and response education and training for board of health staff 7) Ensure that officials are oriented on the board of health’s emergency response plan 8) Exercise the continuity of operations plan, emergency response plan and 24/7 notification protocol 	<p>All workplace parties have a responsibility for promoting health and safety in the workplace and a role to play to help the workplace be in compliance with the statutory requirements set out under the Act.</p> <p>The core foundation of the OHS Act and Regulations is the Internal Responsibility System (IRS), which is a system where everyone has direct responsibility for health and safety as an essential part of his or her job. It does not matter who or where the person is in the organization, they achieve health and safety in a way that suits the kind of work they do. Each person takes initiative on health and safety issues and works to solve problems and make improvements on an ongoing basis. Within WDGPH staff do this both singly and co-operatively with others, the Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) and the EPHSO.</p> <p>One of the key functions of the OHS Act is to ensure that workplace hazards are identified, assessed, reported, investigated and action is taken to resolve the hazard.</p> <p>Under section 25. (2) (a) (c) (h) of the OHS Act it requires that employers provide training:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker, (c) when appointing a supervisor, appoint a competent person, and (h) take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.
WDGPH Programs:	
<p>WDGPH maintains a comprehensive emergency management program for the purpose of preparing for, and responding to, any community health emergency or an emergency with health impacts, as well as to internal emergencies that may impact the ability of the Agency to carry out its regular business.</p>	<p>Within WDGPH, we have a comprehensive health and safety program to ensure we are providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. The program consists of policies and procedures, health and safety resources such as the JHSC and EPHSO, education and training, inspections and auditing, and reporting.</p>

How the Programs Complement Each Other:

The common goal of Emergency Preparedness Health & Safety is to protect the health and safety of all WDGPH employees and the communities we serve.

The foundation of both programs is to identify, assess and control the relevant hazards and risks to employees and the communities we serve.

Both programs have the common proactive theme of increasing awareness regarding Emergency Preparedness Health & Safety in order to inform employees and the communities we serve so they can protect themselves.

Education, training and exercises are another three common requirements between both programs in order to make sure staff and the communities we serve are informed and equipped with the proper information and tools to protect themselves and others from hazards in the workplace and natural environment.

Both programs follow a continuous improvement framework to ensure WDGPH assesses, plans, delivers, manages, evaluates, monitors and improves the two programs.

Program Complement Examples:

In the event of an emergency the EPHSO will fill a number of roles in the Incident Management System (IMS) command structure such as the emergency preparedness lead to manage the emergency and also the health and safety lead to ensure staff are safe throughout the emergency.

A key component of each program is performing a hazard/risk assessment to identify the relevant hazards/risks to staff and the communities we serve. As part of the emergency response plan it is a requirement to define risks and develop procedures to control the risks related to staff, facilities, and specific major community risks. For health and safety it is a requirement to define risks and develop procedures to control the risks in the work environment.

Emergency response training is provided annually to staff as well as an annual exercise related to one of the following: the continuity of operations plan, emergency response plan or 24/7 notification protocol. Health and safety orientation training is provided to all new staff and ongoing training is provided to meet legislative requirements, such as health and safety for managers/supervisors.

WDGPH STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

Organizational Capacity – We will improve our capacity to effectively deliver public health programs and services.

Goal: We will promote and support the psychological health of staff.

Building Health Community – We will work with communities to support the health and well-being of everyone.

Goal: We will promote healthy environments (as defined) that support physical and mental health and well-being.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND/OR FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Ontario Public Health Standards requires that boards of health:

Able to ensure a consistent and effective response to public health emergencies and emergencies with public health impacts¹.

REFERENCES

1. Ontario. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario public health standards-emergency preparedness standard. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2008 [revised 2015 Oct; cited 2014 May 1]. Available from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/ophs_2008.pdf [PDF].

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