

City of London

Emergency  
Communications  
Plan 2013



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Objective**

In the event of an emergency, to provide a guideline for the distribution of critical information to Londoners and the media to ensure their safety and well being.

### **Use**

This plan is in support of the City of London's Emergency Plan and will be used when the City needs to respond to the information needs and concerns of their stakeholders in an emergency.

At all times the emergency communications team will support emergency operations and take a pro-active role with regard to communications; including public and media relations.

### **Notification**

When notification of an emergency has occurred, the City Manager and Division Manager, Corporate Security and Emergency Management, or their designates, will contact the Director of Communications (CCD) or their designate to jointly establish the level of communications support that will be required to assist operations.

## **COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION SUPPORT**

The Communications Division will:

- At all times maintain a current email database of all media outlets.
- Manage and coordinate requests for media interviews.
- Write and distribute news releases, Q and As, PSAs.
- Regularly update the city's website and the city's Facebook and twitter accounts.
- Create key messages.
- Set up media interviews and news briefings with spokesperson/area experts either at the EOC (Byron Library) or near the site of the emergency.
- Work with response agencies that have a need to release information to the media about the emergency (research their position, what they are saying and how joint communication efforts can be managed).
- Brief and prepare personnel for media interviews/briefings.
- Prepare and distribute key messages and communication pieces as necessary.
- Assist staff in the Public Inquiry Centre to find answers and give direction to caller questions.
- Arrange for accessible message delivery: language translation, ASL, etc.

## **SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS**

### **ROLE OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**

The Director acts as the Community Emergency Information Officer as stipulated in the London Emergency Response Plan and supports the Emergency Site Manager with media interviews and works with other involved communications personnel to ensure consistent, accurate and timely communications.

The Director develops and releases information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, city administrative and political leaders and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

Other responsibilities include:

- Develop a communications strategy.
- Ensure the City Manager and Mayor are fully briefed on communication activities.
- Establish a communications link with the Community Spokesperson and any other media coordinator(s) (i.e. provincial, federal, private industry, etc) involved in the incident.
- Implement the Emergency Communications Plan.
- Ensure an Emergency Information Centre is set up and staffed for the purpose of disseminating information to the media.
- Ensure media releases are approved by the Mayor.
- Ensure information notification protocols for Elected Officials are exercised.
- Handle inquiries from the public and media.
- Coordinate individual interviews and organizing press conferences.
- Ensure a Public Inquiry Centre is set up (if necessary) to process email and/or phone inquiries.
- Distribute hard copies of media releases to the Community Control Group and Public Inquiry Centre.

### **ROLE OF MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS**

- Maintain a log of all actions taken.
- Prepare news releases to the media and public.
- Determine a schedule for news releases/news conferences and advise the media of times and locations.
- Issue public announcements, instructions or warnings as directed by the City Manager, Mayor or Director of Communications.
- Coordinate media requests, including the arrangement of supervised tours near the emergency site(s) if possible (to be given by the Communications officers from the Police and Fire Departments) while adhering to safety and confidentiality issues.
- Monitor news and social media coverage and correct any erroneous information.
- Ensure the public is advised of the inquiry centre email address and phone number(s) through public service media announcements.
- Liaise with the Public Inquiry Centre supervisor.
- Participate in a post-emergency debriefing and provide reports as required by the City Manager
- Maintain the Emergency Communications Plan.

### **ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

- Write news releases, Q & As, PSAs, speaking notes as directed.
- Post information on the web site and social media sites, making sure information is available as quickly as possible.
- Assist with management of media at incident scene.

- Assist staff in the Public Inquiry Centre to find answers to inquiries.
- Receive and direct the incoming calls.
- Alert media to time and location of news conference.
- Monitor the media.
- Conduct research on the nature of the emergency.
- Provide administrative support.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

#### **ROLE OF FIRE, POLICE AND MIDDLESEX LONDON EMS AT THE SCENE**

- Liaise with the Communications Division re consistent messaging to media.
- Act as a resource person at the scene of the emergency while maintaining safety and confidentiality issues.
- Set up the media information centre at the scene, if possible, and prevent media from wandering the scene.
- Keep the Manager of Communications informed of the status at the scene of emergency.

#### **ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER AT EVACUATION/RECEPTION CENTRE**

- In the event of an emergency that requires establishing an evacuation centre, Community and Social Services staff will identify one person to act as a media contact on site.
- The spokesperson will liaise with the Communication Division staff to ensure consistent messaging to media.

#### **ROLE OF PARTNER AGENCIES**

##### **MLHU, Hospitals, London Airport, Western & Fanshawe, Middlesex County, OPP**

- In the event of a major emergency, partner agencies will be expected to liaise with the Communications Division to ensure consistent messaging to media.

#### **ROLE OF 211**

Based in Windsor, the southwest 211 service is the Province of Ontario's information and referral hotline that provides people with information on community and social services.

In the event of an emergency, some Londoners might call 211 seeking information or advice.

During an emergency the Communications Division will notify 211 of the situation and forward all news releases for their information.

211 will direct London callers seeking information about the emergency to our PIC line.

#### **AUDIENCES THAT COMMUNICATIONS WILL INFORM**

##### **General**

At all times Communications will endeavour to keep open lines of communication with all appropriate audiences.

At the onset of an emergency the following information will need to be communicated to all audiences:

- An incident has occurred
- Nature, location and time of incident
- Status of public safety
- Actions being taken to manage the emergency + actions to be taken

- How and when further information will be available
- Where to go for further information

Audiences include:

- Emergency operations personnel
- First responders
- Mayor and Council
- City Manager and senior city officials
- Public Inquiry Centre staff
- People directly impacted by the emergency
- General public
- Media
- Neighbouring communities
- Special interest groups

## **MEDIA MANAGEMENT**

### Overview

At the onset of an emergency, the Mayor and City Manager will appoint a person to act as the official spokesperson for the community.

The official spokesperson (or designate) will be the only person to speak on the community's overall emergency response and recovery efforts. Political, strategic operational decisions and policy issues will be communicated to the media through the spokesperson.

In their official emergency response capacity, City of London employees with an emergency response or recovery role (i.e. Police or Fire Chief or designate) may agree to be interviewed by the media provided they only speak about matters within their area of responsibility.

City employees, who don't have a role in emergency response or recovery efforts, should not speak to the media.

Response personnel at the scene:

- May seek advice in advance from Communications if desired or feasible
- May respond or refer the information request to their superior or Communications
- Must refer questions that fall outside of their personal experience or expertise to their supervisor, subject matter experts, or Communications
- Must inform Communications of the interview, and questions that fell outside of their area of expertise
- Must ensure the accuracy of any information provided.
- Must ensure interviews are on the record and for attribution by name/title unless otherwise authorized
- Must inform Communications of the results of the interview and any speculative questions

## **MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDELINES**

When dealing with the media in an official capacity:

### **Never**

- Respond to media inquiries that fall outside personal experience or expertise, unless otherwise approved.
- Undermine the safety of response personnel or the success of response and recovery operations.
- Speculate about events, incidents, issues or future policy decisions.
- Offer personal opinions.
- Discuss advice given to superiors.

### **Always**

- Seek advice and support from Communications when desired or when in doubt about how to respond.
- Agree to be interviewed only if you personally want to do it.
- Respect the principal of security, policy, the judicial process and laws governing the disclosure of information.

## **Preparing for a media Interview**

When possible and appropriate, Communications will prepare City personnel for media interviews/briefings as follows:

- Situation update
- Needs of reporter(s) – story angle, type of reporter, reporter's attitude, questions likely to be asked, other organizations or people the reporter will be interviewing
- Public's attitudes (general public, stakeholder organizations, special interest groups)
- Potentially tough questions or issues that might come up
- Key messages
- Public directives – i.e. listen to AM980, CJBK, etc. for updates
- Issues to avoid
- Interview or briefing logistics (time, location, format, and time limit)

## **KEY MESSAGING**

### **General overview**

Key messages help to consistently and effectively communicate important information to audiences. Key messages will change and evolve throughout each emergency response and recovery operation, but generally key messages should include:

- An up-to-date overview of the incident and the response (what is really happening?)
- A message of empathy for the impact the emergency has on people or the environment. (reassurance)
- How we are working cooperatively with partner agencies to effectively manage the emergency and minimize its impact on people, the environment and our community as a whole. (what are we doing and when will things get back to normal?)
- How people can stay informed. (what specifically do I need to do?)

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **The new reality:**

Social media (Twitter, facebook, flickr, etc) have changed how municipalities react to crises and disasters. Citizens now have the ability to share immediately and from the scene (in text, photos and video) information about a disaster prior to the City and its emergency response teams getting a handle on the event or incident.

This creates a real danger of the spreading of false or misleading information by concerned citizens.

We need to recognize there will be multiple sources of reporting information and we will do our best to address these situations. To be heard, we have to be present on social media platforms and be the trusted voice among dozens of other voices.

### **How we respond:**

- We will use the tools our audiences use by using Communication's well-established social media channels (london.ca, twitter, facebook).
- Communications will work quickly with early emergency responders to push relevant and correct information to the community as fast as possible.
- It is also crucial that Communications monitor social media chatter to counter any erroneous information being circulated. Rumour control through social media is a key communications goal.
- Communications will ensure our social media efforts are supported by coordinated website updates and updates to traditional print and broadcast media.

## **LEVELS OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Potential Disasters that could occur in London:

- Train accident (CN or CP lines)
- Major traffic incident (401, 402, highways north)
- Airplane crash
- Tornado/ hurricane
- Ice storm/severe winter weather
- Power blackout
- Epidemic (Flu, West Nile, Norwalk Virus)
- Major fire
- Chemical spill
- Flooding
- Terrorist attack

At the onset of the emergency, the City Manager, Division Manager of Corporate Security and Emergency Management and the Communications Division will determine the potential level of public and media interest in the emergency. Communications will determine what resources will be required to effectively manage communication issues.



The set up of the emergency communications team will depend on the scale of the emergency, and the anticipated level of public concern and media interest. Only those resources that are needed to effectively respond to the incident will be brought in.

All key components of the emergency communications system will need to be implemented in a Level III emergency, where public concern and media interest are extremely high.

Additional Communications resources might be necessary to properly manage an emergency (i.e. other municipalities, regions, or contracted agency or services).

## **LEVELS OF EMERGENCIES**

Emergency levels are defined based on the impact in the following areas:

- Evacuation
- Impact on infrastructure
- Threat to/loss of life
- Impact on essential services
- Emergency service response
- Declared emergency

**There are three levels of emergencies.**

### **LEVEL ONE**

- An incident has occurred that requires a large scale evacuation.
- There is a serious impact on infrastructure (all or most roads closed/loss of major municipal facilities, reducing or eliminating essential service).
- There is serious economic threat to the community.
- There is a real threat to loss of life, perhaps to a large number of people.
- All or most emergency services involved.
- The Emergency Operations Center activated and/or Community Control Group notified.
- There is high interest from the public, media and many other audiences.
- All levels of political involvement are high.
- The City's performance or reputation may be in question.

Communication requirements/actions

- When a major emergency occurs, the Community Control Group (CCG) will be contacted and requested to assemble in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at Fire Station 12 in Byron.
- The Mayor will be the lead for communication releases in this emergency with the support of the City Manager, Director of Emergency Services and the Communications Division.
- The Mayor, in consultation with the Director of Communications, assumes responsibility for coordinating communications. All communications will be reviewed by the Mayor or designate prior to release.

- Communications officers from the London Fire Department, London Police, Middlesex-London EMS, London Hydro, London Transit Commission, London Central Ambulance Communications Centre and Middlesex-London Health Unit should provide information to the Director of Communications.
- The Director of Communications will coordinate the communications from the Emergency Operation Centre. Unless notice is given otherwise, the Emergency Operations Centre and the media information room are at The Emergency Operations Centre, Fire Station 12 on Boler Road. Communications staff may attend the emergency site to assist with communications issues.
- On site media at an emergency will be referred to the Emergency Site Manager, lead agency commanding officer or communications staff on site.
- Any news releases issued by agencies should be filed with the Manager of Communications.
- The Director of Communications will follow the Notification to Councillors during Emergencies Protocol.

#### Set Up for Level One Emergency

- In a Level One emergency members of the emergency communications team will be present at:
  - The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
  - Media Centre
  - Public Inquiry Centre (PIC)

## **LEVEL TWO**

- An incident has occurred that requires localized evacuation of an area that requires a reception centre to be opened or other extraordinary measures.
- There is an impact on infrastructure (a major roadway or facility damaged).
- There is disruption to business or industry.
- There is a threat to public safety but a minimal threat to loss of life. Serious injuries could occur.
- It may or may not affect some essential services. (Ex: severe storm).
- There is moderate interest or concern from the media, general public or other audiences.
- There may be a question with regard to the community's liability.

#### Communication requirements/actions

- The media officer from the lead agency (fire, police, EMS) will contact Communications as soon as possible.
- Depending on the severity of the emergency, Communications and the Media Relations Officer from the lead agency will deal with all communications.
- The media relations officer for the lead agencies, in conjunction with Communications, will be responsible for ensuring appropriate information is provided to the media and members of the public directly impacted by the emergency situation.
- Communications may attend the site and work in conjunction with the media relations officer or Emergency Site Manager from the lead agency to assist with media on site.
- On site media will be referred to the Emergency Site Manager or communication staff on site.
- Any news releases issued by agencies shall be filed with the Director of Communications.

### **LEVEL THREE**

- An incident has occurred that does not pose a threat to public safety or the community; its elected officials, administration or emergency response personnel.
- There could be a limited evacuation involving a small number of people and for short duration.
- There could be minimal impact on infrastructure (a secondary roadway closed for short duration due to flooding).
- The emergency service response is limited to one or two agencies for a short duration.
- There is little or no interest from the public or media.

#### Communication requirements/actions

- The Media Relations Officer for the lead agency will be responsible to ensure appropriate information is provided to the media as well as members of the public directly impacted by the emergency situation.
- Communications will handle emergency management partner communications/notifications.

### **NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE CITYWIDE PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

In May 2012, the City's water supply was disrupted by a failure of the Lake Huron pipeline. The Communications Division issued news releases and used the City's social media feeds to alert residents of, first, a voluntary outdoor watering restriction and, a day later, a mandatory outdoor watering ban.

These notifications achieved mixed results. Many Londoners complained later that they had not been made aware of the ban.

In order to reach as many Londoners as possible with a message during an event that requires a response from all citizens, Communications will create and distribute informational and "call to action" posters to all community centres, libraries and partner agencies, boards and commissions.

As well, Communications now has agreements in place with the city's largest institutions, landlords and companies whereby they will forward a City message to their employees. Communications estimates we might reach more than 100,000 residents this way.

### **NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL TO COUNCIL MEMBERS**

#### Purpose

This protocol outlines the process to ensure Councillors are provided with appropriate information during an emergency situation when London's Emergency Operations Centre is in operation; and/or during a state of emergency declared by the Province of Ontario and/or Government of Canada.

#### Process

Members of Council will be provided with situation briefings appropriate to the nature of the emergency. The Mayor, through the Director of Communications, will be responsible for developing and

distributing the situation briefings to Councillors.

The situation briefings will contain information regarding:

- Nature of the Incident
- Incident status
- Applied resources
- Public concerns
- Community impact
- Media releases
- Community Control Group status
- Other information as appropriate

#### Frequency of Distribution

Situation briefings will be distributed to Members of Council during the time the Emergency Operations Centre is active as follows:

- Within two hours of the first operations cycle meeting
- Upon any significant change in the emergency situation
- At least once daily
- In conjunction with any media releases

#### Method of Delivery

Situation briefings will be delivered to Councillors via email. Councillors will be responsible for monitoring their email regularly during an emergency incident. If email is not working, Council Members will receive situation briefings by phone. Council Members are responsible to ensure the Manager of Communications has up to date contact information including email and phone numbers. If these communication methods are not available, briefing notes will be delivered to the Councillors' office at City Hall.

During all other times, normal protocols employed to deliver information to Members of Council will be in effect.

#### Councillor Inquiries

Councillor inquiries during EOC activation will be directed through the Community Emergency Management Coordinator, office 661-2500 ext. 2459, cell 670-5595. The Community Emergency Management Coordinator will ensure the inquiries are forwarded to the Community Control Group for action and response.

In the event the City of London's Emergency Operations Centre is not active but the Province of Ontario or Government of Canada is operating under a state of emergency, inquiries will be directed to the Director of Communications, office 519 661-2500 ext 4782, cell 519 636-0911.

## **NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL TO CITY STAFF**

City staff will be kept up-to-date during major emergencies through a variety of channels:

- The City's staff information line will be updated regularly
- City Connect will be updated regularly
- Send All emails will be issued as warranted
- Informational or "call to action" posters will be distributed to all City buildings
- Staff will be encouraged to look for updates on the City's website and follow the City's Facebook and Twitter feeds
- Directors and Managers will be asked to ensure their staff is keeping up to date

## Appendix A

### Ontario's Emergency Public Warning System

Ontario's Emergency Public Warning System is a tool that provides timely and accurate information to Ontario residents, businesses and visitors during an emergency. The system allows Ontarians to receive two types of warnings: Red Alerts and Emergency Information Advisories

The province issues a Red Alert to provide recommended immediate actions to protect citizens, their families and others when there is an imminent threat to life, public safety or property.

Some situations in which a Red Alert may be issued include:

- Large fire or explosion
- Chemical leak or spill
- Nuclear emergency
- Extreme weather event
- Transportation accident

Red Alerts are issued by Emergency Management Ontario's Provincial Emergency Operations Centre when the following three criteria are satisfied:

- Confirmation from municipal/ministry partners or another trusted source that an incident has or is about to occur
- Confirmation that the incident or emergency may pose a major risk to life, public safety, security or substantial damage to property
- An immediate broadcast with a call to action may help reduce the potential threat to life, public safety, security or damage to property

Red Alerts will be posted on the Emergency Management Ontario website and may be distributed through various media outlets, email subscriber services, SMS text messaging, RSS feed and Twitter notifications.

Red Alerts can be distributed through:



[EMO website](#)



[Television](#)



[RSS feeds](#)



[Internet media](#)



[Email notification](#)



[Radio](#)



[Twitter](#)



[SMS text messaging](#)

Some situations in which an Emergency Information Advisory might be issued include:

- Large-scale power outage
- Threats to public safety
- Major transportation incidents

Emergency Information Advisories may also be issued in the early phases of a major incident.

## **Appendix B**

These contacts have agreed to notify their members, students, staff and tenants:

### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (1,000 member companies)**

Gerry Macartney  
Chief Executive Officer  
519-432-7551 x 30  
[gerry@londonchamber.com](mailto:gerry@londonchamber.com)

### **WESTERN UNIVERSITY**

Helen Connell  
AVP Communications  
[hconnell@uwo.ca](mailto:hconnell@uwo.ca)  
Cell 519-709-4400  
Home 519-685-3582  
+  
Keith Marnoch  
[kmarnoch@uwo.ca](mailto:kmarnoch@uwo.ca)  
Cell 226 927 3471  
Office 519 661 2111 ext. 85468  
Home 519 204 5787

### **FANSHAWE COLLEGE**

Leanne Perreault  
Manager, Communications  
[lperreault@fanshawec.ca](mailto:lperreault@fanshawec.ca)  
She will arrange to have them posted to staff and student portals right away.  
For summer months:  
Devin Robinson  
[drobinson@fanshawec.ca](mailto:drobinson@fanshawec.ca)  
Acting Manager, Marketing

### **LHSC**

Tony LaRocca  
Vice President, Community and Stakeholder Relations London Health Sciences Centre 800  
Commissioners Road East London, Ontario N6A 4G5  
Office: (519) 685-8500 x 52839  
BBerry: (519) 854-0387  
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Mary Gillet  
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### **St. JOE'S HOSPITAL**

Laura Dockstader  
Coordinator, Communication and Public Affairs St. Joseph's Health Care



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Kathy Burrill  
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519-646-6100 ext 65262  
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Communicator on Call - for after business hours communication needs, call our Switchboard  
519-646-6100 ext 0 and ask to speak to the Communicator on Call

### **3M CANADA**

Carla MacFarlane  
Public Relations Manager  
[cmcfarlane@mmm.com](mailto:cmcfarlane@mmm.com)

### **CARGILL**

Dave Johnson  
Facility Manager  
519-453-4996, ext 404  
519-871-3164 (cell)  
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### **THE TRICAR GROUP**

Jody McKee  
3800 Colonel Talbot Road  
London, ON N6P 1H5  
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[JMckee@tricar.com](mailto:JMckee@tricar.com)

### **DREWLO HOLDINGS**

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Allan Drewlo [adrewlo@rogers.com](mailto:adrewlo@rogers.com)  
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### **OLD OAK PROPERTIES**

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