

3.



PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**April 13, 2004**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Michael E. Eddy  
Michael E. Eddy, Chief Director  
Fire & Emergency Service

**DATE:** April 7, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Hurricane Juan Update

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

At the Regional Council Meeting of January 20, 2004, a report was requested from Staff to provide an assessment of the damaged areas to be addressed (both public and private property), and recommended procedures and time lines to address the concerns, followed by periodic updates.

This report is the first of three reports related to Hurricane Juan which will be coming to Council in the near future. The other two reports are: 1) Summary & Recommendations from Hurricane Juan Debriefing (regarding the response itself) and 2) Financial Update and status of Disaster Financial Assistance claims.

#### **BACKGROUND**

On September 29, 2003, the Halifax Regional Municipality sustained severe damage to trees, property, etc. from Hurricane Juan. As a result, the Municipality has a tremendous amount of fallen debris which has raised concerns that possible fire hazards may exist. The damage can be categorized into two major types 1) random and widespread "blowdowns" and 2) a more generalized type of damage where trees are randomly blown down throughout the forest.

## DISCUSSION

Following Juan, Fire & Emergency Operations Division were involved in the Hurricane Juan clean up in conjunction with Gary Martin, Community Action Team who were assisting residents to clean up their properties. Additionally, the Operations Division seconded a Station Officer to conduct an assessment of the damage created by Hurricane Juan, in relation to the urban/wildland interface within the municipal boundaries, in order to be better prepared in the event of a major incident.

The assessment to-date includes:

- ▶ compiling a list of all sites with significant blow and conduct an assessment to determine which sites represent a significant risk to citizens and occupancies/dwellings.
- ▶ examining available water supply capabilities; municipal water supply, tanker shuttle capabilities, dry hydrants, drafting sites, etc.
- ▶ liaison with Municipal Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) to evaluate community evacuation plans, which will include evacuation routes and our ability to utilize/protect those routes during a major forest fire.
- ▶ liaison with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Real Property and Asset Management (RPAM) regarding information exchange.
- ▶ liaison with the Fire Prevention Division and DNR concerning the availability of fire risk assessment training for staff to enhance our ability to assess the blowdown sites
- ▶ liaison with GIS (Geographic Information Systems and Services) to develop mapping for areas of significant risk utilizing aerial photography provided by DNR.

Meetings and regular communications with representatives from Municipal EMO, EMO Nova Scotia, Provincial Fire Marshall's Office, Department of Natural Resources, Real Property and Asset Management and DFAA (Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements) are ongoing to ensure that all relevant information is shared between all agencies.

Real Property and Asset Management has conducted damage assessments on nearly 1600 HRM owned properties over the last six months. Of these approximately 900 are forested properties. Of that number 227 are felt to represent a significant fire risk. RPAM has actioned all but 70 of these. Of the remaining properties 42 of these are being actioned with the remaining 28 properties currently undergoing detailed fire assessment to qualify for Federal DFAA funding. Once federal authorization is received to action these remaining properties contractors will be assigned clean-up duties. The aim is to have the properties mitigated before the beginning of the heightened forest fire season risk which the Department of Natural Resources have said is typically around the middle of May.

If any properties which will not be mitigated prior to that time frame, Regional Fire Operations and DNR will be notified to ensure that fire fighting planning measures are put into place for these locations.

The Department of Natural Resources have developed a communication plan to promote the FireSmart guidelines for hazard reduction. This information has been added to the DNR web site [www.gov.ns.ca/natr/protection/wildfire/firesmart.htm](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/protection/wildfire/firesmart.htm) on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. Handouts were distributed at Point Pleasant Park during the weekend of March 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>. Also an information

session was held at the Home Show April 01<sup>st</sup> - 04<sup>th</sup> at Exhibition Park, Halifax. This information will form the basis of our HRM Communication Plan.

- ▶ Aerial photography indicating areas of significant blowdown are also included on the web site [www.gov.ns.ca/natr/juan/juanimages.htm](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/juan/juanimages.htm).
- ▶ Department of Natural Resources is also part of a national CIFFC (Canadian Inter-agency Forest Fire Center) and an international resource sharing group NFFPC (Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Committee) which allows them to draw on resources MAR (Mutual Aid Resource Sharing) such as air tankers if necessary and if available.
- ▶ Research and consult with Ministry of Natural Resources Ontario and other sources.
- ▶ Enhanced alert status for fire risk advisories. This refers to the colour coded maps that you often see in the season regarding hazard levels.
- ▶ Enhanced fire watch. (Lookout towers etc.)
- ▶ Updated preparedness plan.
- ▶ Enhanced training re specifics created by Juan damage.
- ▶ Enhanced fire prevention measures.

Since January, Fire & Emergency Service have examined our wildland fire fighting resources/equipment and purchased additional equipment to further enhance our wildland response capabilities. The Training Division have added additional training programs for staff in the use of Chain Saws and Strategies & Tactics for Wildland Firefighting for the coming fire season. Contacts for external resources have been identified such as the Department of Natural Resources for additional resources/equipment, in the event of a major incident. Additionally, Public Information and Fire Prevention Divisions of HRE&ES are implementing education programs for the general public and the school system, such as Risk Watch to educate citizens on fire safety matters.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS** - None

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**


This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

**ALTERNATIVES** - None

**ATTACHMENTS** - None

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning, RPAM, 490-6047

Report Approved by:   
Stephen Thurber, Deputy Chief Director, 490-5542