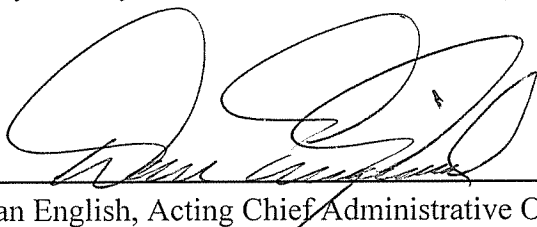


Halifax Regional Council
September 14, 2004

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 8, 2004

SUBJECT: EMO Hurricane Juan - Recommendations from Debriefing

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

The HRM Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) has plans and operational procedures in place that are designed to provide a management structure and process to allow the municipality to successfully deal with any large scale emergency event. These plans and processes have been used successfully since amalgamation and are designed to be re-evaluated after a large scale event to allow enhancements to the process. The Hurricane Juan response was a large scale, multi-site, multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional event.

BACKGROUND

On November 2, 2003 a full debriefing was conducted to analyze the multi-jurisdictional response to Hurricane Juan, and to look specifically at HRM's role and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) effectiveness. The emergency management process that HRM used, worked very well during the Hurricane Juan response however there are some areas where improvements could be made to make it work better.

DISCUSSION

Six areas for improvement were identified from the Hurricane Juan debriefing, as follows:

1. HRM Business Continuity Plan
2. Business Recovery Plan
3. Update Evacuation Profiles
4. Emergency Social Services (ESS) Plan
5. Utilities Response Group
6. Training

HRM Business Continuity Plan

Business continuity means planning for how HRM can continue to provide municipal services to its clients in times of emergency. In 1999 HRM started the business continuity process by creating “Y2K” plans for critical HRM services. This information needs to be updated and enhanced with a covering plan that deals with global business continuity issues, especially those in the area of sustainability in a large scale and prolonged emergency response. Some of the areas that need to be discussed in the business continuity plan as sub-components are:

- A staff support plan to ensure that HRM staff and volunteers responding to a large scale emergency have the proper support mechanisms in place such as: feeding, personal needs, rest, staff rotation, etc;
- A severe weather plan that deals with unusual issues that often arise in a significant weather event that can disrupt normal HRM municipal services; and
- An information management plan that discusses what information is to be made available internally within HRM, who is to receive it, how it will be sent and at what frequency. (This is not to be confused with the Emergency Public Information plan)

The issues a business continuity plan should address specifically are: large scale power outages, transportation issues, emergency response routes, pre-incident staging protocols to be followed before an event occurs and a planned reduction of service levels during and immediately following a major weather event. The review and enhancement of the former “Y2K” Business Continuity Plan and its sub-components should be conducted in the 2004/05 fiscal year and within the existing budget and staff resources.

Business Recovery Plan

A Business Recovery Plan assumes that certain municipal services have been stopped due to an emergency event, and addresses how to re-start the services and return the municipality to a pre-incident condition. An important part of the recovery is the identification of critical infrastructure

within the municipality. As a first priority, a critical infrastructure plan needs to be developed that pre-determines and prioritizes municipal infrastructure for recovery. Having this pre-done, would mean that during an emergency event the pre-plan would only need to be verified and enhanced before activated. Business continuity and recovery go hand in hand and should not be developed independently from each other.

The Business Recovery Plan including a critical infrastructure plan, will be developed over two fiscal years starting in 2004 and within the existing budget and staff resources.

Update Evacuation Profiles

In 1999 as part of the "Y2K" preparedness program HRM developed evacuation profiles for all of the municipality. These profiles need to be updated and revised (but not limited to) to include the following:

- A complete profiling of all potential emergency reception centers and shelters in the HRM;
- An inventory and assessment of all HRM owned generators. This would then allow generators to be allocated based on the critical needs assessment done at the time of the incident; and
- A list of potential shelters in an area that eventually could be fitted with emergency generators (based on existing Fire Zones for example). In the interim, after these sites are determined, each site could be retro-fitted with a transfer switch that would allow a mobile generator to be hooked to the site, as needed.

Updating the Emergency Evacuation Plan profiles is a major task that cannot be fully accommodated within existing budget or staff resources. This work can be coordinated through HRM's Emergency Measures Organization office, however additional funding to hire two summer students to assist with this work is required. The cost of generators and transfer switches cannot be covered within the existing budget, and will be discussed as part of the future budgets or as part of federal infrastructure funding opportunities.

Emergency Social Services (ESS) Plan

The responsibility for the provision of emergency social services has been contested since amalgamation. The five emergency social services that are normally provided in an emergency are: Shelter, Food, Clothing, Registration & Inquiry and Personal Services. While the municipality feels that this is a provincial responsibility, the province alone cannot provide all of these services during and after a large scale emergency event. The municipality has a strong logistical and human resource component that it can offer in a support role to the province. As well, under an anticipated ESS agreement, the municipality will be responsible to provide the emergency shelters.

- It is recommended that the municipality take a leadership role in the development of a joint emergency social services (ESS) plan, one that will have the province as the lead agency and the municipality assisting in a support role. The plan will cover the provision of food and water, shelters and comfort centers, as well as logistical support. The plan will have an assessment phase that would allow the province to gather information and with the municipality's assistance, prioritize the needs.

This is a joint municipal/provincial planning exercise that has no cost implications for HRM and can be carried out with existing staff resources.

Utilities Response Group

At present, utilities are outside the emergency planning and response phase of a multi-site event. For smaller scale, single site events, the utilities work well within HRM's emergency management protocol. Bringing all of the utilities to the EMO Planning Committee level would be both cumbersome and counter productive. It is recommended that EMO liaise with the utilities at their already existing forum to explore joint emergency planning and training. In addition, it is recommended that a joint emergency response function be part of this training. This would include all utilities: Water, gas, electricity, cable and teleco utilities.

This can be accommodated within existing budget and staff resources, and a formal liaison with the utilities can be implemented immediately.

Training

More training of HRM and HRM partner staff must occur to alleviate burnout in emergency operation centers and dispatch centers throughout the municipality. The greater the number of trained staff, and level training regarding EMO awareness and HRM's emergency management process; the better our sustainability will become in a long-term incident. Also, as a secondary benefit, with more people trained in EMO philosophy, the better we can assist and re-direct HRM residents to the proper source to have their concerns dealt with. Currently, we are working on new training regarding site management, EOC structure, and are continuing to train resources in other business units.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None at this time, however if we proceed with the activities listed below, staff will have to identify funding sources.

- hiring two summer students to help with updating evacuation profiles
- purchase of generators for major shelter and response staging areas
- installation of transfer switches for major shelter and response staging areas

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

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: Barry Manuel, Emergency Measures Coordinator 490-5400