Development of an Emergency Management Program Framework – Executive Summary

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"Response has always gotten the bigger part of emergency management budgets, but disaster risk reduction, if done properly, says we must prevent and mitigate emergencies. To implement mitigation strategies, we have to have the policies, processes, procedures and funding to be effectively prepared. If we've done a proper assessment of our hazardscape, we'll know what to try to prevent, try to mitigate, and try to prepare for."

Tahawennon:tie David A. Diabo

The purpose of the attached Emergency Management Program Framework is to present an inventory of the spectrum of activities that make up a fully developed Emergency Management Program (EMP). The Canadian Standards Association standard Z1600-17, Emergency and Continuity Management Program, is the best practice standard that has guided the design of the program framework. The Siksika Nation Emergency Management team, with support from ATCO Frontec Disaster & Emergency Management, developed the EMP Framework to provide a foundation for communities to increase emergency preparedness and enhance their capacity to plan for and respond to emergency events.

The EMP Framework Project was delivered to the Line 3 Indigenous Advisory Monitoring Committee to support the Committee's priority to further emergency management research and emergency planning initiatives. The EMP Framework and supporting documents may be utilized by interested First Nations to support the development of tailored emergency management procedures and emergency response plans that can increase emergency management capacity and resilience. The tools delivered through this project were designed to be utilized by community emergency managers, emergency management coordinators, or individuals who are responsible for or participate in emergency management within an interested community. The EMP Framework Project package includes:

- Emergency Management Program Framework: Editable document to be utilized to create a Community EMP.
- Guidebook for Community Response: Covers standard processes & tools to utilize during emergency response.
- Community Emergency Response Templates: Editable document to support creation of Hazard-Specific ERPs.
- Hazard, Identification, Risk & Vulnerability Assessment Case Study: Provides an example of an initial HIRVA.

This executive summary provides an overview of the EMP Framework and intends to present a logical sequence of the activities that result in a fully developed emergency management program. Program development begins with the First Nation leadership confirming its commitment to support a program through a policy document. With leadership sanction, the program then evolves through program governance, program development, and program maintenance. The initial steps are essential to the success of an emergency management program.

1) GOVERNANCE

First, leadership must commit to supporting the program both administratively and financially. Approval of a policy, the passage of a by-law, or a Band Council Resolution demonstrates program support. This commitment establishes the intent of the program and supports budget allocation to fund the initiative.

Emergency Management does not operate in isolation. It relies on cooperation and collaboration with other departments and business units within a community. The next step in program creation is the formation of a governance group or advisory committee. Representatives of senior leadership work together to provide the vision for the program's direction.

Supervisory and managerial staff come together to form a steering committee that operationalizes the leadership vision. The Emergency Management Program supports the needs of the First Nation departments and business units and relies on their goodwill to be effective. As the emergency management program develops, the emergency manager must understand the capacities of the participants to accept guidance, participate in administrative work, training, and exercises, and what resources it can offer during an emergency response. A steering committee provides a way to assess leadership's expectations, operationalize the achievable objectives, and seek guidance in areas they see potential challenge or conflict.

2) EMP DEVELOPMENT

With the Emergency Management Program governance and guidance structure in place, the program can then develop. The practice of emergency management recognizes a cycle of 4 phases (sometimes referred to as the pillars); Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and, Recovery.

3) HIRVA

A Hazard Identification, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (HIRVA) is the starting point and a critical part of an EMP. Simply put, hazards are events that can happen that negatively impact the community, risk is the likelihood of it happening, and vulnerability describes how severe the impact would be.

Completing a HIRVA provides critical information. Hazards or threats present in the environment in which the community operates are identified, and the likelihood (risk) of a hazard becoming unstable is assessed. The amount of damage the unstable hazard may cause (vulnerability) is considered. The results are scored and plotted on a table, with the hazards with the highest risk and greatest vulnerability receiving the most attention in terms of prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CYCLE

RECOVERY 04
RESPONSE 03
PREPAREDNESS 02
MITIGATION 01

4) EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS

The emergency manager, informed by the results of the HIRVA, can then begin to develop Emergency Response Plans (ERPs). One strategy to consider is developing ERPs from an "all-hazards" perspective. "All hazards" recognizes that most incidents will lead to expected consequences; property damage that doesn't threaten people, people are threatened and need to move away from the threat (evacuate), or people are threatened but moving them puts them more in harm's way (shelter in place).

With the strategic core ERPs developed, plans to respond to specific threats can be developed as necessary to include defined tactics.

5) TRAINING

The preceding activities will lead to the identification of training gaps. The EMP Framework provides guidance in developing this training. Specialized training for various roles and to address specific tactical response skills should be identified and developed.

A matrix that identifies roles and training requirements and schedules is a helpful way to ensure individuals develop and maintain the right skill set for their position.

6) DRILLS & EXERCISES

A schedule of exercises is essential to the ongoing success of the program. Exercises serve several purposes, including testing and validating plans, the practical application of theoretical knowledge, familiarization with systems, tools, and equipment, opportunities for staff who don't usually work together to increase partnerships, and the support of continuous improvement.

Exercises come in various forms, from discussion-based plan reviews, through full deployment live mock scenarios. Each has benefits and drawbacks, but the program must challenge personnel and plans with exercise opportunities regularly.

Drills facilitate the maintenance of a skill set through regular use. Drills focus on the review and practice of an element of a plan such as the evacuation of a building or the ability to execute a task such as setting up a Reception Centre or Emergency Coordination Centre.

7) ACTIVATION

Each plan should have criteria, or "trigger points," that indicate the need to activate the EMP and ERPs. Plans should include the necessary guidance and information that ensures the quick and efficient execution of initial tasks. Plan documents should be structured so that initial activation checklists appear at or near the front to eliminate the need to search through the document for information when an emergency incident occurs.

8) BUSINESS CONTINUITY

In parallel with a response, Business Continuity activities may also be necessary. Business continuity identifies critical functions and plans for the transition of those functions to another place or method that assures their interruption is as short as possible.

9) RECOVERY

Recovery begins as the incident begins to stabilize. This stabilization may be recognized when the Incident Commander notices they have resources that are no longer required. At this point, the Incident Commander must start to make decisions about releasing resources no longer needed in an organized way.

As the incident winds down to the conclusion of the Response, the recovery process gains momentum. While cleaning up and starting to rebuild seem like obvious tasks, there are many other activities which could include:

- ☐ Debriefing personnel,
  - o Operational review
  - o Stress debriefing
- ☐ Releasing personnel to return to their regular duties
- ☐ Returning equipment and facilities to a ready state
- ☐ Collecting and archiving response documentation

10) REVIEW

With the transition to Recovery comes an opportunity to look back at the cycle culminating in the Response. In addition to the initial operational review noted above, post-incident review tasks may include:

- ☐ Post-incident reviews and reports
- ☐ Identification of lessons
- ☐ Application of lessons identified to the improvement of plans and processes (lessons identified become lessons learned)

This Review process closes the cycle, with the review findings driving new Mitigation/Prevention and Preparedness efforts.

11) ADMINISTRATION

The details contained within each Emergency Response Plan need to be checked regularly for change. This demands a process that manages the maintenance and distribution of plan documents. Plans should have a consistent structure. This means that although the details of plans may vary the way they are presented in documents should be consistent. This makes navigating different plans easy.

Plan documents will contain information that should remain confidential, but several different participants in a plan will need to have a copy. The Emergency Management Program Administration should control the distribution of hard copy versions of plan documents.

12) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

With the first priority of Emergency Management being the protection of life, the community whose lives are being protected by the program should be engaged on an ongoing basis. Two general classes of engagement include Awareness and Involvement.

The Awareness component contains products and activities intended to let the community know that an Emergency Management team works to protect the community's wellbeing by mitigating and preventing, preparing for, responding to, and supporting recovery from major emergency and disaster incidents. Awareness also includes informing the community of the steps they can take to lessen the impact of an incident on them and their neighbours.

Involvement manages public support of the Emergency Management Program by recognizing two groups: dedicated and spontaneous volunteers.

Dedicated volunteers make a continuing commitment to the Emergency Management Program either directly or through an organization that then commits to the program.

Spontaneous volunteers respond either in response to a call for assistance, or as a result of becoming aware that an incident has occurred and is affecting a community. The spontaneous unsolicited donation of goods falls into this group as well. Pre-planning for this group is critical to ensure their response assistance is utilized effectively and safely.

For more information, including a copy of the full project package and supporting documents, please contact:

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