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CAMA Unveils Municipal Resilience Toolkit: Strategies for Crisis Management

The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) is thrilled to introduce the **"Municipal Resilience Toolkit: Strategies for Crisis Management"**, a comprehensive resource designed to empower municipalities in effectively managing crises. Now available to members by visiting the Member's Section (Toolkit Section) of the CAMA website (or you can also find it **attached**).

"This toolkit serves as a cornerstone for Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Council members, and senior administration in municipalities" said Tony Kulbisky, CAMA President and CAO for Westlock County, AB. "By focusing on proactive crisis management, it underscores the significance of collaboration and coordination among municipal departments, emergency services, non-profits, and community organizations. In today's ever-changing landscape, it also demonstrates CAMA's commitment to equipping municipal leaders with the tools necessary to safeguard their communities."

Key highlights include:

- **Comprehensive Crisis Coverage**: Addressing a wide array of crises beyond natural disasters, such as economic downturns, communication breakdowns, social unrest, misconduct, and data breaches, ensuring municipalities are prepared for any challenge.
- **Stages of Municipal Crisis Management:** Providing a step-by-step approach from prevention and mitigation to recovery and learning, guiding municipalities through the development of a robust crisis management program tailored to their needs.
- **Effective Crisis Communication:** Stressing the importance of timely and transparent communication, the toolkit assists municipalities in crafting crisis communication plans and utilizing various communication methods to disseminate critical information.

- **Canadian Context**: Canadian examples have been used throughout this resource to provide local relevance, with links to further resources for deeper exploration of specific topics.
- **Practical Checklists**: Each chapter concludes with actionable checklists for readers to compare with their internal processes, facilitating the implementation of the toolkit's principles.

"This toolkit represents the collective effort of CAMA members and industry experts dedicated to equipping municipalities with the tools and strategies necessary to navigate and be prepared for challenges with confidence", said Mike Dolter, Chair of the Committee/Representative for Nova Scotia & PEI and CAO for the Town of Truro, NS. "It's scope is far beyond climate-related crisis – it addresses any crises a municipality may encounter."

The Board Toolkit Taskforce that worked on this project in collaboration with consultant Transitional Solutions Inc., included the following CAMA members:
- Mike Dolter, Chair, CAMA Board Representative for Nova Scotia & PEI
- Bev Hendry, CAMA Past President
- Jamie Nagy, CAMA Board Representative for Manitoba & Saskatchewan
- Raffaelle Di Stasio, CAMA Board Representative for Québec
- Sheila Bassi-Kellett, CAMA Board Representative for Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, and Nunavut
- The late Rodney Cumby, former CAMA Board Representative for Newfoundland & Labrador

Watch for Provincial and Territorial legislative requirements that are also noted throughout the Toolkit.

Got questions? Want more information? Contact Jennifer Goodine, Executive Director, CAMA National Office, 1-866-771-2262, admin@camacam.ca.

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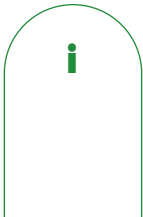Fredericton, NB E3B 4Y2

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MUNICIPAL RESILIENCE TOOLKIT: STRATEGIES FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Administrative Excellence

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CAMA Municipal Resilience Toolkit: Strategies for Crisis Management is a comprehensive resource that provides guidance and for municipalities in managing crises effectively. The toolkit focuses on the role of the Chief Administrative Officer, Council and senior administration in responding to crises in their communities.

The toolkit emphasizes the importance of proactive crisis management and highlights the need for collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including municipal departments, emergency services, non-profits, and community organizations. It provides insights into the different types of crises that municipalities may face. These crises are not always disasters such as wildfires, tornadoes, floods, or hurricanes. The toolkit also covers crises such as economic downturns, education disruption, resource scarcity, communication breakdowns, social unrest, financial mismanagement, misconduct, data breaches, and crises where the typical emergency response is not required.

The following document outlines the stages of a municipal crisis, from prevention and mitigation to recovery and learning, and provides a step-by-step approach to developing a crisis management program. It emphasizes the need for risk assessment, training, and community engagement to enhance preparedness and response capabilities.

Furthermore, the toolkit highlights the importance of effective crisis communications, including the development of a crisis communications plan, triaging of crises, key stakeholder identification, message development, and the use of various communication methods and tools. Canadian examples have been used throughout to provide local context with links to further information should the reader want to dive deeper into a particular topic.

Each chapter concludes with a checklist for readers who may want to cross-compare with their internal processes and documents. These checklists are also available as a complete suite in Appendix I.

Overall, the CAMA Municipal Resilience Toolkit provides a comprehensive and practical guide for municipalities to enhance their crisis management capabilities, protect public safety, and build resilient and prepared communities.

Watch for Provincial and Territorial legislative requirements!

INTRODUCTION
TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

What Constitutes a Crisis?

A crisis, disaster, and emergency are terms often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings, especially in the context of management and response:

- **Crisis:** A crisis is a situation that threatens the stability or reputation of an organization or community and requires an immediate and effective response. It can be anything from a scandal, a security breach, a financial collapse, to a sudden leadership change. Crises are characterized by uncertainty, urgency, and the need for quick decision-making. They may not always pose an immediate threat to life or property but can have long-term impacts if not managed properly. It's characterized by uncertainty, a need for quick decision-making, and a potential to escalate in severity. Crises can be internal (such as a leadership scandal) or external (such as a public health crisis).

- **Disaster:** A disaster is a specific type of crisis that is a sudden, catastrophic event that causes significant damage, destruction, and disruption to life and property. Disasters can be natural (such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes) or man-made (such as industrial accidents, terrorist attacks). They often result in casualties, property loss, and environmental damage and require a coordinated response from emergency services, government agencies, and humanitarian organizations.

- **Emergency:** An emergency is a situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property, or the environment. While it shares similarities with a crisis and disaster, an emergency is usually more localized and of a shorter duration. Emergencies require prompt action to prevent or mitigate the harm they can cause. Examples include medical emergencies, fires, or chemical spills.

Some events will start as an emergency, and can become a disaster, crisis, or both. The potential for escalation is exasperated when mitigation and preparation is lacking, and there are ineffective coordination efforts.

In the context of a municipality, a crisis refers to a situation or event that poses a significant threat to the well-being of the community and requires immediate, coordinated, and effective response. Municipal crises can take various forms beyond what is traditionally considered an emergency or disaster.

Table 1: Types of Municipal Crisis

Crisis:	Risks
Economic Downturns & Labour Disruptions	A potential crisis resulting from: • Sudden industry closures • Significant job loss • Strikes • Inflation or high interest rates
Education Disruption	A potential crisis resulting from: • School closures • School shootings • Mental health crisis
Resource Scarcity	A potential crisis resulting from: • Shortage of essentials (food, water, shelter, medical • Supply chain issues • Hoarding
Communication Breakdowns	A potential crisis resulting from: • Misinformation • Trolling • Lack of communications guidance • Difficulty coordinating various departments
Social Unrest	A potential crisis resulting from: • Social tensions • Civil disturbances and protests
Financial Mismanagement	A potential crisis resulting from: • Corruption, fraud, bribery, or embezzlement • Misuse of public funds • Budget irregularities

Crisis:	Risks
Misconduct	A potential crisis resulting from: • Sexual misconduct, bullying or harassment • Leadership scandal • Workplace violence
Data Breaches	A potential crisis resulting from: • Blackmail or data compromise • Disruption of essential services
Housing	A potential crisis resulting from: • Homelessness • Discrimination in housing policies • Substandard housing conditions or illegal evictions
Election Irregularities	A potential crisis resulting from: • Election fraud or manipulation of electoral processes • Voter suppression
Healthcare Failure e.g. Neglect, Mismanagement	A potential crisis resulting from: • Outbreaks • Neglect or mismanagement

Table 2: Types of Municipal Emergencies & Disasters

Types Of Emergencies & Disasters	Hazards
Natural Hazards **Climatological** **Meteorological**	A potential incident resulting from acts of nature: • Severe Weather • Ice Storms • Damaging Winds • Blizzards • Tornado • Wildland Fires
Biological Hazards **Human Epidemics And Pandemics** **Agricultural Epidemics And Pandem**	• Infectious Disease Outbreak • Pandemic
Technological Hazards **Infrastructure Hazards** **Transportation Hazards** **Structural Fires And Failures** **Power Failures** **Telecommunications System Failures** **Computer Network Failures** **Critical Water Or Sewer System Failures** **Industrial Failures** **Major Gas Disruption Line (Main) Breaks**	Hazards that result from failures in the physical things humans have made. There is no question that human activity is the major contributing factor. Infrastructure hazards are the potential failure of processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets, and services essential to health, safety, security, or economic well-being: • Power/Water Systems • Sewage System Capacities • Motor Vehicle Collisions • Hazardous Material Release
Intentional Hazards **Civil Incidents** **Criminal Acts (Violent & Non-Violent)** **Cyber Attacks** **Terrorism** **War** **Humanitarian Crises** **Complex Humanitarian Emergencies**	These hazards do not result from negligence, oversight, or mother nature. A potential incident resulting from the intentional actions of an adversary: • Explosions • Civil Unrest & Disorder • Blockade Of Major Roadways • Violent Acts/Terrorism/Cyber Attack

A well-prepared municipality should have emergency response plans, communication strategies, and coordination mechanisms in place to address these and other potential crises. Regular drills, training, and community engagement are essential components of effective crisis management in a municipal setting.

Disasters and emergencies will be managed using a formal incident management system such as the Incident Command Structure. Crisis can also be handled using an incident management system, but it may not be the Incident Command Structure.

Managing a municipality is, at its core, a risk management exercise. Every day, municipal leaders are faced with the complex task of juggling resource allocation to deliver essential services while simultaneously minimizing risks. This delicate balance involves making strategic decisions that impact the safety, well-being, and prosperity of the community. Whether it's responding to natural disasters, ensuring public safety, or maintaining infrastructure, municipal leaders must navigate a landscape of uncertainties to protect and serve their constituents effectively.

Managing a municipality as a risk management exercise becomes even more nuanced when viewed through the lens of institutional maturity. Institutional maturity refers to the extent to which an organization has developed processes, systems, and capabilities to effectively manage its operations, including crisis, to achieve its objectives. In the context of a municipality, institutional maturity plays a critical role in enhancing the ability of municipal leaders to allocate resources, deliver services, and minimize risk.

Institutional Risk Maturity
STRUCTURE

NAIVE	AWARE	DEFINED	MANAGED	ENABLED
Has not yet developed an approach for risk management. Risks are a nuisance, would rather avoid the talk of them.	Scattered silo-based approach to risk management. Mitigate risks as they become relevant.	Risk management strategy and policies in place and communicated across the organization.	Enterprise-wide risk management approach considering risk at highest level but could be further enabled in decision making.	Risks taken on an informed basis. Risk management is used to help manage multiple aspects of the institution.

Figure 1: Growing the Crisis Management Institutional Maturity within a Municipality

A municipality with a high level of institutional maturity is likely to have well-established governance structures, robust financial management systems, and comprehensive risk management frameworks. These elements enable the municipality to respond more effectively to crisis. Conversely, a municipality with lower institutional maturity may struggle to manage crisis effectively, leading to potential service disruptions, financial instability, and increased vulnerabilities.

The Stages Of A Municipal Crisis

The management of a municipal crisis typically involves several stages, from preparedness and prevention to recovery and learning. While the specific stages may vary depending on the nature of the crisis, here is a general framework:

1. Prevention and Mitigation

This stage involves proactive measures to prevent or mitigate potential crises. To understand what must be mitigated, a community and organizational risk profile must first be defined, using a hazard and risk assessment process. Completing a community and organizational risk profile involves a structured approach to identify and analyze potential risks facing a community and the internal organization. This six-step process includes completing an environmental scan of the municipality to establishing the context for the municipal stock (e.g. industrial sites, hospitals, geographic features, transportation corridors, etc.). Internally, an organizational risk assessment should include evaluating the status of labor relations and union activities, such as ongoing contract negotiations and the stability of executive leadership, to gauge potential crisis risks effectively. Hazards are then identified within this stock profile and using the risk categories shown in Tables 1 and 2. Each risk is then ranked by assessing its impact and frequency. This will then categorize each hazard; through this categorization the results can be analyzed to understand the comprehensive hierarchy of risks and possible vulnerabilities that could exacerbate the impact of each risk. Risk treatments can then be triaged in alignment with the hierarchy of risks. Ongoing monitoring and reviewing are critical to ensure the data is current and relevant to the community and internally to the organization.

Hazard & Risk Assessment Tools for Prevention & Mitigation

IDENTIFYING HAZARD
Community Risk Profile of Potential Crisis

RISK ANALYSIS
Risks Are Now Categorized From Low to Extreme (Quantitative Formulas Available). See Figure 5

MONITOR & REVIEW
Annually Review Risk Profile and Adjust Risk Treatments as Required.

ESTABLISH THE CONTENT
Munipality Environment Scan

RISK ASSESSMENT
Rank Each Risk Based on Impact and Frequency (Quantitative Formulas Available). See Figure 4

TREAT RISK
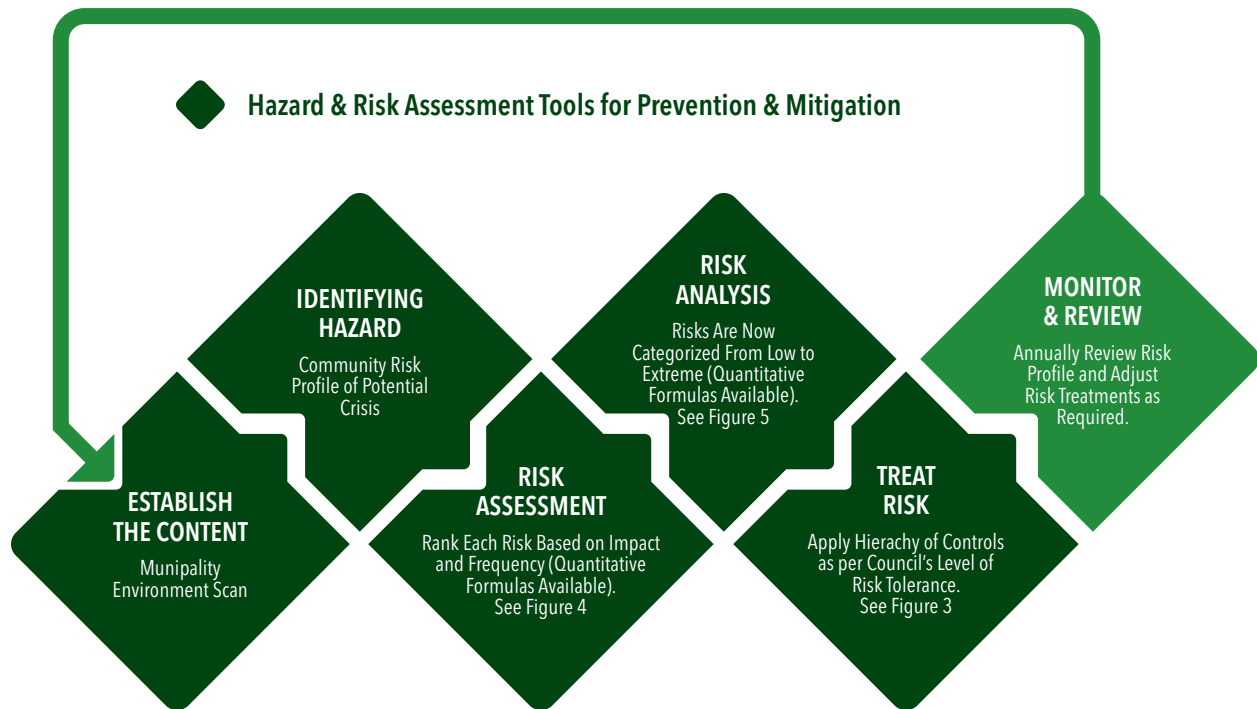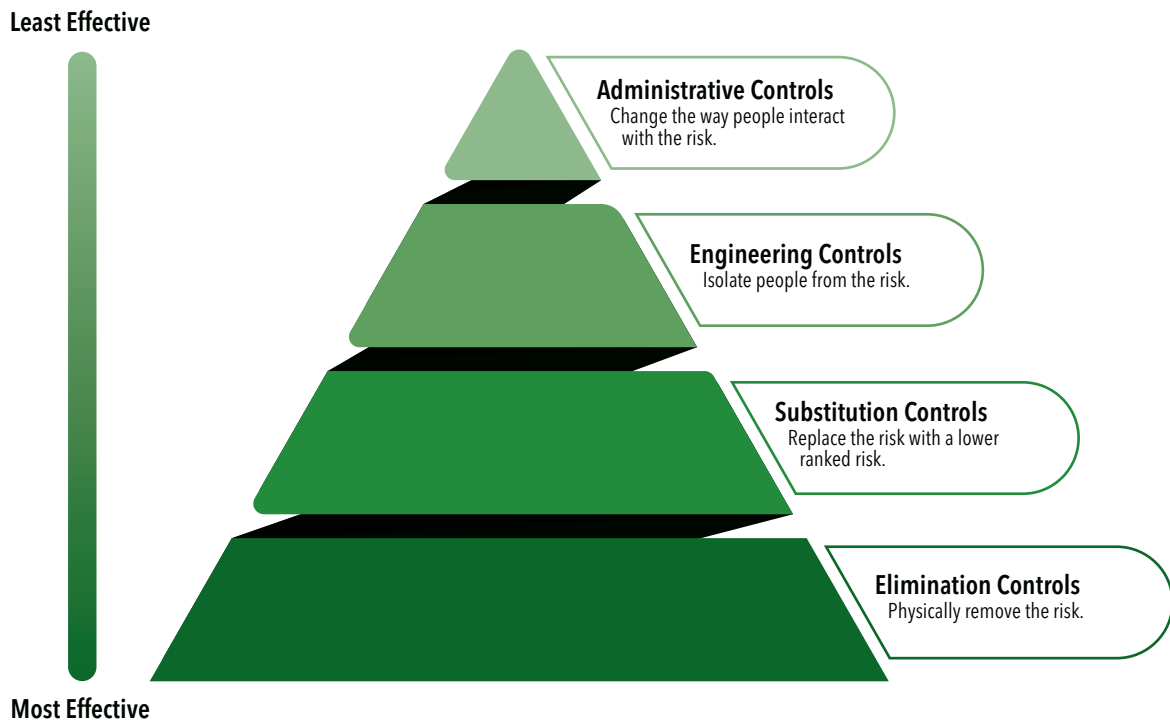Apply Hierachy of Controls as per Council's Level of Risk Tolerance. See Figure 3

Figure 2: Process to Complete a Community Risk Assessment to determine the overall Community Risk Profile

A hierarchy of controls is applied in relation to the risk rating. Elimination, substitution, engineering, and administrative controls are applied to reduce the risk rating to a level that Council and the community are willing to tolerate.

Least Effective

Administrative Controls
Change the way people interact with the risk.

Engineering Controls
Isolate people from the risk.

Substitution Controls
Replace the risk with a lower ranked risk.

Elimination Controls
Physically remove the risk.

Most Effective

Figure 3: Hierarchy of controls applied in relation to the risk rating.

Public Safety Canada has practical risk assessment and planning tools to conduct all-hazards risk assessments. A risk-rating matrix allows for decisions about which risks need treatment and the priority for treatment implementation. The comparison is made based on likelihood and impact estimates to prioritize risks. The risk-rating matrix plots the likelihood on the x-axis and the impacts on the y-axis. Then, by measuring those components of risks, a clustering of risks can be shown, which helps establish acceptable or intolerable risk levels, leading to decisions on priorities. Risk treatments can then be applied to develop, select, and implement controls to eliminate or mitigate risks. The all-hazards risk assessment process can be used within a community as a proven methodology to incorporate risk assessment, pre-incident planning and response activities. Regular reviews of risk and should occur annually or, by some manageable schedule, as assigned by those organizations designated through governance or policy.

There are numerous risk assessment tools available to the Fire Service. Public Safety Canada provides an **All-Hazards Risk Assessment Methodology & Guidelines publication** to support risk assessment activities.

	1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Signigicant	4 Major	5 Catastrophic
5 Certain	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Extreme
4 Likely	Low	Moderate	High	High	Very High
3 Possible	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
2 Unlikely	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
1 Rare	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Low

Figure 4: Sample HIRA Risk Assessment Matrix (Ontario Emergency Management)

Once the risks, threats, vulnerabilities, and hazards are identified, a risk and vulnerability analysis highlight and gives a municipality the ability to recognize potential threats and the probability or potential that these factors will exploit a vulnerability, or gap, in its protection and result in crisis. This provides Council and Senior Leadership the data to prioritize mitigation and response efforts. A sample analysis is provided in Figure 5 for an imaginary Canadian community. Note that the Crisis Hazards will not be in the same hierarchy for each community due to every community's unique hazards, risks and vulnerabilities. **What is rated as extreme in one community may only be rated as moderate in another.**

Level of Risk	Crisis /Hazards
🟣 Extreme	Economic Downturn, Communication Breakdown
🔴 Very High	Misconduct (sexual, workplace violence), Data Breaches (blackmail, data compromise, disruption of essential services), Housing (homelessness)
🟠 High	Healthcare Failure (neglect, mismanagement), Resource Scarcity
🟡 Moderate	Financial Mismanagement (budget irregularities, misuse of public funds, corruption, fraud)
🔵 Low	Social Unrest (civil disturbances and protests), Education Disruption
🟢 Very Low	Election Irregularities (election fraud, voter suppression)

Figure 5: Sample Risk Analysis Results (Community Risk Profile) to Support Priorities in Crisis Risk Reduction

2. Preparation

Training and drills for emergency responders and the community help ensure readiness. This ensures that nobody is scrambling to figure out their role or how to undertake crisis management outputs in real-time, when a crisis hits; instead, they will have gone through exercises that lay the groundwork for actual response if a crisis arises.

3. Identification and Early Warning

Recognizing the early signs of a potential crisis is crucial for effective response. Monitoring systems, community feedback, and surveillance help identify emerging threats. Early warning systems, such as weather alerts or disease surveillance, play a critical role in this stage.

4. Response:

When an emergency occurs or is imminent, municipal authorities activate emergency response protocols. Emergency operations centers or emergency coordination centres are often established to coordinate the crisis response efforts. In disasters and emergencies, an Incident Command Post is also established to mitigate the threat to life safety, property, the environment and the economy. Reputation risk is a key area that the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) and/or Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) also focuses on.

Communication channels are opened to disseminate information to the public and coordinate with relevant agencies. Emergency services, including fire, police, medical, and other relevant agencies, may be mobilized. Evacuations, medical care, containment measures, and other response actions are implemented.

The importance of robust documentation and cost tracking at the onset of a crisis cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of supporting reimbursement through future disaster financial assistance programs. When a crisis strikes, municipalities often incur significant expenses in their response and recovery efforts. These costs can include emergency services, consulting services for incident management or business continuity, infrastructure repairs, and support for affected communities. By implementing meticulous documentation and cost tracking processes from the very beginning of a crisis, municipalities can ensure that all expenses are accurately documented and categorized. This detailed record-keeping is crucial for submitting comprehensive and substantiated claims for financial assistance. **Without it, municipalities risk missing out on vital funds that could alleviate the financial burden of the crisis and support the community's recovery.**

Incident Command Post (ICP): The ICP is the location of the tactical-level incident command organization. This location typically houses the Incident Commander or Unified Command and the Command and General Staffs and is where the primary functions of ICS are performed. It may include other designated incident personnel from Federal, Provincial, Territorial, First Nations and local municipalities and agencies, as well as NGOs and the private sector. While often located in the immediate vicinity of the incident, this is relative. Ideally the ICP should be at a location that best supports the IC and the Command and General Staff. The ICP may be co-located with an incident base or other incident facilities. The Incident Commander or Unified Command may establish an incident communications centre at this location.

Emergency Operations Centre / Emergency Coordination Centre: The physical location at which the coordination of information, resources, and response to support crisis management activities normally takes place. The ECC is where regular situation updates take place, and plans are set for the next steps in crisis management and/or risk mitigation. The ECC is set up as a physical location, though there may be a virtual component to include staff who do not necessarily have to be on-site throughout a crisis or emergent event; often, depending on where the crisis is taking place, an ECC will be set up in Council Chambers or in a boardroom in a municipal facility. The decision to stand-up/activate an ECC should be taken after an ICP has been established that is appropriate to the incident.

Note: A shift in emphasis from EOC to ECC will not be universal and some jurisdictions will choose to retain the EOC nomenclature for their ECC. The key consideration is for assisting and coordinating stakeholders/agencies to understand which functions are being performed in the ECC/EOC and ICP structures to ensure the appropriate integration occurs where and when necessary.

5. Recovery:

After the immediate threat is addressed, the focus shifts to community recovery. Response and recovery often happen simultaneously once life safety and scene stabilization is managed. This involves restoring essential services, aiding affected individuals, and assessing the extent of the damage. Short-term and long-term recovery plans are developed to facilitate community rehabilitation.

6. Communication and Public Information:

Throughout all stages, effective communication is crucial. Municipalities must keep the public informed throughout a crisis, including addressing response efforts, safety measures, and recovery steps. Transparent and timely communications help manage public expectations and reduce public anxieties.

Executing public communications effectively is a key component of building resident trust throughout a crisis event, with this trust then acting as a tool in allowing you to do your crisis management work properly; ensuring resident buy-in to the actions taken by the municipality; and maintaining an ongoing relationship post-crisis; among other areas of relevance. It is for this reason that transparency is paramount throughout a crisis, and that the public must feel as though they're being brought into the conversation and that their voices are being heard.

7. Coordination and Collaboration:

Effective crisis management requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including municipal departments, emergency services, non-profits, and community organizations. Coordination ensures that resources are allocated efficiently, and efforts are synchronized.

8.Post-Crisis Evaluation:

After the crisis has been contained and recovery efforts are underway, a thorough evaluation is conducted. Municipalities assess the effectiveness of their response, identify areas for improvement, and update emergency plans accordingly. Lessons learned during the crisis inform future preparedness efforts.

9. Learning and Adaptation:

Continuous learning is essential for building resilience. Municipalities use insights gained from past crises to improve their overall emergency preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. After-Action Reviews are critical to identifying successes, strengths, challenges and improvement opportunities.

10. Community Engagement and Support:

Throughout all stages, engaging with the community is vital. Soliciting feedback, addressing concerns, and involving residents in planning and response efforts foster community resilience. By following these stages, municipalities can enhance their ability to manage crises effectively, protect public safety, and facilitate a more resilient and prepared community.

Importance Of Proactive Crisis Management

Proactive crisis management is crucial for organizations, including municipalities, as it helps to minimize the impact of potential crises and enhance overall resilience. Here are key reasons highlighting the importance of proactive crisis management:

1. Risk Mitigation:

Proactive crisis management involves identifying and assessing potential risks. By understanding and mitigating risks in advance, organizations can reduce the likelihood and severity of crises by applying control measures.
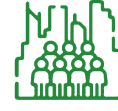
Risk Assessments include the following profiles

Geographic	Demographic	Community Services
Building Stock	Hazards	Economic
Critical Infrastructure	Public Safety Response	Past Loss & Event History

2. Early Detection and Prevention:

Proactive approaches allow for the early detection of warning signs and potential threats. This early awareness enables organizations to implement preventive measures, reducing the likelihood of crises or mitigating their impact.

3. Resource Allocation Efficiency:

Planning and preparing for potential crises in advance allow for more efficient allocation of resources. Emergency response teams can be trained, equipment can be maintained, and resources can be strategically positioned, enhancing overall effectiveness during a crisis.

4. Preparedness and Training:

Proactive crisis management involves regular training and drills for emergency response teams and relevant personnel. Well-prepared teams can respond more effectively during a crisis, making better use of available resources and minimizing response times.

5. Reputation Protection/Management:

Proactive crisis management includes strategies to protect and manage the organization's reputation. Swift and well-managed responses to crises can help mitigate damage to public perception and trust in the organization. The degree to which your organization's reputation must be managed depends on the severity or nature of the crisis being experienced. Reputation management requirements related to natural disasters, for example, are completely different from those related to widespread misinformation campaigns of significant impact to the community. Social crises (those which are related to human activity or behaviour) are more likely to bear significant reputational risk for an organization than natural disasters.

6. Stakeholder Communication:

Establishing communication protocols and plans in advance allows organizations to communicate effectively with stakeholders during a crisis. Proactive communication helps manage expectations, disseminate accurate information, and maintain public trust. Through each phase of a crisis, including those leading up to potential crises, teams should be addressing immediate communications concerns, while planning for potential future needs.

7. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:

Being proactive in crisis management includes staying informed about and compliant with relevant laws and regulations. This ensures that the organization's response aligns with legal requirements, reducing the risk of legal consequences during and after a crisis.

8. Financial Resilience:

Proactive crisis management involves financial planning for potential crises, including the establishment of contingency funds. Financial resilience helps organizations navigate the economic challenges associated with crises and facilitates a smoother recovery process.

9. Community Engagement and Trust:

Proactive engagement with the community fosters trust and cooperation, while building long-term goodwill between the organization and its residents. In times of crisis, a community that is familiar with emergency plans and procedures is more likely to collaborate effectively with authorities and support response efforts.

10. Continuous Improvement:

Proactive crisis management involves ongoing evaluation and improvement of crisis response plans. Organizations can learn from simulations, past experiences, and the experiences of others to continually enhance their crisis management capabilities.

11. Reduced Impact on Operations:

By anticipating potential disruptions and having contingency plans in place, proactive crisis management helps minimize the impact of crises on day-to-day operations.

Proactive crisis management is a strategic and holistic approach that empowers organizations to anticipate, prepare for, and respond effectively to potential crises. This approach not only safeguards the organization but also contributes to the well-being of its stakeholders and the community at large.

Checklist: Completing Your Community Crisis Risk Profile

This checklist is a starting point for municipalities to assess their crisis risks, which will collectively then define their community risk profile. Regular updates and reviews are essential to ensure that the municipality remains prepared for potential crises.

Hazard Identification:

☐ Identify crisis threats (e.g., floods, earthquakes, storms).

Vulnerability Assessment:

☐ Evaluate the vulnerability of critical infrastructure (e.g., bridges, power plants).

☐ Assess the resilience of communication systems.

☐ Determine the readiness of emergency services (e.g., fire, police, medical).

Risk Analysis:

☐ Analyze the likelihood of each identified hazard occurring.

☐ Assess the potential impact of each hazard on the community and infrastructure.

☐ Prioritize risks based on likelihood and impact.

Resource Evaluation:

☐ Assess the availability of emergency response resources (e.g., personnel, equipment).

☐ Evaluate the capacity of shelters and evacuation centers.

☐ Determine the adequacy of emergency funds and insurance coverage.

Community Preparedness:

☐ Assess public awareness and education on emergency preparedness.

☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of early warning systems.

☐ Check the readiness of community response teams.

Plan Review:

☐ Review the existing emergency response and crisis management plans.

☐ Ensure that plans are updated and address all identified risks.

☐ Confirm that plans include clear roles and responsibilities for responders.

Training and Exercises:

☐ Assess the frequency and effectiveness of training programs for emergency responders.

☐ Evaluate the participation in and outcomes of emergency drills and exercises.

☐ Identify gaps in training and areas for improvement.

Interagency Collaboration:

☐ Review agreements and coordination mechanisms with neighboring municipalities.

☐ Assess collaboration with provincial and federal agencies.

☐ Evaluate partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Communication Systems:

☐ Assess the reliability and redundancy of communication networks.

☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of public information and warning systems.

☐ Ensure that communication plans include provisions for diverse populations.

Continuous Improvement:

☐ Implement a process for regular review and updating of the risk profile.

☐ Establish mechanisms for learning from past incidents and exercises.

☐ Encourage a culture of continuous improvement in crisis management.

CRISIS LEADERSHIP
AND GOVERNANCE

The Role and Responsibilities of the CAO During a Crisis

To understand what crisis leadership is and what it looks like in action, it is imperative to understand the broader definition of the words "Crisis" and "Leadership."

Crisis, as defined previously in this report, is a situation or event that poses a significant threat to the well-being of the community and requires action… from the local authorities to bring the event to a conclusion.

One definition of Leadership is:

> "The ability of an individual or group of people to influence and guide members of an organization, society or team. Leadership often is an attribute tied to a person's title, seniority or ranking in a hierarchy." [1]
>
> **TECHTARGET NETWORK, LEADERSHIP BY NICK BARNEY, TECHNOLOGY WRITER AND MARY K. PRATT**

The CAO is the administrative head of the municipality, performing as Council's advisor on its operations and affairs. They are responsible for the rest of the organization, including the human resources required to run the organization. In addition to their seniority and ranking in the organization, as the administrative head, the CAO is the individual responsible for influencing and guiding members of the organization. In fact, their leadership is required most during times of crisis both for Council and the employees of the organization.

In conducting years of research post-crisis municipal employee engagement, several common themes have emerged regarding the needs of the employees from their leaders while dealing with a crisis.

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[1] *https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/leadership#:~:text=Leadership%20is%20the%20ability%20of,or%20ranking%20in%20a%20 hierarchy)*

Job Requirements

The most common misunderstanding of the employee is the ability to accept that managing or participating in crisis management may be as much a part of their job as their day-to-day responsibilities, duties and tasks. The following examples provide a snapshot into some of the employee questions, statements or thoughts that fuel that misunderstanding:

1)   "This isn't my job, it's not in my job description."

2)   "If I'm there helping with a crisis, who will be doing my day-to-day job?"

3)   "My direct superior won't let me leave to help during a crisis."

4)   "I didn't have time away from my responsibilities to take part in any training in case of a crisis or emergency."

5)   "Will I be safe?"

6)   "If there's an evacuation, am I considered a resident who should evacuate, or essential service delivery personnel who stays in the evacuation zone?"

7)   "What happens if I can't or don't have enough time to organize childcare or eldercare?"

8)   "What if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest?"

9)   "What if I am directly involved somehow in the crisis?" (i.e. a family member is involved in an active shooter scenario; their home is in an evacuation zone; or, they have perpetuated misinformation and believe it to be true)

10)   "Can I still leave at the end of my workday?"

Leadership in Crisis

In an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* titled the, "Psychology Behind Effective Crisis Leadership," author Gianpiero Petriglieri discusses how leaders are often thought of as visionaries, tasked with holding the vision of an organization as vision inspires and moves people. Visions are almost always tested by a crisis and typically fail, because when there is a large-scale emergent event, we don't need a call to action from the leaders; we are often already motivated to move. Instead, what is required is the assurance that the organization has the depth and resources to manage the crisis and gives clear direction about what must be done.

A common misconception is that any crisis or emergency will be handled by the first responders employed, or volunteering with the municipality; this is not always the situation. In some cases, the crisis will have very little to do with first responders. Therefore, as the CAO, it will be necessary to ensure that all employees are given reassurance, understanding, role clarity and clear direction through the creation and consistent review of documents such as an Emergency Management Plan, along with bylaws, policies, procedures, and job descriptions. These documents not only communicate the expectation for (some of) the employees to participate in managing the municipality in a crisis, but they should also empower those members to manage their work effectively, knowing they are supported by every level of management. They also need to know their safety will be a priority and that there will be scheduled hours of expected work.

"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men [sic] to do what he wants done and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

– THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Training

Importantly, staff should be supported in training for whatever role they might be expected to participate in, so there is confidence in their ability to do the job. What that looks like in action is the CAO, in some cases, will take or initiate the same training to inspire others to do the same. In some provinces, there are mandates – often in the form of provincial acts or regulations – that require a certain amount of training and preparation to be accomplished to ensure that the municipality is prepared to manage any crisis or emergency. Taking the training with staff, and in some cases Council, will be critical to the overall success of the event, and communication about the importance of meeting the requirements.

In Alberta, all Councils must take The Municipal Elected Officials Course within 90 days of being elected, according to the Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation.

Business Continuity

Serious consideration should be given to having a Business Continuity Plan in place for each department in the organization, supporting the workers should they need to be involved in crisis mitigation on any level for an extended period. The plan can be as simple as understanding who will fill the roles in each department if some of the members of that department are required to help with crisis mitigation. Another example is identifying a strength within your existing team members that may not be utilized in their day-to-day job (i.e. discovering someone is able to manage payroll, but who may typically work as an admin in another department, to allow for job coverage during a crisis.)

Once the Business Continuity Plan has been established, ensure the plan is shared with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure its success, creating a more resilient community. This also helps in crisis succession planning, recognizing that if everyone is aware of the plans in place, there is less chance for a gap to be created either in someone's absence, or in the chaos at the onset of a crisis.

Support

Financially, CAOs must ensure there is a budget to support staff for the necessary training and equipment that might be needed to effectively manage a crisis. Create and champion space for your trained, supported, and enabled staff to do the job you're asking of them by ensuring they have the tools necessary to complete the job and then trusting them to do the job is critical.

The final level of support that a CAO can provide for their staff, Council and community is assuring there are strong mutual aid agreements in place. These agreements can be with neighbouring municipalities, or with a larger regional area, the provincial government, or all the above. With Canada's climate changing rapidly, municipal teams can quickly become overwhelmed with a crisis or emergency. Proactively securing agreements with your neighbours is the quickest way to increase your capacity before having to manage any crisis or emergency.

Checklist: CAO Role in A Crisis

This checklist is a starting point for CAOs to assess their readiness to mitigate and manage a potential crisis. Each of these points should be part of the CAO's preparation and action plan to ensure the municipality can effectively navigate and manage a crisis.

Job Requirements Understanding

☐ Clarify the role of employees in crisis management.

☐ Address misconceptions about job descriptions and crisis involvement.

☐ Ensure training is available for crisis management.

☐ Communicate expectations and safety protocols during a crisis.

☐ Prepare staff for unique crisis scenarios and personal conflicts.

☐ Define the status and expectations of employees during evacuations.

☐ Manage work-life balance concerns, such as childcare during a crisis.

Empowerment

☐ Develop and review critical documents: Emergency Management Plan, bylaws, policies, procedures, job descriptions.

☐ Communicate roles clearly, ensuring staff know they are supported, and their safety is prioritized.

☐ Establish clear expectations for participation and working hours during a crisis.

Training

☐ Provide and participate in training for staff and Council on crisis management roles.

☐ Meet training requirements set by provincial acts or regulations.

Business Continuity

☐ Create and maintain a business continuity plan for each department.

☐ Identify staff with versatile skills for effective job coverage during crises.

☐ Share the plan with the Senior Leadership team for a resilient community.

Support

☐ Allocate a budget for necessary training and equipment for crisis management.

☐ Trust and enable trained staff to perform their duties during a crisis.

☐ Form strong mutual aid agreements with neighboring and regional entities for additional support during overwhelming situations.

DEFINING THE ROLE
OF COUNCIL DURING A CRISIS

Policy Level Endorsement

All Provinces and Territories have legislative requirements in either an Emergency Management Act or Emergency Measures Act that outlines the role of Council within the context of an emergent event; this could also be applied to a crisis depending on the nature and extent of the crisis being experienced. Electing a Council Member from within the body of Council to sit on an Emergency Advisory Committee is not an uncommon requirement, with that member acting as a liaison between Council and the Committee, representing Council's will, and reporting back to Council the work of the Committee. Additionally, there is always a requirement for Council to be responsible for municipal emergency response. In practice, this means setting and approving local legislation, and approving budget allocations to properly fund emergency response needs.

The highest functioning councils are the ones that don't make the news during an emergency or crisis; they are the ones busy supporting their CAO and their staff. Council has authority to do the policy and financial work of crisis management, laying the foundation for how and who they would like to manage any crisis or emergency. Passing emergency management plans, programs, policy, enacting a bylaw, or setting level of service expectations for managing a crisis is where the power of Council lies. Calling for, renewing, or terminating a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) or asking for help from other orders of government is where Council's role is most crucial. Approving unusual financial requests because of a crisis can also be one of Council's jobs.

Lead by Example

As is the case for all others within the municipal organization, training is often offered for councils to emphasize their role during times of crisis or emergencies. Councils are seen as leaders in both the municipality and community; it is critical that they lead by example, taking all training available to best understand their legal obligation and support staff and the municipality, as an organization and as a community. In some provinces, this is mandated through legislation so that Council Members are educated on their specific roles and legal obligations.

Council should be introduced to their role in a crisis or emergency and the subsequent training required at the Council Orientation session and potentially at any pre-election training for those considering a term on Council in the community provides this.

Communication Roles

The Mayor/Chief Elected Official is the spokesperson for the municipality, and as such, will play a key role in communicating to the public during a crisis or emergency. It is important, however, that the Mayor/Chief Elected Official understand that communication is managed by municipal employees, with the appropriate training, and then given to the Mayor/Chief Elected Official in accordance with a Crisis Communication Plan.

If the Mayor/Chief Elected Official are unavailable, then the responsibility and duties of spokesperson falls to the Deputy Chief Elected Official. Some Councillors may be tempted to start using their social media accounts to disburse information not commonly known in support of the ratepayers, or to answer questions directed to them from members of the community. It is never acceptable or appropriate for a Council Member to disclose information in a crisis that has not already been disclosed, or deemed appropriate for disclosure, by the organization's communications team.

Communication outside of the Crisis Communication Plan should be strongly discouraged as it can lead to chaos and mixed messaging for the ratepayers. Instead, if pushed, Council should direct all inquiries to the CAO, as the only employee of Council. Keeping with the principles of good governance, as well as ensuring organizational efficiency through a crisis, it is never acceptable, or appropriate for a Council Member to contact a member of the communications team directly.

Council Roles In The Event Of An Activation Of An ECC or EOC

The roles and responsibilities of elected officials do not include attendance at the EOC or an ECC, unless specifically requested by the Director/Coordinator of Emergency Management (DEM); instead, they include the following:

- Support the DEM in the management of the emergency response, and provide strategic direction as specifically requested by the Director, through the CAO;
- Declare, renew, or terminate a State of Local Emergency, as recommended by the DEM; and,
- Provide advice on the long-term impact of an incident on people, critical infrastructure, the environment, finances, operations, business, industry, and reputation.

In consultation and coordination with the EOC, through the DEM:

- Serve as spokesperson(s) for the situation;
- Engage with other orders of government for financial and resource support;
- Provide briefings to other levels of government; and,
- Authorize major expenditures as required.

Checklist: Council's Role in A Crisis

This checklist ensures that Council takes proactive steps in crisis preparation, maintains its leadership role, ensures effective communication, and supports the municipality's emergency response capabilities. Here's a summary checklist of to-dos for Council in the context of crisis management:

Policy Level Endorsement

☐ Understand legislative requirements regarding Council's role in crisis management.

☐ Elect a Council Member to the Emergency Advisory Committee if the community has one as a liaison.

☐ Ensure Council is responsible for setting and approving local legislation for emergency response.

Policy and Financial Foundation

☐ Support the CAO and staff during a crisis.

☐ Approve emergency management plans, programs, policies, and bylaws.

☐ Set expectations for managing a crisis or emergency.

☐ Authorize declarations of a State of Local Emergency (SOLE).

☐ Approve unusual financial requests because of a crisis.

Lead by Example

☐ Participate in training for Council's role in crisis management.

☐ Understand legal obligations and roles during a crisis.

Communication Roles

☐ Have the Mayor/Chief Elected Official act as the spokesperson.

☐ Adhere to the crisis communication plan.

☐ If unavailable, the Deputy Chief Elected Official should take over.

☐ Discourage Council Members from independently disseminating information on social media.

☐ Amplify the communications coming from the municipality.

Checklist for Council Actions

☐ Approve policies on staff involvement in crisis management.

☐ Establish a Level Of Service Policy for Council's expectations.

☐ Pass an Emergency Management/Measures Bylaw.

☐ Confirm appointments to the Emergency Advisory Committee or Board.

☐ Keep Council updated on committee or board activities.

☐ Sanction funding for staff and Council training in line with service levels.

☐ Attend all available crisis management training for Council.

☐ Follow the Crisis Communication Plan.

☐ Refrain from using social media for unofficial communication.

☐ Allocate a budget for materials and training necessary for crisis management.

LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK
FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Often, a crisis management team can be thought of as a group of people who, in an organized fashion, manage a crisis oftentimes without ever having the crisis event escalate to an emergency or activate an EOC or ECC.

A great example of a crisis that didn't become an emergency occurred when 13 Edmonton women working in the payroll department for the Alberta Treasury Branch head office won $50 million dollars with a group-purchased Lotto 6/49 ticket. The women talked to their managers before taking the rest of the day off to celebrate their winnings. It was reported that after the winning, some of the 13 retired or gave notice vacating their jobs, all of which resulted in a small crisis in the payroll department at head office where facilitating the next payroll became an issue. [2]

The crisis management team handling the lottery winner's crisis might have been managers or other staff trained in payroll, filling in for the short-term employee vacancy while the human resources department worked to fill the positions vacated.

Typically, municipalities rely on the Emergency Management framework to handle all emergency situations believing that a crisis and an emergency are interchangeable. However, some crises like the lottery winners' example wouldn't need the activation of the EOC or the ECC, (the hallmark of the emergency), to handle the crisis. However, a prebuilt organizational management structure does exist within Emergency Management and can provide the crisis management framework to operate with that is familiar.

Emergency Management Framework for Crisis Teams

Almost all EOCs or ECCs in Canada use an internationally recognized standard called the Incident Command System (ICS) to organize their emergency framework. ICS Canada defines ICS as *"a standardized, on-scene, all hazard command and control structure that allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demand of a single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries." (ICS Canada 100)*

ICS organizes itself into five primary management functions consisting of;
- Command
- Finance
- Logistics
- Operations and
- Planning

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[2] *(https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/workers-at-edmonton-financial-company-winners-of-50m-jackpot-1.806536#:~:text=Edmonton-,Workers%20at%20Edmonton%20financial%20company%20winners%20of%20%2450M%20jackpot,%2F49%20draw%2C%20reports%20say)*

Structured very similarly to a municipality, the organizational structure of ICS allows the municipality to assign individuals to roles that align with their expertise: operations staff handle operational tasks, planning staff focus on planning, finance staff manage financial matters, etc. Similarly, when creating an emergency management framework, we can assign employees to roles that correspond to their standard positions and skill sets within the municipal structure.

One of the advantages of using ICS as the framework for crisis management is it allows the municipality to activate only whatever function is necessary to manage the crisis under the supervision of an incident commander. In the example with the lottery winners, likely only Command and Finance would have to manage the crisis.

Image One below shows a simple ICS organizational structure with position names and the Incident Commander at the top or leading the organization.
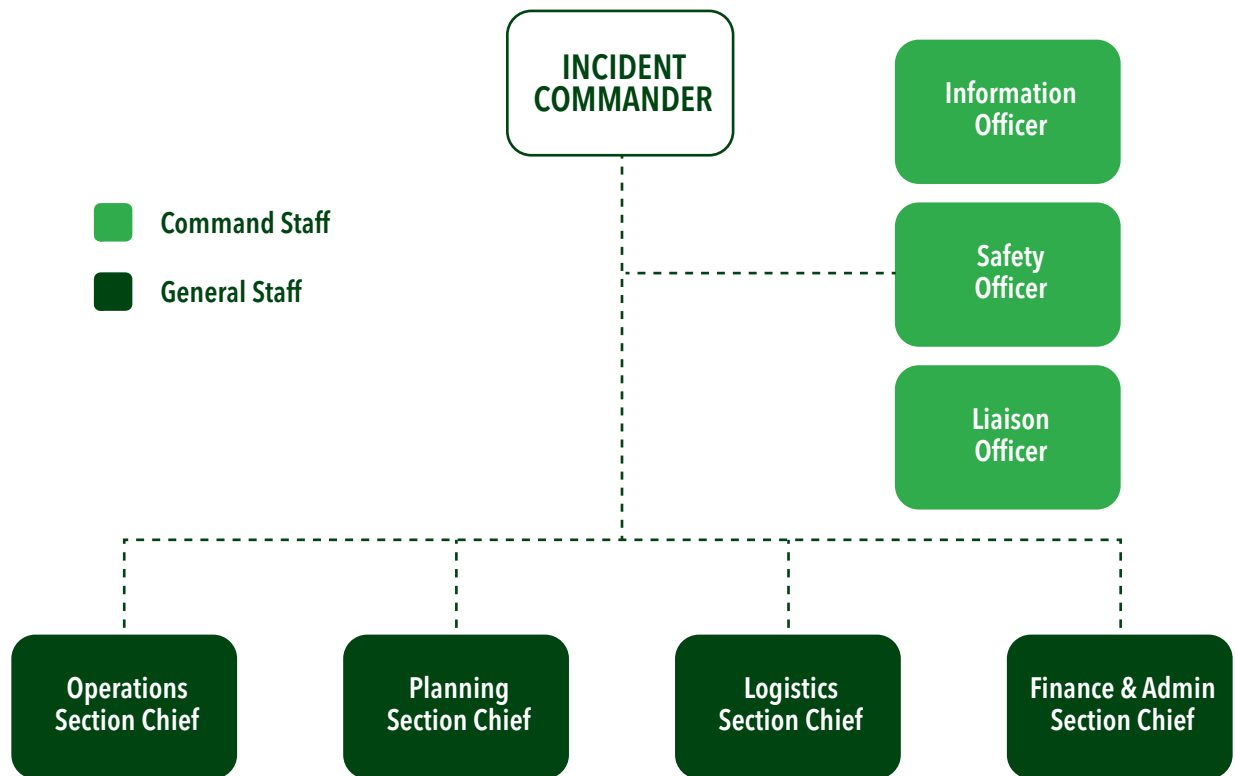
Image 1: ICS Canada Organization Chart

This predetermined framework becomes convenient allowing the municipality to position any employee into any position regardless of their job within the municipality itself. Using the lottery winners' example, the Incident Commander would probably not have been the President of the Bank, but perhaps an HR specialist, with the Finance Section being filled by an employee able to manage the finance department while the managers were filling the role of the winning employees. Enabling the President to continue to hold the vision for the corporation and its clients ensuring day to day business was conducted and the organization was stable.

Organizational Structure versus Crisis Structure

A recent emergency exercise conducted with a municipality in the north central region of Alberta had identified a lack of emergency management maturity due to staff turnover. It led the municipality to ask all employees (not just the ones assigned to the emergency management positions) about previous experience and strengths of any sort in emergency management. They discovered the Agriculture Fieldman had extensive experience and education from previous positions therefore he was given the position of Incident Commander for the exercise.

The Ag Fieldman performed very well in their new position and the municipality was able to add depth to its org chart. It is not necessary to have the highest-ranking municipal employee or CAO fill the position of incident commander or crisis leader. It is healthier for the organization if the CAO specifically stays in the role of facilitating Council's needs and supports the employees in their roles within the Emergency Operations or Coordination centre.

Unlike Emergency Management where it is critical to have the positions filled with static personnel that don't change from event to event, in crisis management traditional municipal reporting structure is not adhered to. Just like the Ag Fieldman demonstrated, the positions within the crisis management team can be filled by any employee with experience and training for that position. A different illustration of not adhering to traditional reporting structures is demonstrated by the innovation and crisis management maturity of a City in Western Canada whose emergency organizational chart positions are filled four people deep. One of four incident commanders is an RCMP member who is trained, experienced, attends municipal emergency training and is part of their emergency management agency. This outside agency partnership is ensured with the proper authority via municipal emergency bylaw endorsing the use of outside agencies as named, increasing the City's capacity to mitigate a crisis or emergency. The strength of a crisis management team does not have to be from the municipality alone, it can come from outside of the organization with like-minded agencies able to help with the specific crisis.

Understanding the flexibility of the organizational structure in terms of traditional municipal reporting structures, coupled with the need to have crisis roles filled by the best suited employee (regardless of rank) within the organization will allow the Municipality to maintain its day-to-day business most effectively. It also allows the CAO the freedom necessary to manage the organization holistically in crisis, much like the President of the Bank did with the lottery winner's crisis.

"When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity."

- JOHN F KENNEDY

Checklist: Leadership Framework for Crisis Management

By following this checklist, organizations can develop a robust leadership framework that ensures organizational understanding for crisis management, promoting effective response and resilience in the face of adversity.

Define Crisis Management Team Roles and Responsibilities:
- ☐ Identify key roles required for crisis management.
- ☐ Clearly outline the responsibilities and authority of each role.

Establish Crisis Management Framework:
- ☐ Choose an appropriate framework for crisis management, such as the Incident Command System (ICS).
- ☐ Understand how the chosen framework organizes functions and roles during a crisis.

Align Organizational Structure with Crisis Management Framework:
- ☐ Map existing organizational roles and expertise to corresponding crisis management roles within the chosen framework.
- ☐ Ensure flexibility to assign employees to crisis management roles based on expertise rather than hierarchy.

Identify Incident Commander and Key Personnel:
- ☐ Select an Incident Commander who possesses the relevant crisis experience and training, regardless of rank.

Promote Collaboration and Partnerships:
- ☐ Consider partnering with external agencies or organizations to bolster crisis management capabilities.
- ☐ Establish policies or bylaws to facilitate collaboration with outside agencies during crises.

Maintain Clear Communication Channels:
- ☐ Establish communication protocols to ensure effective information flow within the crisis management team.
- ☐ Define reporting structures and escalation procedures for critical decisions.

Conduct Training and Exercises:
- ☐ Provide ongoing training to ensure all crisis management team members understand their roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Conduct regular tabletop exercises or simulations to test the effectiveness of the crisis management framework. Include industry and other Authorities Having Jurisdiction such as regulatory agencies incorporated into your training program.

Review and Continuous Improvement:
- ☐ Conduct post-crisis debriefings to evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis response and identify areas for improvement.
- ☐ Incorporate lessons learned from each crisis into future training and planning efforts.

Ensure Organizational Stability and Continuity:
- ☐ Allow senior leadership, such as the CAO, to focus on the continued day to day strategic decision-making and organizational stability during crises.

Document Policies and Procedures:
- ☐ Document crisis management policies, procedures, and protocols for reference during emergencies.
- ☐ Ensure accessibility of documentation to all relevant stakeholders within the organization.

Regularly Update Crisis Management Plans:
- ☐ Review and update crisis management plans regularly to reflect changes in organizational structure, personnel, or external factors.
- ☐ Ensure plans are adaptable to different types of crises and evolving threats.

COORDINATION AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In an era in which crises can emerge with little warning and have far-reaching impacts, the ability of municipalities across Canada to respond effectively hinges on more than just strategic planning and resources. At the heart of a resilient response lies the strength of trust and collaboration, both within internal teams and among a broader network of governmental and intermunicipal partners. This chapter delves into the foundational role that building trust within internal teams plays in fostering an environment ripe for open communication, innovation, and a proactive stance toward crisis management. It further explores the indispensable value of collaboration with local agencies, provincial and federal governments, and neighboring municipalities in crafting a unified and robust response to emergencies.

Through a comprehensive approach that emphasizes communication and transparency, empowerment and accountability, training, and development, and extends to integrated planning, resource sharing, and joint exercises, Canadian municipalities can enhance their resilience. This not only prepares them for the immediate challenges of today's crises but also fortifies their social infrastructure against future adversities, ensuring a quicker recovery and a stronger, more connected community ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead.

Collaboration with intermunicipal partners, government agencies, and non-profit organizations is crucial during an emergency for several reasons. This chapter will discuss the importance of such collaboration and how it can enhance emergency response efforts.

Resource Sharing

During emergencies, no single municipality or organization will have all the necessary resources to respond effectively. Collaborating with partners allows for the sharing of resources such as personnel, equipment, and supplies, ensuring that all involved entities have access to what they need to respond efficiently. An incredible example of this working well can be seen through many industrial mutual aid organizations. The Strathcona District Mutual Assistance Program (SDMAP) is an association of 23 industrial members in the Greater Edmonton region who, through an official mutual aid agreement, share resources. They have created an online resource inventory dashboard where any member can see what other members have to offer in case of an emergency and request it in a crisis. The association does annual training exercises jointly testing the mutual aid and resource inventory toolkit.
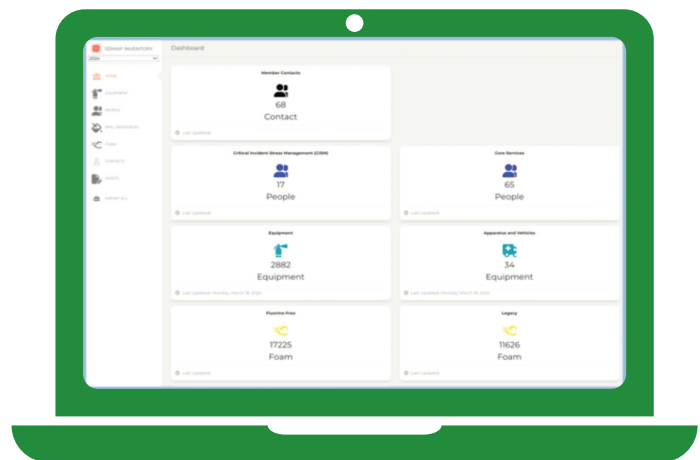
Image 1 SDMAP Industrial Mutual Aid Resource Inventory Interactive Dashboard

Information Sharing

Effective communication and information sharing are vital during emergencies to coordinate response efforts, disseminate critical information to the public, and make informed decisions. Collaborating with partners ensures that relevant information is shared promptly, reducing duplication of efforts and enhancing overall situational awareness. This is imperative when disasters stretch beyond municipal boundaries.

During the wildfire seasons across Canada in 2023, various agencies collaborated to share information about fire conditions, evacuations, and response efforts. This collaboration helped ensure that resources were allocated effectively and that communities received timely and accurate information about the wildfires.

Coordinated Response

By working closely with intermunicipal partners, government agencies, and non-profit organizations, emergency responders can coordinate their efforts more effectively. This coordination helps prevent gaps in response and ensures that resources are deployed where they are most needed. Consideration should be given to whether formalized mutual agreements should be put in place to ensure a coordinated response in the event of an emergency. These are typical in the fire service, however, can be utilized in emergency management as well.

Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) is an example of a government agency that plays a crucial role in coordinating emergency response efforts in the province. EMO works closely with municipal, provincial, and federal partners to share information, coordinate response efforts, and ensure that communities are prepared for emergencies.

Specialized Expertise

Municipalities may lack expertise in managing certain emergency situations, such as wildfires, technical rescues, and other specialized emergency responses due to their limited resources and the relative rarity of such events within their jurisdictions. Conversely, government agencies, neighbouring municipalities, and non-profit organizations often possess specialized knowledge in these technical areas. Collaborating with these entities enables emergency responders to access this expertise, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and comprehensiveness of their response efforts.

Community Group Engagement

Community engagement is a critical aspect of effective emergency management; community groups, such as non-profits, play a key role in effective crisis management. These organizations often have strong connections to the community and a deep understanding of its needs and vulnerabilities. By collaborating with non-profit associations, emergency responders can ensure that their training and exercises include a clear understanding of the roles these organizations play in emergency response.

Including non-profit associations in training and exercises helps ensure that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. This collaboration also allows emergency responders to leverage the unique strengths and capabilities of these organizations, such as their ability to reach vulnerable populations and provide specialized services.

Planning and Preparedness

Collaboration with partners is essential during the planning and preparedness phases of emergency management. By working together, entities can identify risks specific to their communities, develop response plans tailored to those risks, and conduct training and exercises to ensure readiness for a wide range of emergencies. This collaborative approach allows for a more effective and comprehensive response when emergencies occur, as partners are familiar with each other's roles and can coordinate their efforts more efficiently.

The City of Montreal collaborates with other municipalities in the region, as well as with provincial and federal agencies, to enhance their emergency management capabilities. They conduct joint training exercises and develop response plans to ensure readiness for emergencies like extreme weather events and industrial accidents.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Collaboration with government agencies is essential to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements during a crisis. Working closely with these entities helps ensure that response efforts are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. While there are no uniform regulations across Canada regarding the participation of municipalities in regional emergency management agencies, many provinces and territories have guidelines or requirements for municipalities to collaborate on emergency management. These requirements often stem from provincial or territorial emergency management legislation, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of municipalities in emergency preparedness and response. Make sure you clearly understand the regulations and laws in your province or territory.

In Canada, the management of crises at the municipal level is governed by a combination of federal, Provincial/Territorial, and municipal laws and regulations. Here are some of the key legislative frameworks and regulations that guide how municipalities manage crises:

1. **Emergency Management/Measures Acts (Provincial/Territorial):** Each province and territory have its own Emergency Management or Measures Act or equivalent legislation that provides the legal framework for managing emergencies, including the preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation of emergencies. Municipalities must align their emergency plans with these Acts.

2. **Emergency Management Act (Federal):** Section 4 (1) (f-j) address how the federal government can support the Provinces in the event of a provincial emergency including; assisting through the lieutenant governor with the declaration of an emergency under an Act of Parliament, calling out of the Canadian Forces, or for financial assistance. Lastly Section 6 (3) states that the federal government may not respond to the provincial emergency unless the provincial government requests its assistance. Though this does not directly impact municipalities, these considerations flow through the province to municipalities in delivery.

3. **Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation:** This type of regulation, often part of provincial legislation, outlines the responsibilities of municipal governments in emergency management, including the requirement to have an emergency management plan and agency in place.

4. **Public Safety Canada:** At the federal level, Public Safety Canada provides guidelines and policies that shape emergency management practices, including the Emergency Management Framework for Canada, which municipalities may use as a guide for their own emergency management programs.

5. **Occupational Health and Safety Acts (Provincial/Territorial):** These acts contain provisions to ensure the safety and well-being of workers, including during a crisis. Municipalities must ensure that their crisis management plans adhere to occupational health and safety regulations to protect their employees.

6. **Canada Labour Code:** For federally regulated employees, the Canada Labour Code sets out health and safety standards. While it's less likely to directly impact municipal employees, it does establish a general precedent for worker safety during crises.

7. **Public Health Acts (Provincial/Territorial):** During public health crises, such as pandemics, municipalities are guided by their provincial or territorial public health acts, which set out the powers and responsibilities for managing public health emergencies.

8. **Critical Infrastructure Protection Acts:** Some Provinces may have legislation aimed at protecting critical infrastructure, which includes municipal assets, to ensure continuity of services during crises.

9. **Privacy Legislation:** Federal, provincial, and territorial privacy laws, such as the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) at the federal level, dictate how municipalities must handle personal information during and after a crisis.

10. **Municipal Bylaws:** Municipalities themselves may pass bylaws that address specific local needs and stipulations for crisis management, which can include evacuation procedures, emergency shelters, and local emergency response teams.

11. **Mutual Aid Agreements:** While not a law or regulation, these agreements between neighboring municipalities or with other levels of government can have legal ramifications and provide a framework for collaborative response efforts during a crisis.

Municipalities must navigate this complex web of legislation and regulation to develop comprehensive crisis management plans that are compliant with all applicable laws and address the needs of their communities effectively.

Collaboration with intermunicipal partners, government agencies, and non-profit organizations is essential for effective emergency management. By working together, entities can share resources, information, and expertise, coordinate response efforts, engage with the community, and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. This collaboration enhances the overall effectiveness of emergency response efforts and helps communities become more resilient in the face of disasters.

The complexity of modern crises requires more than just well-designed plans and advanced technologies; it demands a foundation of trust, collaboration, and inter-municipal coordination. By investing in these relational dynamics, Canadian municipalities can enhance their resilience, ensuring a more effective response to emergencies and a quicker recovery. Building these bridges, both within internal teams and among the wider network of governmental and municipal partners, is an ongoing process that pays dividends in the face of adversity.

The concept of "Authority Having Jurisdiction" (AHJ) is crucial in crisis and emergency management, referring to the organization with the legal responsibility and authority to enforce regulations, standards, and policies within a specific area or domain. In the context of emergency management, the AHJ is responsible for making decisions, directing response efforts, and ensuring compliance with emergency protocols. This authority can vary depending on the nature and scope of the crisis, ranging from local fire departments and municipal governments to provincial or federal agencies. The AHJ is also tasked with coordinating resources, communicating with stakeholders, and overseeing the overall response to ensure the safety and well-being of the affected population. In some scenarios, there may be multiple AHJs involved. For example, understanding and respecting the AHJ's role is essential for effective collaboration and coordination during emergency situations. Training with various AHJs in your region is critical for successful crisis management.

The 1990 Oka Crisis in Quebec is an example of a political crisis that involved multiple AHJs. The crisis was a land dispute between the Mohawk community of Kanestake and the town of Oka, Quebec, over the proposed expansion of a golf course onto sacred Indigenous lands. AHJs involved included:

- *Local - The municipality and its local police force*
- *Provincial - The Surete du Quebec (Quebec Provincial Police)*
- *Federal - The Canadian Armed Forces*
- *First Nations - Indigenous Authorities including the Mohawk Council of Kanesatake*

Checklist for Coordination and Building Relationships

Internal Team Trust and Communication

☐ Foster an environment of open communication and innovation.

☐ Encourage proactive stance toward crisis management within internal teams.

Collaboration with Local Agencies

☐ Collaborate with local agencies for a unified response to emergencies.

☐ Share resources, information, and expertise with local agencies.

Collaboration with Provincial and Federal Governments

☐ Coordinate with provincial and federal governments for a robust response.

☐ Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements at all levels of government.

Collaboration with Neighboring Municipalities

☐ Collaborate with neighboring municipalities for resource sharing and coordinated response.

☐ Consider formalized mutual agreements for coordinated response.

Information Sharing

☐ Establish effective communication channels for sharing critical information.

☐ Ensure timely dissemination of information to the public.

Resource Sharing

☐ Share personnel, equipment, and supplies with partners for effective response.

☐ Consider creating an inventory toolkit for resource sharing.

Community Engagement

☐ Engage with non-profit organizations for community outreach and support.

☐ Define roles and responsibilities of non-profit organizations in emergency response.

Planning and Preparedness

☐ Collaborate with partners in planning and preparedness efforts.

☐ Conduct joint training and exercises to ensure readiness.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

☐ Ensure compliance with federal, provincial, and municipal laws and regulations.

☐ Align emergency management plans with relevant legislation.

Continuous Improvement

☐ Continually evaluate and improve collaboration efforts.

☐ Incorporate feedback and lessons learned into future plans.

By focusing on these areas, Canadian municipalities can enhance their resilience and ensure a more effective response to emergencies, building stronger and more connected communities.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Crisis Communications is an essential component of any successfully executed crisis management effort undertaken by local government, ranging in scope from large-scale natural disasters to human-caused social crises. The depth to which crisis communications is undertaken will depend on the level of crisis being experienced, which means that any good effort will begin with a crisis triage.

There are three phases of crisis related to communications efforts undertaken: Issues Management, Risk Communications, and Crisis Communications. These are not always black and white in nature. There are times at which a crisis may seem to hover in between two stages, or where it does not flow structurally from one phase to the next. A rapidly evolving wildfire requiring immediate community evacuation, for instance, likely means a community is going from zero-to-crisis. A wildfire that slowly approaches a community, though, would naturally progress through the three phases of crisis communications.

Issues Management	Risk Communications	Crisis Communications
A problem exists in its early stages, which may result in significant negative impacts on the community and/or organization, and which needs to be addressed proactively to mitigate the situation worsening.	The elements involved in the emergent situation are nearing closer to an impactful crisis. There is a reasonable chance that these elements will continue to trend in a direction that could result in the need for crisis-level communications.	All elements of a crisis have come together and have resulted in a major event or circumstance of significant negative impact to your community and/or municipal organization.

Alternatively, social scientist Timothy Coombs describes these three interconnected stages of crisis communications as the **pre-crisis** phase, the **crisis response** phase, and the **post-crisis** phase.

In each phase, you are developing communications aligned with the severity and need presented by the situation at hand. However, you are also preparing for communications efforts for potential next steps, anticipating that the situation may worsen. While these materials and efforts may not be required if emergency mitigation actions lessen the threat of a potential crisis, it is better to be prepared in communications than scrambling reactively.

Once you are in crisis mode, your first step will be to access your Crisis Communications Plan.

Development of a Crisis Communications Plan

Every municipality should have a dedicated Crisis Communications Plan, separate from its regular communications plan. This plan will be put into action once a crisis hits and will include numerous pieces that will prove valuable in a crisis – particularly in the early stages of an emergent event, when things may prove chaotic.

Your Crisis Communications Plan will be designed to meet the specific needs of your organization, including your community makeup, and your internal capacity. For example, rural communities with smaller populations over a large area will require different communications approaches than a highly populated urban centre. Similarly, communities with a fully staffed Communications Department will be able to execute crisis communications to a different extent than is possible for smaller municipalities, where there may be just one dedicated communications staff member, or communications is a secondary deliverable of someone holding another title within the organization.

However, all Crisis Communications Plans will include similar information and materials, regardless of organizational structure and specifics tied to your community. The following Table of Contents will serve as a general guide for how to develop your plan.

Crisis Communications Plan – Table of Contents

1. **Crisis Communications Overview**

2. **Crisis Triaging**

3. **Key Stakeholders**
   a. Audience Identification

4. **Key Message Development**
   a. Guidelines for Communications

5. **Communications Methods & Tools**

6. **Roles & Responsibilities**
   a. Organizational Crisis Structure
   b. ECC/EOC Structures

7. **Contact Information**
   a. Organizational Contacts
   b. Municipal & Community Partner Contacts
   c. Non-Governmental Organization Contacts
   d. Media Contacts

8. **Debrief process**

9. **Templated Scenario Statements**
   a. Scenario Risk Assessments

It is quite common that Crisis Communications Plans will include quick reference guides up front, for easy access and use in chaos, and more in-depth sections behind those briefs.

Within this, timelines will also be set for message dissemination, recognizing that we no longer have the luxury of waiting days (or even hours, in many cases), to release information publicly. In a crisis of major impact to the community, for example, a holding statement should be released within 20-60 minutes of crisis initiation, with more information released within 60-180 minutes, depending on the severity of the crisis at hand, and what is known in the early phases of the crisis.

Example Timeline for Message Dissemination in a High-Impact Crisis*

Holding Statement	20 minutes (optimal) – 60 minutes (maximum)
Subsequent Statement	60 minutes (optimal) – 120 minutes (sub-optimal) – 180 minutes (maximum)
Follow-ups for rapidly evolving crisis	Every 60-120 minutes (situation dependant)
Follow-ups for sustained crisis	1-2 times per day (situation dependant)

*These are examples only; timelines must be developed to meet the specifics of your organization and the crisis being faced by your organization/community.

Management of Media Relations and Public Information

The way crisis communications have been shared has evolved significantly over the years and will continue to evolve with trends in information consumption constantly shifting. When it comes to media, the use of traditional outlets has decreased in prominence for emergent information, but remains valuable, nonetheless. It just needs to be placed through a lens that considers:

a.   Many communities no longer have a local newspaper

b.   Have a local media outlet with constrained staff resources

c.   Certain social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, no longer allow users to share news content

There was a time at which your relationship with the media was paramount to the successful execution of crisis communications, period. Given the new realities surrounding media, however, that is no longer the case. As such, it is not necessarily to place more focus on media coverage than you would on any other aspect of crisis communications. In fact, it is wisest to control the conversation from the root – your organization. Sharing information consistently through social media, with similar messaging on all other platforms (such as your website, emergency/community notifications/or alerts, mailing lists and newsletters, etc.) will go a long way in ensuring consistency in messaging. From there, media releases (including holding statements, if required) will mirror that information which is being released to residents.

For major events, a more strategic approach is required. If there is a community evacuation, for instance, live-streamed updates with key personnel at consistent times each day are not just a key source of information for the community, but also as a first point of information for members of the media.

Each crisis is unique and will require a unique approach to working with the media and controlling messaging. Misinformation, for instance, is more prevalent in some crises than others, and requires a very hands-on approach to ensure that any misinformation is dispelled as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Meanwhile, sustained crises that span months will require a long-term approach to ensure that consistent updates remain top of mind, where they should, and that the story is allowed to die down in other respects.

Finally, a one-off sudden crisis, such as the death of a Council Member, will require a swift and dynamic approach to media management and messaging with quick impact, knowing that the story will be widely viewed and covered over a very short period. In a situation of this nature, crisis triage often walks backwards, going from initial crisis communications at the announcement of death and immediate fallout, to sustained issues management through by-election.

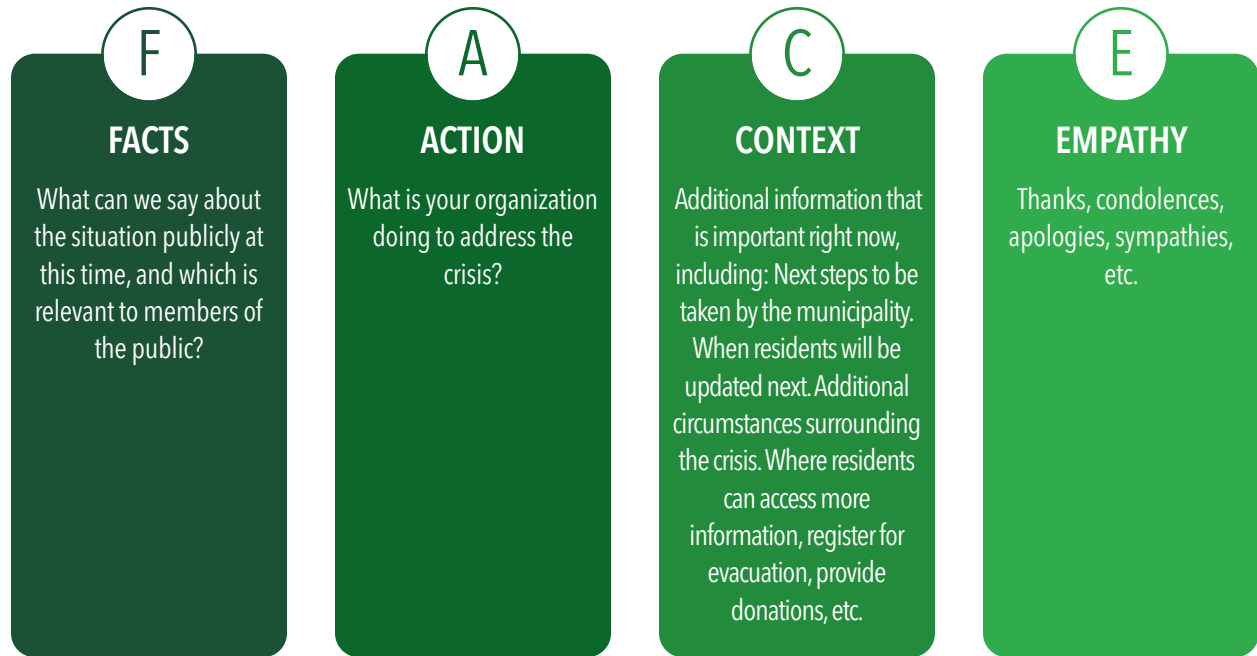## Tools for Media Relations and Public Information

In addition to your Crisis Communications Plan, and potentially your typical corporate Communications Plan, there are other tools that will help you through these processes. Some of the following will apply differently to various communities, recognizing that it is likely only the large organizations which have all the various pieces listed below. However, identifying a gap in what exists within your community is also a good reminder of where future policy or tool creation may be valuable.

- Communications Policy
- Media Relations Policy
- Public Engagement Policy
- Council Code of Conduct
- Public Engagement Framework
- Social Media Policy

Message Creation

Generally, messaging for a crisis is more strategic than messaging for day-to-day public communications executed by your organization. It needs to be structured in a way that addresses the various considerations tied to a crisis situation, and often must exist amongst all other operational communications needs.

We recommend the F.A.C.E. Messaging method (Catalyst Communications©):

F — FACTS
What can we say about the situation publicly at this time, and which is relevant to members of the public?

A — ACTION
What is your organization doing to address the crisis?

C — CONTEXT
Additional information that is important right now, including: Next steps to be taken by the municipality. When residents will be updated next. Additional circumstances surrounding the crisis. Where residents can access more information, register for evacuation, provide donations, etc.

E — EMPATHY
Thanks, condolences, apologies, sympathies, etc.

Showing clear understanding of and empathy for what residents may be going through because of the crisis at hand is important in building trust in residents and showing humanity within the organization.

Checklist - Crisis Communications

Crisis Triage

☐ Assess the level of crisis to determine the depth of public communications needed, determining which phase of a crisis is taking place:

    1. Issues Management: Address early-stage problems proactively to mitigate worsening situations.

    2. Risk Communications: Communicate as elements trend towards a potential crisis.

    3. Crisis Communications: Address a major event or circumstance with significant negative impact.

Development of a Crisis Communications Plan

☐ Create a dedicated Crisis Communications Plan separate from the regular communications plan.

☐ Tailor the plan to the specific needs and capacity of your organization and community.

☐ Include sections such as overview, triaging, key stakeholders, key messages, communication methods, roles & responsibilities, contact information, debrief process, and templated scenario statements.

Timeline for Message Dissemination in a High-Impact Crisis

☐ Release holding statements within 20-60 minutes of crisis initiation.

☐ Provide subsequent statements within 60-180 minutes, depending on crisis severity.

☐ Update every 60-120 minutes for rapidly evolving crises and 1-2 times per day for sustained crises.

Management of Media Relations and Public Information

☐ Control the conversation by sharing information consistently through various platforms.

☐ Consider live-streamed updates for major events like community evacuations.

☐ Address misinformation promptly and thoroughly.

☐ Use tools such as communications policy, Council code of conduct, media relations policy, public engagement framework, and social media policy.

Message Creation - F.A.C.E. Messaging Method

☐ Use the F.A.C.E. method (Facts, Action, Context, Empathy) for crafting crisis messages.

By following this checklist, organizations can effectively manage their crisis communications, ensuring timely and appropriate messaging during emergencies.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGY

Internal communications are an important part of an organization's crisis leadership approach and will be different for hired members than for elected officials.

Employees

Not all employees will be in the room for a crisis, and even fewer when it pertains to a large-scale crisis that requires the establishment of an Emergency Coordination Centre and/or Emergency Operations Centre. Staff still need to feel as though they're part of the solution is glaring, and they cannot be blindsided by what's happening, unless it is unavoidable.

In social or community crises, it is important that residents are brought into the loop slightly before public messaging goes out, in a confidential internal document. For example, if the organization is about to announce the death of a Council Member, staff should be made aware of the death before the community is – but only slightly so. Similarly, if there is an operational change with the potential to drive community crisis, such as a significant spike in utility rates, staff need to be made aware of what's taking place before the public, so they can prepare for the potential backlash and understand their role in dealing with the public response and potential operational fallouts.

For major emergencies, such as natural disasters, it is likely that staff will be brought into the loop on a need-to-know basis throughout; however, regular briefings should still be sent to employees from the CAO, even if it contains information that is already publicly available, to ensure that employees do not feel 'forgotten' throughout a crisis.

In situations where there is a work stoppage resulting from the emergent event, it will also be important to communicate with staff on how their role is impacted, what's expected of them throughout the crisis, and what their return-to-work will encompass.

Staff should be communicated with in a manner that 'meets them where they are,' the same as the public. If staff prefer to be texted, then that's a core method of internal communication; if they still have easy access to internal communications tools such as Microsoft Teams or Slack, those can continue to be utilized – again, so long as it is not a barrier to communication. Internal engagement surveys should be conducted every few years to determine what methods of communications work best for employees in a crisis (along with what works best and what they prefer on a regular, ongoing basis).

Council

In the event of a crisis, Council has very little to do in terms of crisis communications, other than to share the information already being released publicly by the organization. That said, Council will want to be involved in the crisis to the extent that they want to be informed, at the very least.

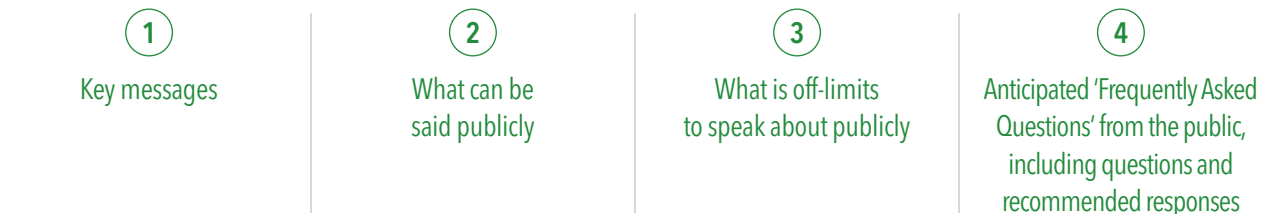In conducting After-Action Reviews following large-scale crises, it is quite common that Council Members voice displeasure with the level of information shared with them on an ongoing basis. This is not due to malice or negative intentions by the CAO, or anyone else within the organization; it is simply a reality of large-scale emergent events that focus is sometimes placed elsewhere than communicating with Council. That said, Council should be briefed once or twice per day, depending on the severity of the crisis at hand, with clear expectations for when the next briefing is coming. They should also be able to communicate effectively with the CAO throughout a crisis, but that they must be judicial in doing so. **It is not acceptable for Council to contact members of the communications team or other municipal employees directly at any time throughout a crisis.**

For social crises of impacts, such as an employee facing fraud charges for misappropriation of funds, Council should be informed on what is taking place as the situation evolves. A scenario such as this, however, carries numerous communications risks, including:

1	2	3	4
HR-related privacy requirements tied to the staff member charged with fraud	Provincial privacy regulations	Restrictions on what can be said due to ongoing legal proceedings	A high potential of misinformation stemming from this situation
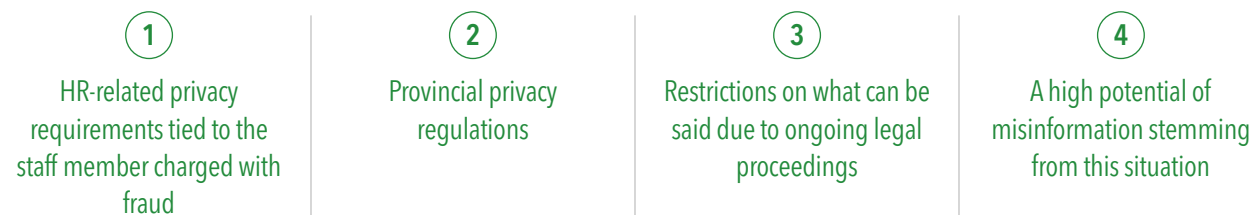
So, while Council must be made aware of what is happening, it is also crucial that Council also be provided with key messaging, and a clear overview of what can and what cannot be said publicly. Updates should be provided to Council as the situation progresses, and with each update, that communications-focused piece needs to be re-emphasized. Again, this will often include considerations such as:

1	2	3	4
Key messages	What can be said publicly	What is off-limits to speak about publicly	Anticipated 'Frequently Asked Questions' from the public, including questions and recommended responses

This process will continue as situational follow-up, recovery, and/or mitigation efforts progress, often through processes such as Root Cause Investigations, Third-Party Audits, and Organizational Reviews, among others.

In instances of ongoing crises, Council should be informed and updated as appropriate to the situation.

Crisis Communications Capacity Needs

The capacity of your organizational communications team members is not the same in-crisis as it is during regular day-to-day operations. There are numerous stresses and external influences of impact that may reduce capacity. In sustained crises of major impact, specifically – such as natural disasters – communications team members should not work more than 12 hours at a time, if possible. However, in large-scale events, shifts can sometimes last as long as 16 hours. What is not acceptable is expecting that communications staff members are available 24/7 throughout a crisis.

When shifts are longer, capacity naturally dwindles quicker. For large-scale events of major impact to the community, it is important to remember that communications staff are also facing the effects of the emergency at hand, which can create deep anxieties, stresses, and result in exhaustion faster than normal. If a team member's family has been evacuated, for instance, they may choose to continue working, but their emotional and mental capacity must be accounted for, and contingencies need to be put in place in case those staff members decide or it is deemed they are no longer able to perform their duties under current circumstances (this latter consideration is rare, but it does happen).

It is best practice for all municipalities to form a formal relationship with a third-party crisis communications expert who can support the organization in times of crisis, both as an authority and subject matter expert, and as capacity support.

Crisis Communications Checklist

The following checklist will support you in ensuring you are prepared to design and execute effective crisis communications when a crisis hits. Each of these will be unique to your organization but must be based on the foundations of sound crisis management, good governance, and organizational sustainability.

Not each of these is crucial in the immediate. Your most important components will include those items which are bolded.

- **Crisis Communications Plan (CCP)**
    - **Templated Statements**
    - **Risk Assessment Framework**
- **Training of all relevant team members on CCP**
- **Crisis Communications Team Structure**
- Communications Policy
- Communications Plan/Strategy
- Social Media Policy
- Media Relations Policy
- Public Engagement Policy
- Public Engagement Framework
- Council Code of Conduct
- Internal Communications Plan
- Internal Communications Policy

Community Engagement and Public Relations

Community engagement is a crucial aspect of both effective crisis communications and successful crisis management, recognizing that efforts undertaken throughout an emergent event or extended crisis are done in service of the community. To this end, it's important that typically high-level engagement is conducted throughout the term of a crisis, and that a larger public engagement effort is executed post-crisis.

In-Crisis Engagement

Throughout the term of a crisis, engagement conducted will be largely informal and somewhat high level; still, it is important to collect residents' feedback throughout the term of a crisis. Social media still acts as a major tool throughout this process. As your crisis communications efforts will include a social media plan, there is a high likelihood that social media will provide you valuable insight into the public mindset and reaction to response efforts.

The communications team should gauge public sentiment based on a combination of:

- Comments
- Messages
- Reactions

Within that, it's possible to gauge how effective crisis communications and crisis management/emergency response efforts are interpreted to be, based on what feedback and questions are received. If there are a notably high number of questions being posed by the public, it is a sign that public anxieties are high, and that your organization has likely not been proactive enough in putting information out publicly. If there are many comments voicing gratitude for the efforts being undertaken by your organization, however, that is a good sign that the actions of the municipality are being well received by members of the public.

Questions posed should be responded to in a timely manner and should be noted for assessment on whether they apply to a broader public. If so, that information gets folded into future messaging, ensuring others who may have a similar question receive the response as well.

Similar collection of comments and questions can be recorded by those answering phone calls and emails, making notes in a shared file for review by the communications team.

Sentiment Analysis

Throughout this process, you'll conduct sentiment analysis. There are software tools available to help with this assessment of public sentiment; however, these tools are often more costly than is sensible for the vast majority of municipalities. The largest municipal organizations may receive thousands of comments, which would make using such software (i.e. SproutSocial, Meltwater) more valuable. That won't be the case for most organizations, where at most, hundreds of comments will be received and can be assessed by a person making ticks on a notepad.

Sentiment analysis divides community reactions into three categories:

- Negative
- Neutral
- Positive

By assigning a weight to the sentiment of each comment received from members of the public, quick math will show you where public sentiment currently stands. To ensure ease of analysis, each category is typically weighted with enough room for averages to be determined effectively; for example:

- Negative = 1
- Neutral = 3
- Positive = 5

Alternatively, each sentiment level can be further qualified within a range, providing even more precise analysis; for example:

- Negative = 1-3
- Neutral = 4-6
- Positive = 7-10

Assessing sentiment within ranges is more telling than singularly assigning one value to all comments; that said, it does take more work and additional analysis, which is why it's not done frequently during major emergent events, such as natural disasters. The use of sentiment ranges is more appropriate for extended or smaller-scale crises.

Sentiment will not always be positive. That would be an unrealistic expectation amid situations which are often highly stressful for the community. Instead, what you'll typically see for major events is a curve such as the following:

Typical Sentiment Analysis
(MAJOR EMERGENT EVENT)

Catalyst Communications©2024

Major crises almost always carry an initial negative sentiment as anxieties run high. That sentiment level begins to improve as the initial chaos of a large-scale crisis subsides, and your organization shows calmness, transparency, empathy and a willingness to engage through public communications. Then, the longer an event drags on, restlessness settles in a sentiment begins to trend more negative again.

The COVID-19 pandemic offered a perfect example of this typical bell curve. At the beginning, public sentiment trended negatively in response to municipal messaging, as residents were simply unsure about everything. There was a lot of unknown, which feeds into public anxieties and negative sentiments very heavily.

Then, as the initial fear of the unknown was met with scientific answers, public sentiment trended more positively. People stood on their balconies, clanging together pots and pans whilst cheering for healthcare workers, who had been widely deemed heroes for their work on the frontlines of a global pandemic. The phrase "We're in this together" was used at a level that many studies have deemed a social movement. People were dropping off groceries for elderly neighbours, waving to each other through windows, and finding connection through video calls.

The positivity ticked upward rather sharply, and then took a slower decline as restlessness settled in and the fear of the unknown returned. When will life go back to normal? People keep using the term 'New Normal' – what does that mean? What's the solution?

As the pandemic dragged on, those questions echoed more prominently, and then more serious questions were posed that caused public sentiment to plummet, supported by mass misinformation/disinformation campaigns and the politicization of a pandemic. Is this pandemic as severe as we've been led to believe? Is it sensible for us to have to isolate ourselves from the world? What is isolation doing to our children? Is any of this even real?

That last question proved to be the breaking point, and the negatively-trending public sentiment fell into constant negativity, with ideological battles waged over simple public messaging.

For better or worse, the bell curve held true.

For smaller-scale or shorter-term crisis, however, the negative beginning of the bell curve can begin higher, typically closer to the neutral mid-point, while the tail end of the crisis will also hover closer to the neutral level of public sentiment. The negativity is mitigated, but so too is the level of positivity, which is often lower in its peak, as apathy drives little response for many less impactful crises.

Where you can begin to identify smoke that could lead to public backlash, response challenges, and a loss of trust in the municipality – amongst other areas of concern – is in spikes that occur throughout the sentiment timeline. If you are in a sustained period of positive public sentiment, for example, and you notice a sudden negative spike, you need to immediately determine what caused the spike and how to mitigate its fallout.

In 2024, that sudden negative spike is often attributed to pieces such as misinformation/disinformation, something that makes residents question their trust in the organization, the municipality suddenly going quiet, or an unanticipated external factor, such as what's taking place in another municipality or at another order of government.

Post-Crisis Engagement

Following a crisis, whether small-scale or community re-entry post-evacuation – and everything in between – there is a distinct need to engage the community to see what worked well and where improvements can be made prior to the next crisis arising. This can most commonly be done through a simple digital survey, asking questions related to crisis communications, trust in local government, and perceptions tied to the municipality's response to the crisis.

This will support your broader organizational debrief/review.

There are times at which public engagement results will align perfectly with internal perceptions of how things were handled, and at other times, it may be different altogether, often resulting from a lack of communication. If, for instance, it is deemed that all response efforts were appropriate to the situation and supported and/or protected members of the public, but residents respond they did not see that perfect execution, that's an issue of communications. On the other hand, if residents have a positive reaction to a flawed response, that's likely the result of strong communications rather than strong crisis management.

Any such results must be weighed against future crisis management and emergency response plans, including crisis communications, ensuring that the public is part of the conversation, and that there is positive response information to provide the public on an ongoing basis.

Naturally, if there is loss of life or home, even if it is by no fault of your organization, that can drive negative public reactions. While those engagement results may not necessarily be reflective of reality, they are important to have nonetheless, so that post-crisis messaging, and other recovery efforts can be designed to meet residents where they are.

Building Resident Trust

Once all is said and done, there should be a sense of increased trust between residents and your organization. If crisis communications were executed effectively, supported by transparency and empathy, residents will have gained trust and confidence in the municipality, often further emboldened by a strong sense of community. This good will can be wielded, for lack of a better term, and built upon into the future.

The saying 'Never let a good crisis go to waste' holds true in crisis communications. A crisis is an opportunity to lay a foundation of good will with the community that can be maintained and strengthened post-crisis.

Reputational management

Reputation management has become an ongoing piece of strong municipal communications, mitigating any potential circumstances that could paint a community with a negative brush.

In a situation such as this, it is imperative that intentional actions be taken to mitigate the negative public perception of what has taken place, recognizing that while your main stakeholders are your residents, the reputation of your municipality is foundational to its long-term success. There is no one way to correctly handle reputational management; it comes down to the situation and the perception impacting your community. That said, it is always about building a positive image separate from the negative perception.

In the United States, the Town of East Palestine, Ohio, was put into an international spotlight when a train derailment released toxic chemicals into the community. Though the derailment was not the community's fault, the two were intertwined, and the Town saw very real impacts resulting from that event (which falls into the category of major crisis).

Around one year after the event took place, the Town announced a rebranding initiative as part of its reputation management efforts.

> *In a Western Canadian municipality, an ideologically driven petition resulted in a bylaw proposition that would effectively ban all non-governmental flags, such as Pride Flags or Indigenous/Metis flags, and which would require all crosswalks to adhere to the traditional, white-laddered design, again barring such inclusive practices as painting rainbow crosswalks. This would also require that the existing pride crosswalk be removed.*
>
> *Not wanting to vote in favour of the proposed bylaw, Council opted instead to put the vote back to the community through plebiscite, in line with provincial legislation requiring one approach or the other. The vote landed in favour of the bylaw – though with less than 51% of the total tally – which creates an image of intolerance. That negative perception could have significant implications tied to economic development and local investment, tourism, and community growth, amongst others.*

Critical Thought Exercise

Considering the Town's use of rebranding as part of its approach to reputation management, please consider the following questions:

1. What is the impact of rebranding on a municipality's reputation?

2. Does changing the Town's logo bear an impact on people's perceptions of the community?

3. Does undertaking a rebranding effort in a very public forum help to draw the conversation away from the train derailment?

4. Does publicly rebranding remind people outside the community of the train derailment?

5. Is creating a positive image of the community the appropriate reputational response for an issue of public health concern?

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions above; rather, it is an exercise that proves there is ambiguity in reputation management. No one path will get you to the end destination. For the Town of East Palestine, this rebranding initiative is part of a deeper effort to promote the community as welcoming, carrying a positive image despite the train derailment. It includes a broader plan to bolster local business promotion and bring in out-of-state consumers. However, the rebranding effort undertaken by the Town of East Palestine is not considered typical as a reputation management measure.

On one hand, the initiative shows the community is putting the disaster behind them, and trying to move forward in a rejuvenated, strategic and concerted effort. On the other hand, rebranding alone will not achieve that desired outcome.

Reputation management is complex. It is not linear, and it is not defined. Often, it takes numerous overlapping outputs, and a strong desire throughout the organization to raise the level of discourse surrounding a community beyond any negative perceptions that have percolated from those outside the community. For the Town of East Palestine, being transparent throughout this rebranding this effort has given them the most public attention secured since the derailment event itself; that, in and of itself, may be a victory for the Town. But it's also likely part of a long-term play, with most reputation management efforts not paying off immediately, but rather, in the long term.

Checklist - Internal Communications Strategy

Internal Communications for Employees

- ☐ Keep employees informed about crises to make them feel part of the solution.
- ☐ Inform employees slightly before public announcements for social or community crises.
- ☐ Update staff on operational changes affecting them before public announcements.

Council Communication

- ☐ Council members should be briefed once or twice daily during a crisis, depending on the severity of the crisis and the evolving nature of local circumstances.
- ☐ Ensure clear expectations for when the next briefing will occur.
- ☐ Council should communicate with the CAO, avoiding direct contact with communications staff or any other municipal employees.

Crisis Communications Capacity Needs

- ☐ Recognize reduced capacity for your communications team during crises.
- ☐ Avoid the unrealistic expectation that communications staff must be available 24/7.
- ☐ Consider forming a formal relationship with a third-party crisis communications expert for support.

Crisis Communications Checklist

- ☐ Develop a Crisis Communications Plan (CCP).
- ☐ Prepare templated statements and a risk assessment framework.
- ☐ Train all relevant team members on the CCP and establish a Crisis Communications Team Structure.

Community Engagement and Public Relations

- ☐ Conduct engagement throughout a crisis, collecting feedback.
- ☐ Analyze sentiment through comments, messages, and reactions.
- ☐ Conduct post-crisis engagement to assess effectiveness and build trust.

Building Resident Trust

- ☐ Execute crisis communications with transparency and empathy.
- ☐ Use a crisis as an opportunity to strengthen community trust.

Reputation Management

- ☐ Mitigate negative public perception through intentional actions.
- ☐ Be strategic in long-term thinking tied to reputation management.

By following this checklist, organizations can enhance their internal communications strategy, ensuring effective communication during crises and building trust with employees and the community.

PSYCHOLOGICAL
AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

In Canada, municipalities employ various best practices to manage the psychosocial impacts on employees and residents when a crisis occurs. These practices are aimed at addressing the mental, emotional, and social well-being of individuals affected by the crisis. It is essential for Canadian municipal administrators to have strategies in place for psychological and emotional support. These practices ensure that both employees and the community have the help they need to cope with stress, trauma, and the challenges that come with a crisis.

Establish Crisis Management and Support Teams

Municipalities often have dedicated teams or committees responsible for crisis management and providing psychosocial support to their employees. These teams include mental health professionals, social workers, and trained volunteers.

Critical Incident Stress Management and Peer Support teams are critical mental health supports for staff, ranging from frontline Emergency Management personnel to office staff providing support throughout a crisis. The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) model is a comprehensive approach to critical incident stress management (CISM) that addresses resiliency, response, and recovery in the aftermath of a traumatic event, led by homogenous peers who operate under the direction of a Clinical Director. Here's how the ICISF model addresses these three components:

1. Resiliency:

- **Pre-Incident Education:** The ICISF model emphasizes the importance of educating individuals and organizations about stress, trauma, and coping strategies before a critical incident occurs. This education helps build psychological resilience, enabling individuals to better withstand and recover from traumatic events.

- **Stress Management Training:** The model includes training in stress management techniques, such as relaxation exercises, deep breathing, and mindfulness. These techniques help individuals develop skills to manage stress more effectively, enhancing their overall resilience.

2. Response:

- **Immediate Support:** In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, the ICISF model advocates for providing support through interventions such as Psychological First Aid (PFA) and crisis intervention. These interventions aim to stabilize emotions, reduce stress, and prevent the development of more severe psychological issues. Intervention is impact-driven, not event-driven. Not every person involved in a crisis will be impacted.

- **Critical Incident Stress Management:** Individual and group intervention is designed to help process responder's experiences, share their emotions, and receive information about normal stress reactions and coping strategies. CISM strategies are typically conducted within 24 to 72 hours after the incident and is a key component of the ICISF model's response phase.

- **Long Duration Activations (Burnout):** During long-duration crisis activations, it's crucial to watch for and mitigate burnout among employees. Prolonged stress and extended working hours can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, reducing effectiveness and potentially compromising the response effort. Implementing a Fatigue Management Program is essential to ensure that staff have adequate rest and recovery periods. Additionally, a Mental Health Program can provide support and resources to help employees cope with the psychological demands of crisis response. By prioritizing the well-being of your people, organizations can maintain a resilient workforce capable of sustaining prolonged emergency operations.

3. Recovery:

- **Follow-Up Services:** The ICISF model recognizes that recovery from a critical incident is an ongoing process. It recommends follow-up services, such as individual counseling or support groups, to provide continued emotional support and address any lingering psychological effects.

- **Referral for Professional Help:** When necessary, individuals are referred to mental health professionals for further assessment and treatment. This ensures that those with more severe or persistent reactions receive the specialized care they need.

- **Organizational Support:** The model also emphasizes the importance of organizational support in the recovery process. This includes creating a supportive work environment, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing access to employee assistance programs (EAPs).

By incorporating these elements, the ICISF model provides a structured framework for managing critical incident stress, promoting resiliency, ensuring an effective response, and supporting recovery. Peer support teams, with critical incident stress management training, should be developed utilizing homogenous work groups, which means there likely will be more than one peer team in a municipality. Homogeneous work groups and peer teams are often used in critical incident stress management (CISM) for several reasons:

1. **Shared Experience:** Homogeneous groups are composed of individuals with similar experiences or backgrounds. In the context of CISM, this means that group members have likely faced similar stressors, challenges, and work environments. This shared experience can foster a sense of understanding and empathy among group members, making it easier for them to relate to each other's experiences and emotions.

2. **Enhanced Trust and Openness:** People are often more comfortable discussing sensitive or traumatic experiences with others who have gone through similar situations. Homogeneous groups can create a safe space where individuals feel understood and supported, encouraging openness and honest sharing of feelings and experiences.

3. **Cultural Competence:** In some cases, homogeneous groups are formed based on cultural, ethnic, or linguistic similarities. This can help ensure that the group's dynamics and the facilitator's approach are culturally sensitive and appropriate, which is crucial for effective communication and support.

4. **Targeted Support:** Different professions or roles may have unique stressors and coping mechanisms. For example, the experiences of first responders, such as police officers or firefighters, can be quite different from those of healthcare workers or military personnel. Homogeneous groups allow for more targeted discussions and interventions that are directly relevant to the specific challenges faced by the group members.

5. **Peer Support:** Peer teams are composed of individuals from the same profession or organization who are trained in CISM. The peer support model is based on the idea that peers, who understand the work environment and its specific stressors, are well-positioned to provide effective support and guidance to each other. This can enhance the credibility and acceptance of the support provided.

6. **Empowerment:** Participating in homogeneous groups and peer teams can empower individuals by validating their experiences and providing them with tools and strategies that are tailored to their specific needs. This can lead to a greater sense of control and self-efficacy in managing stress and trauma.

In Canada, there are several organizations and models that are considered exemplary in providing mental health and psychological support for municipal workers and the public. Some of these include:

1. **International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (Canada):** (ICISF) Canada is the Canadian branch of the ICISF, a global organization dedicated to providing education, training, and support in critical incident stress management (CISM). ICISF Canada focuses on promoting the well-being of emergency services personnel, such as firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and other first responders, as well as individuals in other high-stress professions.
   https://icisfcanada.com/

2. **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):** The CMHA is a nationwide organization that offers a range of services and programs aimed at promoting mental health and supporting individuals with mental health issues. They provide resources, training, and support for workplaces, including municipal organizations.
   https://cmha.ca/

3. **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):** CAMH is one of Canada's leading hospitals in mental health and addiction. They offer a wide range of services, including education and training programs for professionals, as well as resources and support for individuals and communities.
   https://www.camh.ca/

4. **Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC):** The MHCC is a federal agency that focuses on improving mental health and mental health care in Canada. They offer various programs and resources, including guidelines for workplace mental health and psychological safety, which are applicable to municipal workers.
   https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/

5. **The Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Program:** Originally developed for the Canadian Armed Forces, the R2MR program has been adapted for use in first responder organizations, including police, fire, and emergency medical services. It provides training on mental health, resilience, and coping strategies.
   https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/health-support/road-to-mental-readiness.html

6. **Guarding Minds at Work:** This is a comprehensive set of resources designed to help employers, including municipalities, protect and promote psychological safety and health in the workplace. It offers tools for assessing and addressing psychosocial risk factors.
   https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/

7. **The Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace Standard (CSA Z1003/BNQ 9700-803):** This voluntary standard provides a framework for organizations, including municipalities, to create a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. It covers areas such as policy development, hazard identification, and prevention.
   https://www.csagroup.org/article/can-csa-z1003-13-bnq-9700-803-2013-r2022-psychological-health-and-safety-in-the-workplace/

8. **Before Operational Stress (BOS): (**BOS) is a proactive mental health program designed for first responders and other high-risk professionals, such as military personnel, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services workers. The program aims to enhance mental resilience and prevent the onset of operational stress injuries (OSIs) or other mental health issues that can arise from exposure to traumatic events and high-stress environments.
   https://www.beforeoperationalstress.ca/

These organizations and models are widely recognized for their contributions to mental health and psychological support in Canada. Municipalities can leverage the resources and best practices provided by these entities to enhance the mental well-being of their workers and the public

Provide Immediate Psychological First Aid:

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a key initial response to help individuals cope with the immediate emotional distress following a crisis. Municipalities ensure that trained responders are available to provide PFA to both employees and residents.
https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/mental-health-first-aid/

Offer Counseling and Mental Health Services:

Access to counseling and mental health services is crucial for dealing with the aftermath of a crisis. They should also be used pre-crisis to build individual and community resiliency. Municipalities may provide these services directly or collaborate with local mental health organizations to ensure that residents have access to the support they need. These services can also be available to municipal employees in addition to municipal peer support and critical incident stress management teams:

1. **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Many municipalities have EAPs in place to offer confidential counseling and support to employees dealing with personal or work-related issues, including stress and trauma related to a crisis. Many EAP programs also include services for employee's families. These programs also offer resource support for health and wellness, financial counseling, addiction support, family and relationship support, work-life balance resources, career counseling and legal consultation.

2. **Victim Services:** The RCMP are also able to provide Victim Services referrals to the public or impacted party. This referral to victim services programs across Canada connects people to trained responders who lessen the impact of trauma on victims and their families, support recovery, enhance victim safety and help reduce the risk of further victimization .

Checklist: Building a Psychological Support Community Program

By following this checklist, a municipality can establish a structured approach to creating a mentally healthy and resilient community that is well-prepared to face crises. This checklist should be adapted and expanded based on the specific needs and resources of the municipality. Regular evaluation and updating of these measures are important to maintain their effectiveness and relevance.

Establish Crisis Management and Support Teams:

☐ Form dedicated crisis management and support teams including mental health professionals and trained volunteers.

☐ Develop clear protocols for team activation and intervention during crises.

☐ Ensure the teams are familiar with the ICISF model and CISM principles.

Implement the ICISF model for Resiliency, Response, and Recovery:

☐ Conduct pre-incident education for individuals and organizations on stress, trauma, and coping strategies.

☐ Offer stress management training including relaxation exercises, deep breathing, and mindfulness.

☐ Provide immediate support through PFA and crisis intervention post-incident.

☐ Organize critical incident stress debriefing sessions within 24 to 72 hours after an event.

☐ Establish follow-up services like counseling or support groups for ongoing recovery.

☐ Set up a referral system for professional mental health support where needed.

☐ Create a supportive organizational environment with flexible work arrangements and access to EAPs.

Develop Homogeneous Peer Support Teams:

☐ Build peer support teams based on homogeneous groups with shared experiences.

☐ Train peers in CISM to enhance trust, openness, and targeted support within the groups.

☐ Integrate cultural competence into team training and operations.

Collaborate with Local Mental Health Services:

☐ Consider providing access to EAPs for all municipal employees and their families, ensuring the EAP includes pre-crisis counseling to build individual and community resilience.

☐ Establish partnerships with local mental health organizations for broader community support.

☐ Collaborate with credible mental health organizations that are evidence-based and incorporate resiliency, response and recovery into their programs, in alignment with nationally and internationally recognized standards

☐ Make psychological first aid training available to responders and public-facing employees.

☐ Integrate Victim Services referrals as part of the support structure for the public.

Mental Health First Aid and Post-Crisis Support:

☐ Train staff in Mental Health First Aid to aid in immediate crisis response.

☐ Offer ongoing counseling and mental health services as part of long-term recovery efforts.

☐ Facilitate the transition from immediate response to recovery and rebuilding initiatives.

TECHNOLOGY AND DATA MANAGEMENT

During a crisis, such as natural disasters, cyberattacks, or pandemics, it is crucial to ensure the resilience of technology infrastructure and effective data management. Incorporating insights into technology and data management, including information systems, technology readiness, data backup, recovery, and cybersecurity measures, is crucial for enhancing crisis management and municipal resilience, particularly within the Canadian context. This approach not only ensures the continuity of critical services but also safeguards sensitive information against cyber threats that can escalate during crises. Furthermore, municipalities should be considering the ever-evolving technology that can support a municipality and its residents during a crisis. This section delves into these components, emphasizing their importance in the broader landscape of crisis management and resilience.

Risk Assessment and Planning

Conducting a comprehensive risk assessment is the foundation of effective crisis preparedness. This process involves identifying, analyzing, and evaluating potential threats and vulnerabilities to your technology infrastructure and data. Here's an expanded section on conducting a risk assessment and developing the technology and data portion of the crisis management plan:

Identifying Threats and Vulnerabilities: Begin by identifying all potential threats that could impact your technology infrastructure and data. These threats may include natural disasters (such as wildfires, tornados, floods), human errors, malicious attacks (such as cyberattacks or insider threats), infrastructure failures, or pandemics. Additionally, identify vulnerabilities in your systems, processes, and personnel that could be exploited by these threats.

Assessing Risks: Once threats and vulnerabilities are identified, assess the likelihood and potential impact of each risk. Consider factors such as the probability of occurrence, the severity of consequences, and the effectiveness of existing controls. Use qualitative and quantitative risk assessment techniques to prioritize risks based on their significance to your organization's operations and objectives.

Developing Risk Mitigation Strategies: Based on the risk assessment findings, develop risk mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood and impact of identified risks. This may involve implementing technical controls (such as firewalls, antivirus software, or data encryption), operational controls (such as access controls, employee training, or incident response procedures), and physical controls (such as backup power supplies or facility security measures). Prioritize mitigation efforts based on the level of risk and available resources.

Technology Crisis Management Plan: Develop a comprehensive crisis management plan that outlines protocols and procedures for responding to various crises and emergencies. Include specific protocols for data backup, recovery, and cybersecurity measures tailored to different types of crises. Define roles and responsibilities for key personnel, establish communication channels and escalation procedures, and identify resources and tools necessary for crisis response and recovery efforts.

Data Backup and Recovery Protocols: Specify detailed procedures for regular data backups, including the frequency of backups, the types of data to be backed up, and the storage locations (both on-site and off-site). Define recovery time objectives (RTOs) and recovery point objectives (RPOs) to determine the acceptable downtime and data loss tolerances. Test backup and recovery systems regularly to ensure they are functioning correctly and can restore operations swiftly in the event of a crisis.

Cybersecurity Measures and Incident Response: Integrate cybersecurity measures into the crisis management plan to address potential cyber threats and attacks. Establish incident response procedures for detecting, assessing, and responding to cybersecurity incidents, such as data breaches or ransomware attacks. Define steps for containing the incident, mitigating the impact, and restoring affected systems and data securely.

Training and Awareness: Provide training and awareness programs for employees to familiarize them with the crisis management plan, including data backup, recovery, and cybersecurity protocols. Conduct regular drills and exercises to test the effectiveness of the plan and enhance employee readiness to respond to crises effectively. Encourage employees to report suspicious activities promptly and promote a culture of vigilance and accountability.

Continuous Improvement and Review: Periodically review and update the risk assessment, crisis management plan, and associated protocols to adapt to evolving threats, changes in technology infrastructure, and lessons learned from previous incidents. Incorporate feedback from stakeholders, lessons learned from exercises and real-world events, and emerging best practices to continually improve crisis preparedness and resilience.

Cloud Services: Consider leveraging cloud services for data storage and backup, as cloud platforms offer scalability, accessibility, and redundancy. Ensure that cloud service providers adhere to stringent security standards and compliance regulations to safeguard sensitive data.

Remote Access and Telecommuting: Enable secure remote access capabilities to allow employees to work remotely during a crisis. Implement virtual private networks (VPNs) and secure remote desktop protocols to ensure encrypted communication and secure access to corporate networks and data.

Regulatory Compliance: Ensure compliance with relevant regulatory requirements, concerning data protection, privacy, and security. Stay updated on evolving regulations and adjust policies and procedures accordingly to mitigate legal and financial risks.

Collaboration and Information Sharing: Foster collaboration and information sharing with industry peers, government agencies, and cybersecurity organizations to stay informed about emerging threats and best practices for mitigating cyber risks during a crisis.

Virtual Tools During a Crisis

Virtual Emergency Operations Centre / Emergency Coordination Centre

In the modern landscape of emergency management, digital tools like Microsoft Teams Virtual Emergency Operations Center (EOC) have become invaluable in enhancing communication, coordination, and decision-making during crises. This platform transforms the traditional, physically centralized emergency operations center into a dynamic, virtual space, enabling real-time collaboration and information sharing among team members, regardless of their geographical locations. Microsoft Teams Virtual EOC facilitates a seamless flow of critical information, integrating with other software tools and data sources to provide comprehensive situational awareness. Features such as secure chat rooms, video conferencing, document sharing, and real-time updates ensure that every member of the emergency response team remains informed and engaged. This digital approach not only breaks down barriers to effective communication but also significantly reduces response times, allowing for more agile and adaptive management of emergencies. By leveraging the capabilities of virtual EOC platforms, municipalities and organizations can ensure a coordinated response to crises, highlighting the importance of technology in building resilient communities.

Public Notification Platforms

In Canada, the new national alert system, known as Alert Ready, is a public emergency alerting system that enables government authorities at all levels to send out immediate, life-saving alerts to Canadians across the country. Launched in 2015, Alert Ready is designed to deliver critical and potentially life-saving alerts to Canadians through television, radio, and compatible wireless devices using the Wireless Public Alerting (WPA) service. The system ensures that people have the information they need to take appropriate action to protect themselves and their families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian municipalities leveraged technology for contact tracing, public health information dissemination, and remote work setups, highlighting the need for robust information systems, data management practices and cybersecurity measures.

Private platforms like Everbridge, Voyent Alert or AlertMedia enable organizations to send emergency notifications and critical information to stakeholders through multiple channels, including SMS, email, voice calls, and social media. These tools are invaluable for ensuring timely and broad communication during crises.

Integrating these elements into a cohesive assessment and plan as identified above involves continuous evaluation and adaptation to emerging technologies and threats. Collaboration across different levels of government and with private sector partners is crucial for sharing best practices, resources, and intelligence.

In conclusion, technology readiness, data backup, recovery, and cybersecurity measures are integral components of a comprehensive crisis management strategy. By prioritizing these aspects, Canadian municipalities can enhance their resilience against a wide range of crises, ensuring the continuity of critical services and the protection of sensitive data against both physical and cyber threats. Continuous investment in these areas, coupled with a culture of preparedness and adaptability, will serve as the foundation for resilient communities across Canada.

Checklist for the Management of Technology and Data

Risk Assessment and Planning

- ☐ Identify threats and vulnerabilities to technology infrastructure and data.
- ☐ Assess risks based on likelihood and potential impact.
- ☐ Develop risk mitigation strategies, including technical, operational, and physical controls.
- ☐ Create a comprehensive crisis management plan for technology and data.

Data Backup and Recovery

- ☐ Specify procedures for regular data backups and storage locations.
- ☐ Define recovery time objectives (RTOs) and recovery point objectives (RPOs).
- ☐ Test backup and recovery systems regularly.

Cybersecurity Measures and Incident Response

- ☐ Integrate cybersecurity measures into the crisis management plan.
- ☐ Establish incident response procedures for cybersecurity incidents.
- ☐ Define steps for containing incidents and restoring affected systems securely.

Training and Awareness

- ☐ Provide training and awareness programs for employees.
- ☐ Conduct regular drills and exercises to test the crisis management plan.

Continuous Improvement and Review

- ☐ Periodically review and update the risk assessment and crisis management plan.
- ☐ Incorporate feedback and lessons learned to improve crisis preparedness.

Cloud Services

- ☐ Consider leveraging cloud services for data storage and backup.
- ☐ Ensure cloud service providers adhere to security standards and regulations.

Remote Access and Telecommuting

- ☐ Enable secure remote access capabilities for employees.
- ☐ Implement virtual private networks (VPNs) and secure remote desktop protocols.

Regulatory Compliance

- ☐ Ensure compliance with relevant regulatory requirements for data protection and security.
- ☐ Stay updated on evolving regulations and adjust policies accordingly.

Collaboration and Information Sharing

- ☐ Foster collaboration with industry peers, government agencies, and cybersecurity organizations.
- ☐ Share best practices and intelligence for mitigating cyber risks.

Virtual Tools During a Crisis

- ☐ Consider using virtual Emergency Operations Center (EOC) platforms like Microsoft Teams.
- ☐ Utilize public notification platforms for sending emergency notifications.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
IN A CRISIS

Managing the expenses and financial considerations of a crisis is a critical aspect of effective crisis management in Canada. This chapter explores the financial challenges faced by organizations and municipalities when standing up their Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), or Emergency Command Centres (ECCs) as well as the implications of not activating an EOC/ECC during a crisis. It also discusses strategies for managing expenses and securing financial resources to support crisis response and recovery efforts.

Standing Up the EOC/ECC

Activating an EOC/ECC during a crisis incurs various expenses, including personnel costs, equipment procurement, technology upgrades, and logistical support. These costs can escalate rapidly, especially during prolonged or widespread emergencies. It is essential to have a clear understanding of the financial implications and to plan accordingly.

> Ensure your Finance Section and Procurement Unit are stood up immediately in the EOC/ECC and that they have a clear understanding of the disaster assistance and recovery programs, what is typically approved and what is required to submit for financial compensation. Refer to your provincial or territorial recovery program, listed in Appendix IV.

The Finance Section Chief plays a crucial role in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by managing the financial aspects of crisis response and recovery. This role is essential for ensuring that financial resources are allocated effectively, expenses are tracked accurately, and funding sources are managed efficiently. The Finance Section Chief works closely with other EOC staff to develop and monitor budgets, track expenditures, and provide financial guidance to decision-makers. Their expertise in financial management helps ensure that the organization or municipality can access and deploy funds promptly, comply with financial regulations and reporting requirements, and maximize the use of available resources. The Finance Section Chief's role is critical in maintaining financial accountability and transparency, which are essential for building trust with stakeholders and ensuring the successful financial management of the crisis response and recovery efforts. In collaboration with the Finance Section Chief, municipalities should plan for the following expenditures both in the planning phase and in the response phase of a disaster:

Personnel Costs

EOC activation often requires additional staffing or contracted services to manage operations, coordinate response efforts, and communicate with stakeholders. These costs can strain budgets, particularly for smaller organizations with limited resources.

It is important to have policy in place regarding the use of overtime and how staff are compensated for the additional time required (time in lieu, overtime pay, etc.). Particular attention should be given to the difference between union and non-union. Furthermore, consideration should be given to what tasks may be better suited for an external contractor, particularly if the task can be reimbursed through DRP funds.

An East Coast municipality found out the hard way that the use of staff for disaster clean-up would not result in a reimbursable expense through the Disaster Recovery Program. Had the municipality utilized an external contractor, the expense could have been reimbursed.

Equipment and Technology

Upgrading or acquiring new equipment and technology to support EOC operations can be expensive. This includes communication systems, data management tools, and specialized equipment for emergency response.

Logistics and Supplies

Ensuring the availability of essential supplies, such as food, water, and medical supplies, for EOC staff and responders can be costly. Logistics, transportation, and storage expenses also add to the financial burden.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Securing and maintaining a suitable EOC facility, equipped with the necessary infrastructure, such as power backup systems and secure communication networks, requires significant investment.

Not Standing Up the EOC

In situations where activating an EOC/ECC is not appropriate, such as smaller-scale incidents or crises that do not require a centralized command structure, managing the financial impacts remains a crucial aspect of crisis management. The Finance Section Chief can still play a role, even if there is no formal EOC. In these cases, organizations and municipalities can adopt several strategies to mitigate financial risks and ensure effective management of resources:

Budgeting and Planning

Develop a crisis budget that includes potential costs and identifies available resources. This budget should account for expenses related to emergency response, recovery, and any necessary repairs or replacements.

Resource Allocation

Prioritize resource allocation based on the critical needs of the situation. Identify essential services and functions that must be maintained and allocate resources accordingly to minimize financial strain.

Cost Containment

Implement cost-containment measures to reduce unnecessary expenses. This may include limiting non-essential spending, renegotiating contracts, and finding more cost-effective solutions for delivering services.

Insurance Coverage

Review insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage for potential risks. Consider additional coverage or riders that may be necessary for specific types of crises, such as natural disasters or cyber incidents.

Financial Monitoring and Reporting

Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting financial data related to the crisis. This includes tracking expenses, documenting losses, and preparing financial reports for stakeholders and funding agencies.

Communication and Transparency

Maintain open communication with stakeholders, including staff, suppliers, and the public, regarding financial matters. Transparency can help build trust and support for financial decisions made during the crisis.

Post-Crisis Assessment

Conduct a post-crisis assessment to evaluate the financial impacts and identify lessons learned. Use this information to improve financial preparedness for future crises.

By implementing these strategies, organizations and municipalities can effectively manage the financial impacts of crises, even in situations where activating an EOC is not necessary.

Managing Expenses and Securing Financial Resources

To manage expenses and secure financial resources for crisis management, organizations and municipalities can consider the following strategies:

Strategies	Description
Financial Planning	Develop a comprehensive financial plan that includes budgeting for EOC activation, identifying potential funding sources, and establishing financial controls to monitor and manage expenses.
Collaboration and Partnerships	Collaborate with other organizations, government agencies, and community partners to share resources, pool funding, and leverage collective expertise and capabilities.
Insurance and Risk Management	Review and update insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage for crisis-related risks, such as property damage, business interruption, and liability.
Grant and Funding Opportunities	Stay informed about available grants, funding programs, and financial assistance offered by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other sources to support crisis response and recovery efforts.
Cost Recovery and Reimbursement	Explore options for recovering costs incurred during a crisis, such as seeking reimbursement from insurance providers, government agencies, or other responsible parties.
Continuous Improvement	Conduct post-crisis reviews and assessments to identify areas for improvement and implement changes to enhance financial efficiency and effectiveness in future crises.

By proactively managing expenses and securing financial resources, organizations and municipalities can enhance their ability to respond to crises effectively while minimizing the financial impact on their operations and communities.

Checklist for Financial Considerations in a Crisis

Standing Up the EOC/ECC

- ☐ Understand the financial implications of activating an EOC/ECC.
- ☐ Plan for personnel costs, equipment procurement, technology upgrades, and logistical support.
- ☐ Assign a Finance Section Chief to manage financial aspects of crisis response and recovery.
- ☐ Develop and monitor budgets, track expenditures, and provide financial guidance.

Personnel Costs

- ☐ Allocate additional staffing or contracted services for EOC operations.
- ☐ Consider the strain on budgets, particularly for smaller organizations.

Equipment and Technology

- ☐ Budget for upgrading or acquiring new equipment and technology.
- ☐ Include communication systems, data management tools, and specialized equipment.

Logistics and Supplies

- ☐ Ensure availability of essential supplies for EOC staff and responders.
- ☐ Consider logistics, transportation, and storage expenses.

Facilities and Infrastructure

- ☐ Secure and maintain a suitable EOC facility with necessary infrastructure.
- ☐ Include power backup systems and secure communication networks.

Not Standing Up the EOC

- ☐ Develop a crisis budget and identify available resources.
- ☐ Prioritize resource allocation based on critical needs.
- ☐ Implement cost-containment measures to reduce unnecessary expenses.

Insurance Coverage

- ☐ Review insurance policies for adequate coverage.
- ☐ Consider additional coverage for specific types of crises.

Financial Monitoring and Reporting

- ☐ Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting financial data.
- ☐ Track expenses, document losses, and prepare financial reports.

Communication and Transparency

- ☐ Maintain open communication with stakeholders regarding financial matters.
- ☐ Build trust and support for financial decisions made during the crisis.

Post-Crisis Assessment

- ☐ Conduct a post-crisis assessment to evaluate financial impacts.
- ☐ Identify lessons learned to improve financial preparedness for future crises.

Financial Planning

- ☐ Develop a comprehensive financial plan for crisis management.
- ☐ Establish financial controls to monitor and manage expenses.

Collaboration and Partnerships

- ☐ Collaborate with other organizations and community partners to share resources.
- ☐ Pool funding and leverage collective expertise and capabilities.

Grant and Funding Opportunities

- ☐ Stay informed about available grants and funding programs.
- ☐ Seek financial assistance to support crisis response and recovery efforts.
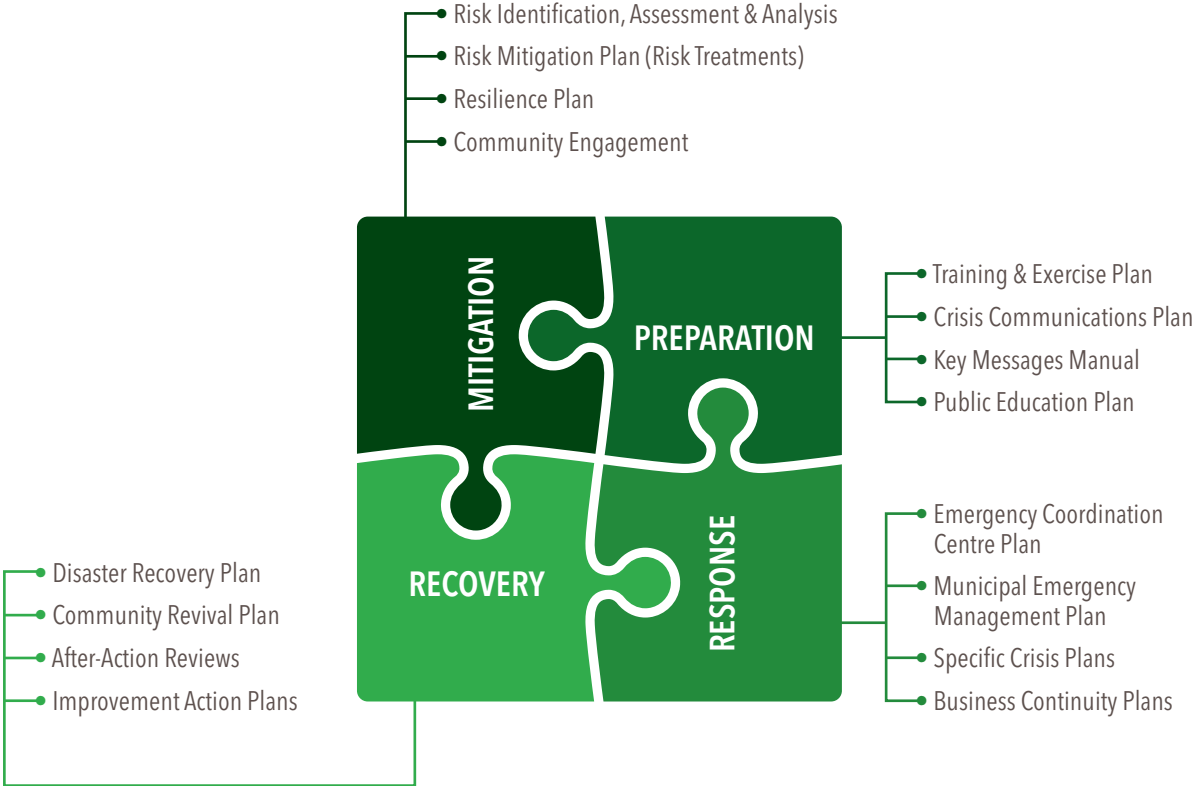
Cost Recovery and Reimbursement

- ☐ Explore options for recovering costs incurred during a crisis.
- ☐ Seek reimbursement from insurance providers, government agencies, or other responsible parties.

Continuous Improvement

- ☐ Conduct post-crisis reviews to identify areas for improvement.
- ☐ Implement changes to enhance financial efficiency and effectiveness in future crises.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM SUMMARY

Risk Identification, Assessment & Analysis
Risk Mitigation Plan (Risk Treatments)
Resilience Plan
Community Engagement

MITIGATION

PREPARATION

Training & Exercise Plan
Crisis Communications Plan
Key Messages Manual
Public Education Plan

Disaster Recovery Plan
Community Revival Plan
After-Action Reviews
Improvement Action Plans

RECOVERY

RESPONSE

Emergency Coordination Centre Plan
Municipal Emergency Management Plan
Specific Crisis Plans
Business Continuity Plans

APPENDIX I: QUICK SUMMARY GUIDE TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Completing Your Community Crisis Risk Profile

Hazard Identification:

☐ Identify crisis threats (e.g., floods, earthquakes, storms).

Vulnerability Assessment:

☐ Evaluate the vulnerability of critical infrastructure (e.g., bridges, power plants).

☐ Assess the resilience of communication systems.

☐ Determine the readiness of emergency services (e.g., fire, police, medical).

Risk Analysis:

☐ Analyze the likelihood of each identified hazard occurring.

☐ Assess the potential impact of each hazard on the community and infrastructure.

☐ Prioritize risks based on likelihood and impact.

Resource Evaluation:

☐ Assess the availability of emergency response resources (e.g., personnel, equipment).

☐ Evaluate the capacity of shelters and evacuation centers.

☐ Determine the adequacy of emergency funds and insurance coverage.

Community Preparedness:

☐ Assess public awareness and education on emergency preparedness.

☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of early warning systems.

☐ Check the readiness of community response teams.

Plan Review:

☐ Review the existing emergency response and crisis management plans.

☐ Ensure that plans are updated and address all identified risks.

☐ Confirm that plans include clear roles and responsibilities for responders.

Training and Exercises:

☐ Assess the frequency and effectiveness of training programs for emergency responders.

☐ Evaluate the participation in and outcomes of emergency drills and exercises.

☐ Identify gaps in training and areas for improvement.

Interagency Collaboration:

☐ Review agreements and coordination mechanisms with neighboring municipalities.

☐ Assess collaboration with provincial and federal agencies.

☐ Evaluate partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Communication Systems:

☐ Assess the reliability and redundancy of communication networks.

☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of public information and warning systems.

☐ Ensure that communication plans include provisions for diverse populations.

Continuous Improvement:

☐ Implement a process for regular review and updating of the risk profile.

☐ Establish mechanisms for learning from past incidents and exercises.

☐ Encourage a culture of continuous improvement in crisis management.

CAO Role in A Crisis

Job Requirements Understanding

- ☐ Clarify the role of employees in crisis management.
- ☐ Address misconceptions about job descriptions and crisis involvement.
- ☐ Ensure training is available for crisis management.
- ☐ Communicate expectations and safety protocols during a crisis.
- ☐ Prepare staff for unique crisis scenarios and personal conflicts.
- ☐ Define the status and expectations of employees during evacuations.
- ☐ Manage work-life balance concerns, such as childcare during a crisis.

Empowerment

- ☐ Develop and review critical documents: Emergency Management Plan, bylaws, policies, procedures, job descriptions.
- ☐ Communicate roles clearly, ensuring staff know they are supported, and their safety is prioritized.
- ☐ Establish clear expectations for participation and working hours during a crisis.

Training

- ☐ Provide and participate in training for staff and Council on crisis management roles.
- ☐ Meet training requirements set by provincial acts or regulations.

Business Continuity

- ☐ Create and maintain a business continuity plan for each department.
- ☐ Identify staff with versatile skills for effective job coverage during crises.
- ☐ Share the plan with the Senior Leadership team for a resilient community.

Support

- ☐ Allocate a budget for necessary training and equipment for crisis management.
- ☐ Trust and enable trained staff to perform their duties during a crisis.
- ☐ Form strong mutual aid agreements with neighboring and regional entities for additional support during overwhelming situations.

Council's Role in A Crisis

Policy Level Endorsement

- ☐ Understand legislative requirements- Council's role in crisis management.
- ☐ Elect a Council Member to the Emergency Advisory Committee if the community has one as a liaison.
- ☐ Ensure Council is responsible for setting and approving local legislation.

Policy and Financial Foundation

- ☐ Support the CAO and staff during a crisis.
- ☐ Approve emergency management plans, programs, policies, and bylaws.
- ☐ Set expectations for managing a crisis or emergency.
- ☐ Authorize declarations of a State of Local Emergency (SOLE).
- ☐ Approve unusual financial requests because of a crisis.

Lead by Example

- ☐ Participate in training for Council's role in crisis management.
- ☐ Understand legal obligations and roles during a crisis.

Communication Roles

- ☐ Have the Mayor/Chief Elected Official act as the spokesperson.
- ☐ Adhere to the crisis communication plan.
- ☐ If unavailable, the Deputy Chief Elected Official should take over.
- ☐ Discourage Council Members from independently disseminating information on social media.
- ☐ Amplify the communications coming from the municipality

Checklist for Council Actions

- ☐ Approve policies on staff involvement in crisis management.
- ☐ Establish a Level of Service Policy for Council's expectations.
- ☐ Pass an Emergency Management/Measures Bylaw.
- ☐ Confirm appointments to the Emergency Advisory Committee or Board.
- ☐ Keep Council updated on committee or board activities.
- ☐ Sanction funding for staff and Council training in line with service levels.
- ☐ Attend all available crisis management training for Council.
- ☐ Follow the Crisis Communication Plan: Refrain from using social media for unofficial communication.
- ☐ Allocate a budget for materials and training necessary for crisis management.

Leadership Framework for Crisis Management

Define Crisis Management Team Roles and Responsibilities:

☐ Identify key roles required for crisis management.

☐ Clearly outline the responsibilities and authority of each role.

Establish Crisis Management Framework:

☐ Choose an appropriate framework for crisis management, such as the Incident Command System (ICS).

☐ Understand how the chosen framework organizes functions and roles during a crisis.

Align Organizational Structure with Crisis Management Framework:

☐ Map existing organizational roles and expertise to corresponding crisis management roles within the chosen framework.

☐ Ensure flexibility to assign employees to crisis management roles based on expertise rather than hierarchy.

Identify Incident Commander and Key Personnel:

☐ Select an Incident Commander who possesses the relevant crisis experience and training, regardless of rank.

Promote Collaboration and Partnerships:

☐ Consider partnering with external agencies or organizations to bolster crisis management capabilities.

☐ Establish policies or bylaws to facilitate collaboration with outside agencies during crises.

Maintain Clear Communication Channels:

☐ Establish communication protocols to ensure effective information flow within the crisis management team.

☐ Define reporting structures and escalation procedures for critical decisions.

Conduct Training and Exercises:

☐ Provide ongoing training to ensure all crisis management team members understand their roles and responsibilities.

☐ Conduct regular tabletop exercises or simulations to test the effectiveness of the crisis management framework.

Review and Continuous Improvement:

☐ Conduct post-crisis debriefings to evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis response and identify areas for improvement.

☐ Incorporate lessons learned from each crisis into future training and planning efforts.

Ensure Organizational Stability and Continuity:

☐ Allow senior leadership, such as the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), to focus on the continued day to day strategic decision-making and organizational stability during crises.

Document Policies and Procedures:

☐ Document crisis management policies, procedures, and protocols for reference during emergencies.

☐ Ensure accessibility of documentation to all relevant stakeholders within the organization.

Regularly Update Crisis Management Plans:

☐ Review and update crisis management plans regularly to reflect changes in organizational structure, personnel, or external factors.

☐ Ensure plans are adaptable to different types of crises and evolving threats.

Coordination and Building Relationships

Internal Team Trust and Communication

- ☐ Foster an environment of open communication and innovation.
- ☐ Encourage proactive stance toward crisis management within internal teams.

Collaboration with Local Agencies

- ☐ Collaborate with local agencies for a unified response to emergencies.
- ☐ Share resources, information, and expertise with local agencies.

Collaboration with Provincial and Federal Governments

- ☐ Coordinate with provincial and federal governments for a robust response.
- ☐ Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements at all levels of government.

Collaboration with Neighboring Municipalities

- ☐ Collaborate with neighboring municipalities for resource sharing and coordinated response.
- ☐ Consider formalized mutual agreements for coordinated response.

Information Sharing

- ☐ Establish effective communication channels for sharing critical information.
- ☐ Ensure timely dissemination of information to the public.

Resource Sharing

- ☐ Share personnel, equipment, and supplies with partners for effective response.
- ☐ Consider creating an inventory toolkit for resource sharing.

Community Group Engagement

- ☐ Engage with non-profit organizations for community outreach and support.
- ☐ Define roles & responsibilities of non-profit organizations in emergencies.

Planning and Preparedness

- ☐ Collaborate with partners in planning and preparedness efforts.
- ☐ Conduct joint training and exercises to ensure readiness.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- ☐ Ensure compliance with federal, provincial, and municipal laws and regulations.
- ☐ Align emergency management plans with relevant legislation.

Continuous Improvement

- ☐ Continually evaluate and improve collaboration efforts.
- ☐ Incorporate feedback and lessons learned into future plans.

Crisis Communications

Crisis Triage

☐ Assess the level of crisis to determine the depth of crisis communications needed, including evaluating the level of crisis being experienced:

  1. Issues Management: Address early-stage problems proactively to mitigate worsening situations.
  2. Risk Communications: Communicate as elements trend towards a potential crisis.
  3. Crisis Communications: Address a major event or circumstance with significant negative impact.

Development of a Crisis Communications Plan

☐ Create a dedicated Crisis Communications Plan separate from the regular communications plan.

☐ Tailor the plan to the specific needs and capacity of your organization and community.

☐ Include sections such as overview, triaging, key stakeholders, key messages, communication methods, roles & responsibilities, contact information, debrief process, and templated scenario statements.

Timeline for Message Dissemination in a High-Impact Crisis

☐ Release holding statements within 20-60 minutes of crisis initiation.

☐ Provide subsequent statements within 60-180 minutes, depending on crisis severity.

☐ Update every 60-120 minutes for rapidly evolving crises and 1-2 times per day for sustained crises.

Management of Media Relations and Public Information

☐ Control the conversation by sharing information consistently through various platforms.

☐ Consider live-streamed updates for major events like community evacuations.

☐ Address misinformation promptly and thoroughly.

Tools for Media Relations and Public Information

☐ Use tools such as communications policy, council code of conduct, media relations policy, public engagement framework, and social media policy.

Message Creation - F.A.C.E. Messaging Method

☐ Use the F.A.C.E. method (Facts, Action, Context, Empathy) for crafting crisis messages.

Internal Communications Strategy

Internal Communications for Employees

- ☐ Keep employees informed about crises to make them feel part of the solution.
- ☐ Inform employees slightly before public announcements for social or community crises.
- ☐ Update staff on operational changes affecting them before public announcements.

Council Communication

- ☐ Council members should be briefed once or twice daily during a crisis.
- ☐ Ensure clear expectations for when the next briefing will occur.
- ☐ Council should communicate with the CAO, avoiding direct contact with communications staff.

Crisis Communications Capacity Needs

- ☐ Recognize reduced capacity for communications team during crises.
- ☐ Avoid expecting communications staff to be available 24/7.
- ☐ Consider forming a formal relationship with a third-party crisis communications expert for support.

Crisis Communications Checklist

- ☐ Develop a Crisis Communications Plan (CCP).
- ☐ Prepare templated statements and a risk assessment framework.
- ☐ Train all relevant team members on the CCP and establish a Crisis Communications Team Structure.

Community Engagement and Public Relations

- ☐ Conduct engagement throughout a crisis, collecting feedback.
- ☐ Analyze sentiment through comments, messages, and reactions.
- ☐ Conduct post-crisis engagement to assess effectiveness and build trust.

Building Resident Trust

- ☐ Execute crisis communications with transparency and empathy.
- ☐ Use a crisis as an opportunity to strengthen community trust.

Reputational Management

- ☐ Mitigate negative public perception through intentional actions.
- ☐ Be strategic in identifying opportunities that will support a community's reputation in the short-, medium- and long-term.

Building a Psychological Support Community Program

Establish Crisis Management and Support Teams:

- ☐ Form dedicated crisis management and support teams including mental health professionals and trained volunteers.
- ☐ Develop clear protocols for team activation and intervention during crises.
- ☐ Ensure the teams are familiar with the ICISF model and CISM principles.

Implement the ICISF model for Resiliency, Response, and Recovery:

- ☐ Conduct pre-incident education for individuals and organizations on stress, trauma, and coping strategies.
- ☐ Offer stress management training including relaxation exercises, deep breathing, and mindfulness.
- ☐ Provide immediate support through PFA and crisis intervention post-incident.
- ☐ Organize critical incident stress debriefing sessions within 24 to 72 hours after an event.
- ☐ Establish follow-up services like counseling or support groups for ongoing recovery.
- ☐ Set up a referral system for professional mental health support where needed.
- ☐ Create a supportive organizational environment with flexible work arrangements and access to EAPs.

Develop Homogeneous Peer Support Teams:

- ☐ Build peer support teams based on homogeneous groups with shared experiences.
- ☐ Train peers in CISM to enhance trust, openness, and targeted support within the groups.
- ☐ Integrate cultural competence into team training and operations.

Collaborate with Local Mental Health Services:

- ☐ Consider providing access to EAPs for all municipal employees and their families, ensuring the EAP includes pre-crisis counseling to build individual and community resilience.
- ☐ Establish partnerships with local mental health organizations for broader community support.
- ☐ Collaborate with credible mental health organizations that are evidence-based and incorporate resiliency, response and recovery into their programs, in alignment with nationally and internationally recognized standards
- ☐ Make psychological first aid training available to responders and public-facing employees.
- ☐ Integrate Victim Services referrals as part of the support structure for the public.

Mental Health First Aid and Post-Crisis Support:

- ☐ Train staff in Mental Health First Aid to aid in immediate crisis response.
- ☐ Offer ongoing counseling and mental health services as part of long-term recovery efforts.
- ☐ Facilitate the transition from immediate response to recovery and rebuilding initiatives.

Management of Technology and Data

Risk Assessment and Planning

- ☐ Identify threats and vulnerabilities to technology infrastructure and data.
- ☐ Assess risks based on likelihood and potential impact.
- ☐ Develop risk mitigation strategies, including technical, operational, and physical controls.
- ☐ Create a comprehensive crisis management plan for technology and data.

Data Backup and Recovery

- ☐ Specify procedures for regular data backups and storage locations.
- ☐ Define recovery time objectives (RTOs) and recovery point objectives (RPOs).
- ☐ Test backup and recovery systems regularly.

Cybersecurity Measures and Incident Response

- ☐ Integrate cybersecurity measures into the crisis management plan.
- ☐ Establish incident response procedures for cybersecurity incidents.
- ☐ Define steps for containing incidents and restoring affected systems securely.

Training and Awareness

- ☐ Provide training and awareness programs for employees.
- ☐ Conduct regular drills and exercises to test the crisis management plan.

Continuous Improvement and Review

- ☐ Periodically review and update the risk assessment and crisis management plan.
- ☐ Incorporate feedback and lessons learned to improve crisis preparedness.

Cloud Services

- ☐ Consider leveraging cloud services for data storage and backup.
- ☐ Ensure cloud service providers adhere to security standards and regulations.

Remote Access and Telecommuting

- ☐ Enable secure remote access capabilities for employees.
- ☐ Implement virtual private networks (VPNs) and secure remote desktop protocols.

Regulatory Compliance

- ☐ Ensure compliance with relevant regulatory requirements for data protection and security.
- ☐ Stay updated on evolving regulations and adjust policies accordingly.

Collaboration and Information Sharing

- ☐ Foster collaboration with industry peers, government agencies, and cybersecurity organizations.
- ☐ Share best practices and intelligence for mitigating cyber risks.

Virtual Tools During a Crisis

- ☐ Consider using virtual Emergency Operations Center (EOC) platforms like Microsoft Teams.
- ☐ Utilize public notification platforms for sending emergency notifications.

Financial Considerations in a Crisis

Standing Up the EOC/ECC
- ☐ Understand the financial implications of activating an EOC/ECC.
- ☐ Plan for personnel costs, equipment procurement, technology upgrades, and logistical support.
- ☐ Assign a Finance Section Chief.
- ☐ Develop and monitor budgets, track expenditures, and provide financial guidance.

Personnel Costs
- ☐ Additional staffing or contracted services for EOC operations.
- ☐ Consider strain on budgets, particularly for smaller orgs.

Equipment and Technology
- ☐ Budget for upgrading or acquiring new equipment and technology.
- ☐ Include communication systems, data management tools, and specialized equipment.

Logistics and Supplies
- ☐ Ensure essential supplies for EOC staff and responders.
- ☐ Consider logistics, transportation, and storage expenses.

Facilities and Infrastructure
- ☐ Secure and maintain a suitable EOC facility.
- ☐ Power backup systems and secure communication networks.

Not Standing Up the EOC
- ☐ Develop a crisis budget and identify available resources.
- ☐ Prioritize resource allocation based on critical needs.
- ☐ Implement cost-containment measures.

Insurance Coverage
- ☐ Review insurance policies for adequate coverage.
- ☐ Consider additional coverage for specific types of crises.

Financial Monitoring and Reporting
- ☐ Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting financial data.
- ☐ Track expenses, document losses, and prepare financial reports.

Communication and Transparency
- ☐ Open communication with stakeholders regarding financial matters.
- ☐ Build trust and support for financial decisions made.

Post-Crisis Assessment
- ☐ Conduct a post-crisis assessment to evaluate financial impacts.
- ☐ Identify lessons learned to improve financial preparedness.

Financial Planning
- ☐ Develop a comprehensive financial plan for crisis management.
- ☐ Establish financial controls to monitor and manage expenses.

Collaboration and Partnerships
- ☐ Collaborate with other organizations and community partners to share resources.
- ☐ Pool funding and leverage collective expertise and capabilities.

Grant and Funding Opportunities
- ☐ Stay informed about available grants and funding programs.
- ☐ Seek financial assistance to support crisis response and recovery efforts.

Cost Recovery and Reimbursement
- ☐ Explore options for recovering costs incurred during a crisis.
- ☐ Seek reimbursement from insurance providers, government agencies, or other responsible parties.

Continuous Improvement
- ☐ Conduct post-crisis reviews to identify areas for improvement.
- ☐ Implement changes to enhance financial efficiency and effectiveness in future crises.

APPENDIX II: EMERGENCY COORDINATION CENTRE OVERVIEW

Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC/EOC) and/or the Incident Command Post are normally activated at the request of the Incident Commander, Director (Coordinator) of Emergency Management, ECC/EOC Director or senior municipal officials authorized by bylaw or policy to provide overall jurisdictional direction and control, coordination and resource support. Incident Command System (ICS) principles are utilized for organizing and managing operations and activities. This ensures inter-operability effectively and consistently with regional and provincial counterparts.

In Canada, Provincial and Territorial legislation varies in the title for the person designated as the lead for emergency management. Common titles include:
- **Director of Emergency Management (DEM)**
- **Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC)**
- **Emergency Measures Coordinator (EMC)**
- **Emergency Program Coordinator (EPC)**
- **Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC)**
- **Director of Civil Security**

A municipal ICP/ECC/EOC normally turns to the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre for support when all their resources are exhausted, or they require coordination that is outside of their jurisdiction.

Scope

This document guides the management, organization, responsibilities, and coordination necessary to provide for effective response and recovery from major emergencies or disasters at the Site Support Level. This document does not address emergencies that are normally handled at the scene by the appropriate first-responding agencies.

Note that different Provincial and Territorial legislation may vary in the definition and use of an "emergency coordination centre, "emergency operations centre" and/or an "incident command post". For the purposes of this guide, the terms "ECC" and "EOC" are used interchangeably.

Management Team

The Incident Commander, General Staff and Command Staff function as the Incident Management Team.
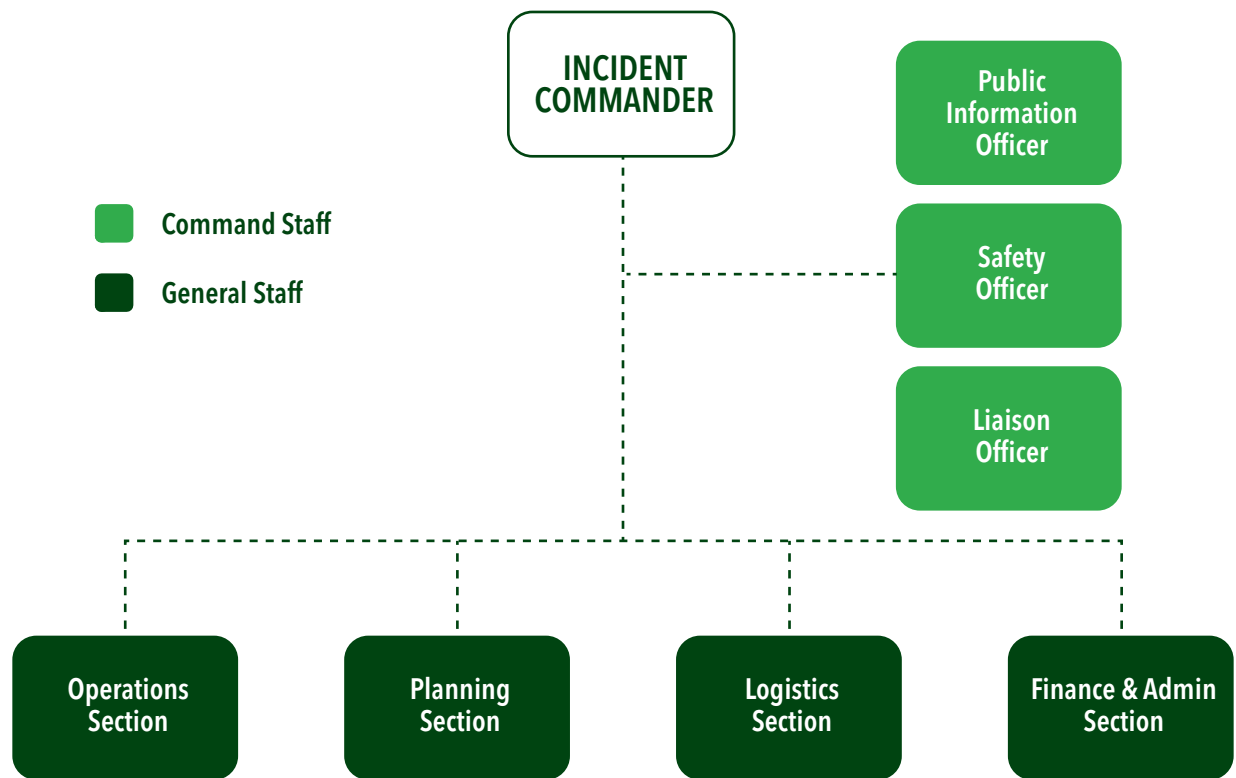

Figure 1 Adapted from Alberta Incident Management System

Structure

It is important to remember that not every ICS function and / or element will be filled in every emergency or disaster.

The situation at hand will dictate the functions and elements to be activated. As a minimum, an activation only an Incident Commander. Other functions are staffed as needed.

The Incident Commander is responsible for ensuring that the ICP and/or ECC/EOC is ready for use on short notice by establishing a regular maintenance and testing schedule.

The ICP and/or ECC/EOC contains information display materials, telecommunications and any additional supporting equipment, documents, and supplies required to ensure efficient operations and effective emergency management. In addition, power generation capabilities and other special life support systems may be required to allow for continuous operations apart from normal public utilities and services.

Authority to Activate

An ICP and/or ECC may be activated by any one of the following:

- An Incident Commander within the ICP/EOC/ECC's jurisdiction
- Director of Emergency Management as designated by bylaw or policy
- Persons named in the jurisdictions' emergency plan such as: CAO, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Mayor/Chief Elected Official or Elected Officials, etc.

Declaring a Crisis or Emergency

The ICP/ECC/EOC may be activated with or without declaring an emergency; however, it must be activated once a Declaration has been made.

A declaration made by a municipality in response to a crisis may have different names, but generally services the same purpose across Canada. Common names include:

- **Local State of Emergency**
- **State of Local Emergency**
- **State of Emergency**
- **Declaration of Emergency**

Activation Criteria

Suggested criteria for activation include:

- Significant number of people at risk
- Response coordination required because of:
  - Large or widespread event
  - Multiple emergency sites
  - Several responding agencies
- Resource coordination required because of
  - Limited local resources, and
  - Significant need for outside resources
  - Uncertain conditions
  - Possibility of escalation of the event
  - Unknown extent of damage
  - Potential threat to people, property and / or environment
  - Declaration of a Local Emergency is made

Termination

The Incident Commander will terminate the ICP/ECC/EOC activity for the current incident and notify all participants. The Director/Coordinator must consider the requirements of termination from the outset of the incident. The Demobilization Unit Leader supervises and administers the termination process, staying behind, if necessary, after the ECC is closed.

Suggested criteria for terminating ECC operations include:

- Individual ECC functions are no longer required.
- A Declaration of Local Emergency is lifted.
- Coordination of response activities and / or resources is no longer required.
- Event has been contained and emergency personnel have returned to regular duties.

Activation Levels

The level of activation is determined by the magnitude, scope and stage of the event. **Only those functions and positions that are required to meet current response objectives need to be activated. Non-activated functions and positions will be the responsibility of the next highest level in the ICS organization.** Each function must have a person in charge.

The organizational structure should be flexible enough to expand and contract as needed, as per ICS principles.

Response Goals

The ICP/ECC/EOC supports a prescribed set of response goals set out in priority as follows:

- Save/Protect lives
- Provide for the safety and health of all responders
- Protect public health
- Protect critical infrastructure and property
- Protect the environment
- Reduce economic and social losses
- Reduce reputational damage

Incident Action Plans will take these goals into consideration.

LIFE SAFETY AND HEALTH

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

PROPERTY

ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY

REPUTATION

Activation Levels

The incident type corresponds to both the number of resources required and the anticipated incident duration. The incident types move from Type 5 being the least complex to Type 1 being the most complex. As the number of resources required gets larger and the duration of the incident gets longer, the complexity increases. The vast majority of incidents are in the Type 3-5 range (FEMA, 2024). Most municipalities handle Type 5 incidents daily (e.g. single vehicle car accident), and Type 4 incidents occasionally as part of normal business operations, managing the emergency with local resources in a relatively quick manner (e.g. fuel spill on a local road).

TYPE 1

TYPE 2

TYPE 3

TYPE 4

TYPE 5

■ **The vast majority of all incidents**

Source 1 Incident Typing (FEMA)

APPENDIX III:
TRAINING & EXERCISE PLAN

A Training and Exercise Plan (TEP) outlines the education and execution of increasingly complex aspects of crisis management that municipal staff are expected to provide if a crisis were to occur. Training and exercise plans are a risk-based process that includes a cycle, mix and range of exercise activities of varying degrees of complexity and interaction. The knowledge, skills and abilities will give municipal staff the tools they need to respond using a professional, coordinated, and methodical approach. A Training and Exercise Plan will enhance the organization's suite of tools that meet or exceed compliance with internal and external requirements.

A Training and Exercise Plan is intended to provide a framework for the organization to continue building up their capacity, capability, and maturity in emergency response. This method provides a safe learning environment built around the principles of technical and leadership development and continuous improvement. This is achieved by identifying key personnel, critical roles, and minimum training requirements. Each Training and Exercise Plan cycle will challenge the status-quo of current practices to ensure the municipality has a robust and well-rounded emergency management system in place that is well understood both internally and with external partners.

Training is critical to provide municipal teams with opportunities to practice emergency response protocols, tasks and functions so they have the space, time and support to learn, apply and practice their roles in a non-emergent environment. Mistakes are expected and seen as opportunities for continuous improvement not only at the individual level, but also the team and organizational level. OHS requires mandatory emergency response training. Additional training is required at prescribed frequencies based on the organization's risk profile and resulting risk treatments, as well as potential regulatory requirements.

A variety of training types are encouraged to progressively build your team up from rote memorization through application to synergy and innovation. As training complexity increases, so too do costs, resource and time requirements. Training will also incorporate as many learning styles as feasible, including auditory, visual, kinesthetic, social, and logical.

Regularly scheduled training ensures your team is proficient in all aspects of your crisis management plan. Below is a brief description of the training and exercise types:

Discussion Based Training:

Seminars
- Orientation to authorities, strategies, standard operating procedures, concepts
- Lecture based
- Minimal time constraints
- Effective for all sizes of groups
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Workshops
- Develop policies, procedures, plans
- Increased interactive discussions
- Breakout sessions
- Clearly defined product or goal
- Results in a specific product or training certification

Tabletop Exercise
- Facilitated exercise scenario discussion
- Knowledge application
- Group problem solving
- Group breakout sessions
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Games
- Simulate operations with consequences
- Identify critical decision-making moments
- Dynamic structure
- Strategic based
- Validates plans and evaluates resource requirements
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Operations-Based Training

Drills
- Practice and validate a specific function or capability
- Ideal for training new equipment or skills
- Immediate feedback
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Functional Exercise
- Exercises managing, direction, command and control functions
- Application of system under crisis conditions
- Includes a Master Scenario Event List
- Validates capabilities
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Full-Scale Exercise
- The most complex and resource-intensive method
- Can involve multiple jurisdictions
- As realistic as safely and cost-effective as possible
- Complex problem-solving requiring critical thinking
- Multiple activities occurring
- After-Action Reviews (AAR) and Improvement Plans (IP) result from activity

Training & Exercise Program

In context with Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

CREATE	**Full-scale Exercises** • Stimulates judgement in abstract or fluid scenarios; generate, plan, produce, strategic, contextual. Self-knowledge.
EVALUATE	**Functional Exercises** • Put blocks together to form a whole response; check and critique. Metacognitive and conditional knowledge.
ANALYZE	**Drills** • Break down into elements and restructure into relations between ideas; differentiate, organize, attribute. Procedural knowledge, subject-specific skills, techniques and methods.
APPLY	**Table-top Exercises and Games** • Use of abstraction in specific and concrete situations. Execute and implement. Procedural knowledge with algorithms and implementation of procedures.
UNDERSTAND	**Workshops** • Can make use of material or idea being communicated; interpret, classify, compare, explain. Conceptual knowledge of principles, models, structures.
REMEMBER	**Seminars** • Recall of specific, methods, processes; recall. Factual knowledge including terminology, specific details and elements.

■ Operations-Based   ■ Discussion Based

Source: Transitional Solutions Inc. (2022)

APPENDIX IV:
DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAMS BY PROVINCE & TERRITORY

Disaster recovery programs in Canada vary by province and territory, each with its own name and specific guidelines. Here's a list of some of the disaster recovery programs across the country:

1. Alberta: Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) - Alberta Disaster Recovery Program

2. British Columbia: Emergency Management BC (EMBC) - Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA)

3. Manitoba: Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) - Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA)

4. New Brunswick: New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization (NBEMO) - Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA)

5. Newfoundland and Labrador: Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador (FES-NL) - Disaster Financial Assistance Program

6. Northwest Territories: Northwest Territories Emergency Management Organization (NWT EMO) - Disaster Assistance Policy

7. Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office (EMO) - Disaster Financial Assistance Program

8. Nunavut: Nunavut Emergency Management (NEM) - No specific program name, but they follow a Disaster Assistance Policy

9. Ontario: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians (DRAO)

10. Prince Edward Island: PEI Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) - Disaster Financial Assistance Program

11. Québec: Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP) - Programme d'aide financière aux sinistrés (Financial Assistance Program for Disaster Victims)

12. Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) - Provincial Disaster Assistance Program (PDAP)

13. Yukon: Yukon Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) - Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA)

These programs provide financial assistance and support to individuals, businesses, and communities affected by disasters, helping them recover and rebuild.

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