

Municipal Evacuation Plan 2024

INTRODUCTION

An evacuation is defined as the process of removing people from an area where a present or imminent situation has or may result in a loss of life and/or a risk to public safety, health and welfare of people. Property or environmental damage may also trigger an evacuation if it poses a risk to the safety, health and welfare of people. The Municipal Evacuation Plan for the Township of Matachewan provides information about planning techniques, strategies and tactics and will help streamline the evacuation process by providing an organized framework for the activities involved in coordinating and conducting an evacuation.

AIM

Since an emergency evacuation is the immediate and rapid movement of people away from the threat or actual occurrence of a hazard, the plan will ensure the safest and most efficient evacuation time of all residents and visitors within the emergency area. The Municipal Evacuation Plan outlines the policies and procedures to be followed by all responding agencies as it pertains to the evacuation process. According to the Risk Profile developed by the municipality as part of its annual Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment evacuations may be triggered by floods, potential dam failures, wildland fires and/or hazardous materials incidents. This plan takes an “all-hazards” approach and can be implemented for any type of emergency situation whether an emergency declaration has been made or not.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Evacuations are often multi-jurisdictional activities making extensive coordination amongst numerous agencies and governments necessary. The following organizations should assist the municipality in evacuation planning, training, exercising and responding to emergency evacuations. Program partners may include:

- Police service
- Emergency services (Fire /EMS)
- School boards
- Volunteer organizations, Non- Government Organizations, Registered Charities that may support an evacuation
- Public Health
- Provincial government partners (OFMEM, MTO, MOHLT)
- Transportation providers
- Social services
- Neighbouring municipalities
- Others, as required

AUTHORITY AND MAINTENANCE

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, RSO, 1990 provides as follows:

- Municipal Emergency Plan: Every municipality shall formulate an emergency plan governing the provision of necessary services during an emergency and the procedures under and the manner in which employees of the municipality and other persons will respond to the emergency and the council of a municipality shall by by-law adopt the emergency plan;
- What Plan may provide: An emergency plan formulated for procedures to be taken for the safety and/or evacuation of persons in an emergency area;
- Plan review: EMCPA requires municipalities to review and, if necessary revise its emergency plan every year. The same approach shall apply to the Municipal Evacuation Plan and the Community Emergency Management Coordinator is responsible for its review and revision as necessary.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency Medical Services will play an important role in the evacuation process. EMS will have the following responsibilities in an evacuation:

- Ensuring an adequate response to all medical emergencies within the local catchment area and activating any/all emergency plans and protocols established by Kirkland Lake EMS and the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care Emergency Services Branch
- Ensuring the triage, treatment and transport of all patients from the emergency site(s) to receiving hospitals as directed by the CACC in North Bay
- Obtaining additional EMS support as required, including air ambulance support
- Providing additional EMS support at municipal facilities during the emergency as resources permit
- Assisting the O.P.P. and/or the Matachewan Volunteer Fire Department with evacuations in the evacuation zone(s)
- Other duties as may be assigned

MVFD FIRE SERVICE

The Matachewan Volunteer Fire Department may be responsible for:

- Providing an Incident Commander and adequate firefighting staff to ensure the evacuation of endangered persons in an emergency area under their control
- Assisting the O.P.P. and/or EMS with evacuations in the evacuation zone(s)
- Performing all the legally required duties of a municipal fire department in the province of Ontario including fire suppression, search and rescue, auto extrications and other duties as legally defined
- Providing assistance to other departments and/or agencies and being prepared to take charge of, or contribute to, non-firefighting operations as requested
- Providing expertise and advice on fire-related issues and operations
- Activating and coordinating mutual fire aid assistance
- Maintaining operational readiness throughout the incident and especially in the re-entry stages

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC WORKS

The Municipal Public Works & Roads Department under the Supervision of the Public Works Superintendent will have the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring the construction, maintenance and repair of all municipal roads
- Ensuring roads are passable and free of debris
- Responding adequately to municipal emergencies affecting all Township facilities and critical infrastructure and ensuring their continued operation
- Providing advice on engineering and public works matters
- Providing equipment and vehicles, staff and resources in aid of evacuations and emergency response
- Arranging for the disconnection of public works/utilities as required and returning services when appropriate
- Assisting the O.P.P., Fire Service and/or EMS with evacuations as requested
- Assisting the O.P.P. with traffic and perimeter controls as resources permit

As mentioned previously, evacuations require numerous agencies and organizations to work together to achieve a timely and efficient evacuation. The Municipal Control Group will be the primary coordinating link for all responding agencies under the authority of the Municipal Emergency Response Plan.

RECOVERY STAGE

The goal is for the municipality, citizens and businesses to recover from the event. This includes restoring the physical infrastructure where possible as well as addressing the emotional, social, economic and physical well-being of those involved. Provincial disaster financial programs will assist the community in its return to normalcy.

When the emergency that prompted the evacuation has been resolved it will be necessary to plan for the return of evacuees. The impacted area must be safe for residents to return. The decision to re-enter an area that has been evacuated is based on numerous factors including:

- The threat that prompted the evacuation has been resolved or has subsided.
- Access to the community is assured.
- The infrastructure is safe to use.
- Safety hazards connected to the emergency have been eliminated.
- Services have resumed and are sufficient to support returning evacuees
 - Power
 - Water
 - Security
 - Sanitation
 - Food and essential supplies
 - Medical services

EVACUATION & CRISIS INTERVENTION

Where individuals have suffered a major loss as a result of an emergency, or where they have had an adverse reaction to a traumatic event, Crisis Intervention Teams should be engaged to help support the mental health of the evacuees. The Critical Incident Stress Teams (CISM) will work with local mental health professionals to provide on-going support. Kirkland Lake VCARS is the local agency providing such support as requested by local emergency service agencies.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The following groups of people may require particular attention in an evacuation:

- Persons with disabilities;
- sensory (e.g. hearing, vision)
- mobility (e.g. visible and non-visible)
- mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression)
- intellectual/developmental (e.g. Autism)
- learning disabilities (e.g. Dyslexia, Dysgraphia)
- persons with medical conditions
- persons requiring addiction services
- temporary populations (e.g. tourists, seasonal residents, miners)
- persons with animals/pets, including service animals
- elderly persons
- others, as identified

REPATRIATING EVACUEES

1. The Mayor, in consultation with the MCG, determines that the community has recovered sufficiently to support the repatriation of displaced persons and issues a directive for the return of evacuees.
2. An emergency declaration may/may not be in effect at this time
3. The O.P.P. will continue to act as a Lead Agency through the repatriation process. All Access Control Points (previously used to prevent entry to the area) will now be used as Entry Control Points for the return of Evacuees.
4. Municipal infrastructure must be sufficiently recovered to allow repatriation.
5. Utility companies will ensure all vital utilities are operational and safe.
6. All transportation routes must be functional and free of debris.
7. Public Health must ensure all disease potentials have been controlled
8. EMS will ensure operational readiness.
9. All fire-related hazards will be under control.
10. Police will maintain law & order and oversee the return of displaced persons using a phased, controlled re-entry process.

RE-ENTRY PROCESS

- a) Key municipal officials will be returned to the community first to restore the functionality of the municipality
- b) Sectors of the community that were not damaged, or have recovered fully from the emergency will be repatriated first
- c) Residents displaced from all other areas will be returned next
- d) Vulnerable populations and residents with chronic health conditions may be returned last to ensure that the extra assistance they require will be available once the community is functioning at “near-normal”.

FINANCIAL RECOVERY

Evacuees may experience financial distress following a mass evacuation for reasons which may include:

- Loss of income from work-related shutdowns
- Additional expenses for food, clothing and shelter

Municipal Evacuation Plan 2024

- Property damage
- Inability to access government assistance, financial institutions and banking

DTSSAB will assist residents with Children's Services, Ontario Works Program, Social Housing and the Ontario Disability Support Program

O.P.P. POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ontario Provincial Police Service is responsible for providing the Township of Matachewan with the services as outlined in the Police Services Act. The O.P.P. will provide an Incident Commander (and an adequate number of police officers) to assist the municipality in executing the Municipal Evacuation Plan. A strong police presence is required in order to convince endangered persons to evacuate the municipality by “voluntary compliance”.

The core principles of policing include:

“ensuring the safety and security of all persons and property in Ontario and the importance of safeguarding the fundamental rights as are guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Code.”

Under Section 4.2 and 19.1 of the Police Services Act, the O.P.P. has the following responsibilities and shall provide the following services:

- Crime prevention
- Law enforcement
- Assistance to victims of crime
- Public order maintenance
- Emergency response, including going door-to-door to ensure endangered persons are removed from harm and are evacuated safely
- Providing police service on all navigable bodies and course of water
- Maintaining traffic control on all highways and connecting links, including corridor control
- Property damage
- Inability to access government assistance, financial institutions and banking

DTSSAB will assist residents with Children’s Services, Ontario Works Program, Social Housing and the Ontario Disability Support Program

PETS & EVACUATIONS

The following considerations concern pets and the evacuation process:

- If considering moving animals to a safer place, do so early to avoid unnecessary risk
- Many emergency shelters do not allow pets and it may not be possible for you to take your pets to evacuation shelters, so pre-planning will avoid problems
- Use secure pet carriers/cages and sturdy leashes and harnesses to move animals safely
- Ensure all pet vaccinations are current
- Where possible, board pets in safe environments away from the emergency zone
- If you are able to house your animal in a temporary foster home, ensure your pet's medications, food and other supplies accompany them to the foster home
- Ensure pets are properly identified. Have a current photograph to assist you in identifying yourself as the pet's legal owner

INSURANCE COVERAGE: MASS EVACUATION

The Insurance Bureau of Canada and many private insurance providers acknowledge the impacts of emergencies on policy holders. Individuals who carry personal business, homeowner and property insurance should consult their policies to determine what coverage your company offers. Many policies will cover expenses incurred when civil authority induces a mass evacuation. Fire and smoke damage will be covered under a home insurance policy.

MMAH / DISASTER FUNDING

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing administers provincial disaster funding programs. Individuals may contact MMAH directly to apply for disaster assistance funding. Municipalities may apply for funding under a separate program to repair municipal infrastructure, if the emergency and resulting evacuation, is a result of a natural hazard.

ENFORCING EVACUATION ORDERS IN ONTARIO

In Ontario, the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act argues that while Police, Fire, or other agencies may be authorized to order persons to secure an area, and exclude persons from it, this is not considered an evacuation order under the EMCPA. The emergency order provisions of the EMCPA only come into effect after a provincial emergency is declared. The Act provides the province with the ability to make an evacuation order that may be enforced under the Act. It is a provincial offense not to comply with the order and the province can seek enforcement by a court order. While there is authority for the creation of such orders, it does not mean that the Police are further empowered to enter residences and force people out, nor does the Act contain an arrest authority. The evacuation order is aimed at “persons” and it is not an order that authorizes police action. For pragmatic reasons, enforcing an evacuation order should not entail physical force. Officials should be prepared to use a variety of non-physical means to enforce the order. Mechanisms to enforce the order should begin with the least restrictive, least resource-intensive alternatives and proceed to more forceful, costly methods as urgency demands. Persons that remain in an area, in violation of the evacuation order, should be advised that they cannot expect assistance if their lives are subsequently threatened by the hazard and that future rescue efforts will be suspended ... they may be killed or injured by the hazard by choosing to remain behind. Police may apprehend any minor at risk, if their guardians are refusing to obey the evacuation order, and turn those minors over to the appropriate child protection agency. Police may arrest and charge individuals who are obstructing the evacuation process or hindering Emergency First Responders in the performance of their duties. Section 129, Police Obstruction, of the Criminal Code of Canada states:

Everyone who

- a) Resists or willfully obstructs a police officer or peace officer in the execution of his duty or any person lawfully acting in aid of such an officer,

Municipal Evacuation Plan 2024

- b) Omits, without reasonable excuse, to assist a public officer or peace officer in the execution of his duty in arresting a person or in preserving the peace, after having reasonable notice that he is required to do so, or
- c) Resists, or willfully obstructs any person in the lawful execution of a process against Lands or Goods or in making a lawful distress or seizure, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or an offence punishable on summary conviction.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL EVACUATIONS

The success of a timely evacuation depends upon the willingness of the affected population to evacuate. In some instances, people refuse to evacuate for a variety of reasons which may include:

1. **Denial:** People do not believe the event can or will happen. (“never happened here before”, “never happen in my lifetime”)
2. **Minimizing the Hazard:** People who have survived past/similar events convince themselves that the hazard is survivable and that it will not be as strong a threat as predicted, or that it will not exceed previous events)
3. **Minimizing the impacts on others:** Persons refusing to evacuate will argue that their actions endanger only themselves and not others...and that they have a personal right to stay and not evacuate. They give little thought to rescuers who may have to endanger their lives if a rescue attempt is required later in the incident.
4. **Civil Rights issues:** Many people feel that authorities are exceeding their legal powers and by issuing a mandatory evacuation order are violating their civil rights.
5. **Lack of Accurate Information:** Misinformation, or a general lack of information and clear instruction, may result in people refusing to evacuate. They are not provided with the information they need and thus may not be aware of the consequences of their actions. Confusing information may lead to indecisiveness.
6. **Companion Animals/Service Animals& Livestock:** Many people will refuse to evacuate if they cannot take their animals with them, or be able to care for them throughout the evacuation. Lessons from Hurricane Katrina have taught that owners should take their pets with them when evacuating.
7. **Vulnerable Populations lack resources to evacuate:** Persons who are sick, elderly or who have special needs and/or disabilities may want to comply with the evacuation order but cannot do so without extra assistance.

Special transportation or other devices may be required to assist them. Many do not have their own transportation and will be totally reliant on the municipality to provide transportation.

8. Criminal Activity: Criminal elements may choose to remain behind and engage in looting, rioting and illegal activity once the general population is gone. Police resources may be insufficient to maintain law and order.

9. Financial impacts/Logistics: Local authority may be reluctant to issue an evacuation order due to costly and complex logistical issues.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL EVACUATIONS

10. Public Backlash: In some instances, the use of precautionary measures such as an evacuation order that is taken pre-emptively to reduce harm can sometimes themselves cause harm. Public backlash may occur if the impending hazard fails to materialize, or its impact does not warrant the actions taken. Disaster officials will often be criticized for “over-reacting” to perceived/actual threats.

ENFORCING EVACUATION ORDERS

Enforcing evacuation orders is a very difficult task. In most parts of the United States and Canada, a person cannot be forced to evacuate under most conditions. To facilitate “voluntary compliance” with evacuation orders, First Responders have used creative techniques to get people to leave such as:

- Asking people for names/numbers of their next of kin
- Having people write their social security numbers on their torso so their remains can be identified
- Refusing government services in the affected area, including emergency services and rescue efforts.

HURRICANE KATRINA: LESSONS LEARNED

The “ultimate authority” for issuing evacuation orders may sometimes become a struggle between jurisdictions with differing viewpoints. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, during her response to Katrina, argued that “evacuation at gunpoint” was unjustified, unnecessary and impractical. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was of the opposing opinion and demanded Governor Blanco issue mandatory evacuation orders early in the incident. She refused and the problem of “ultimate authority” was not solved in this case and as a result a clear, effective evacuation strategy was compromised.

CONTENT OF AN EVACUATION ORDER

Evacuation orders must be clear and concise and easily understood to be effective.

Evacuation orders should contain the following information:

- Issuing authority
- Date, time and location of the order
- Details of the hazard and the reason behind the order
- Evacuation routes to be used
- Assembly points (location of Reception & Evacuation Centre’s)
- Transportation assistance that is available
- Re-entry process
- Numbers for the Emergency Call Centre for information on the evacuation (9-1-1 is only to be used for reporting actual emergencies, all other inquiries should go to the public inquiry lines)

RESCINDING AN EVACUATION ORDER

A formal Rescind Order should be made once the decision has been made to terminate the evacuation. The Rescind order should also advise the population at risk that an evacuation alert/order may be re-instated at any time, should conditions change. If it is determined that a rescind order is appropriate for a portion of the evacuated area, it is recommended that the entire original evacuation order be rescinded and a new order issued with the new boundary.