



Quality of Life Standing Committee Meeting
Additional Information

Tuesday, March 24, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium

Pages

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***7.2 Emergency Management Program**

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Report 25-2026 - Infrastructure & Operations - Thunder Bay Fire Rescue seeking endorsement from the Quality of Life Standing Committee of the Emergency Management Program which will guide municipal emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities. **(Distributed Separately on Friday, March 20, 2026)**

WITH RESPECT to Report 025-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, we request endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendations to City Council:

WE RECOMMEND THAT City Council approve draft By-law 087-2026, including the City of Thunder Bay Emergency Management Program, Emergency Management Plan and Strategy, as attached to this report;

AND THAT By-law 76/2021 (Emergency Plan By-law), as amended, be repealed;

AND THAT City Council enacts the new Emergency Management Program By-law, being By-law 087-2026;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 025-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Thunder Bay Fire Rescue

DATE

PREPARED

December 15, 2025

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

March 24, 2026

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

Emergency Management Program

PURPOSE

To seek endorsement from the Quality of Life Standing Committee of the Emergency Management Program which will guide municipal emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

WITH RESPECT to Report 025-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, we request endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendations to City Council:

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AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City's Emergency Management Program will guide municipal emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities and is documented in the Emergency Management Strategy and the Emergency Response Plan. The Emergency Management Strategy (EMS) provides a framework and direction guiding the ongoing work of the City of Thunder Bay Emergency Management Program. The Emergency Response Plan (ERP) establishes roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, coordination mechanisms, and response principles to support effective municipal action during emergency events.

The Emergency Management Strategy embeds both climate resilience principles and a commitment to social equity acknowledging the increasing impacts of climate change on Northwestern Ontario and the amplification of these impacts on vulnerable populations. The ERP has been comprehensively reviewed and updated to reflect current legislation, best practices in emergency management, lessons learned from recent large-scale and prolonged emergencies, including the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the move to embracing Ontario's Incident Management System (IMS) in the City's emergency response. The Plan is a living document and is intended to be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving risks, organizational changes, and emerging best practices.

A key input into the ERP update was the City of Thunder Bay COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review, which assessed the City's preparedness, response, governance structure, and recovery considerations. While the review concluded that the City managed the overall pandemic response effectively, it identified opportunities to strengthen preparedness, coordination, training, and corporate resilience.

Adoption of the EMS and ERP will provide a modernized, scalable framework to guide emergency management activities and support the safety and resilience of the community.

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* requires municipal Councils to adopt an emergency management program and plan and appoint certain positions to act in an emergency. A draft of the by-law adopting the program, plan, and strategy are attached to this report.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* requires municipalities to develop, implement, and maintain an emergency management program and plan, and adopt both by by-law. In accordance with Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, the City of Thunder Bay has enacted By-law 76/2021 and By-law 81/2021. Ontario Regulation 380/04 describes emergency management standards for municipal emergency management programs.

Based on best practices in emergency management, and lessons learned from recent large-scale and prolonged emergencies, including the COVID-19 Pandemic, Administration has created an Emergency Management Strategy (EMS) and revised the existing Emergency Response Plan (ERP). Creating a separate EMS document has taken information about the City's emergency response framework, like membership of the Municipal Emergency Program Committee, public education, training and emergency exercises out of the Emergency Response Plan and allows the ERP to be a document that focuses on how to respond to an emergency. The Emergency Response Plan identifies emergency response goals and establishes roles and responsibilities for individuals and agencies which may become involved in a municipal emergency

response. Both documents reflect the City's move to incorporate the province's Incident Management System (IMS) into emergency response to provide a standardized, scalable, coordinated response especially when requiring outside agency support. Supporting information that requires regular updates like contact lists, risk assessment, critical infrastructure identification, hazard-specific plans, and operational procedures are associated documents that do not need Council approval but inform those responding to an emergency.

Emergency Response Vision

The Emergency Management Strategy and Emergency Response Plan support a coordinated, scalable, and risk-informed approach to emergency management that enables the City of Thunder Bay to respond effectively to a wide range of emergency scenarios while maintaining continuity of essential services.

The EMS and ERP support community resilience in the following key ways:

Governance and Decision-Making

- Clear roles, responsibilities, and escalation processes during emergency activations
- Defined authority and coordination structures to support timely and effective decision-making

Operational Coordination

- Alignment with the Incident Management System and Emergency Operations Centre functions
- Improved coordination across departments and with external partners

Preparedness and Capacity

- Emphasis on training, exercises, and continuous improvement
- Integration of hazard-specific plans and supporting procedures

Recovery and Resilience

- Consideration of recovery and mitigation as integral components of emergency management
- Institutionalization of lessons learned from past emergency events

Alignment with the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review

The Emergency Management Strategy and Emergency Response Plan have been developed to directly respond to the findings and recommendations identified in the City of Thunder Bay COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review completed in November of 2023.

While the Review concluded that the City managed the overall pandemic response effectively, it identified several areas where corporate emergency management capacity and resilience could be further strengthened to better support complex and prolonged emergencies.

In particular, the EMS and ERP address the following recommendations and areas for improvement identified in the Review:

Integration of Pandemic and Hazard-Specific Emergency Plans

The COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review recommended that pandemic response planning be formally integrated within the City's Emergency Response Plan to ensure clarity, consistency, and alignment during large-scale emergencies requiring activation of the Emergency Operations Centre.

- The current outdated Corporate Pandemic Plan will be revised based on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review and will be an associated document to the ERP to inform future pandemic response.
- Future subordinate plans will be developed and available as associated documents to the Emergency Response Plan to provide clear, hazard-specific direction consistent with current legislation, best practices, and lessons learned. For example, subordinate plans will be developed for evacuation, snow/ice storm, flooding, and wildfire emergencies.

Emergency Management and Incident Management System Training

The COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review identified the importance of ensuring that members of the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG), Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), and designated alternates receive role-appropriate emergency management and Incident Management System (IMS) training to support effective coordination during emergency activations

- IMS training plans have been initiated to fill gaps and will continue as a core component of the City's emergency preparedness program, with a specific focus on ensuring that all members of the MECG, EOC, and identified alternates are trained and proficient in their assigned roles and responsibilities.
- The Emergency Management Strategy reinforces the requirement for ongoing training and exercises aligned with emergency management and IMS principles. The City's internal capacity to deliver IMS training has been an important factor in strengthening staff preparedness, supporting consistency in instruction, and enabling timely and scalable training delivery across the Corporation.
- Continued emphasis on internal IMS training and exercises will support operational clarity, effective decision-making, and sustained readiness for both short-duration and prolonged emergency events.

Corporate Readiness and Coordination During Prolonged Emergencies

The Pandemic Response Review identified challenges associated with sustaining operations, coordination, and communication over extended emergency periods.

- The Emergency Management Strategy and Emergency Response Plan strengthen the City's framework for prolonged emergency activations by

emphasizing continuity of operations, information sharing, and coordinated support across departments and external partners.

- The Emergency Management Strategy identifies duty time and rest time cycles for responders and EOC members to support their health, safety and ability to respond to the emergency.

Strengthening Emergency Management Planning Capacity

The COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review identified the need for enhanced, dedicated emergency planning capacity within the Corporation, recognizing the scope, duration, and complexity of modern emergency events. Specifically, the Review recommended the creation of a full-time Emergency Planner position to support the City's emergency management program and reduce reliance on part-time or collateral-duty resources.

- While the Emergency Response Plan strengthens governance, clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities, and improves the overall planning structure, the addition of a dedicated Emergency Planner position has not yet been implemented. The need for this role remains recognized and validated based on operational experience, lessons learned from prolonged emergency activations, and the increasing demands placed on municipal emergency management functions.
- Implementation of this recommendation would require a financial commitment to add one (1) full-time equivalent position. Consideration of this resource requirement will be subject to future budget deliberations and Council approval.

Implementation

Implementation will be supported through:

- Development and maintenance of supporting associated documents and hazard-specific plans
- Training and exercises aligned with roles and responsibilities
- Ongoing review and continuous improvement based on exercises, real-world events, and evolving best practices

Adoption of the Program, Strategy and Plan will strengthen corporate readiness, improve coordination across departments and partner agencies, and help reflect lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic and other emergency events in future response efforts.

CONSULTATION

The review and update of the Emergency Response Plan was informed by current emergency management legislation and best practices, internal operational experience, post-incident reviews, and external assessment through the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review. The Review included staff surveys, focus groups, and public

engagement, providing valuable insight into opportunities for improvement in emergency preparedness and response.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the adoption of the Emergency Management Strategy and Emergency Response Plan. Costs for improvements to the Emergency Operations Centre are included in the 2026 capital budget, but the Strategy and Plan are not contingent on the work being done. Any future resource requirements related to emergency response implementation, training, or program enhancements will be addressed through existing budgets or brought forward to City Council for consideration, as required.

BACKGROUND

A By-Law (76/2021) to establish an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan was presented and approved by City Council on October 25th 2021.

By-law 81/2021 - An amendment to the By-Law (Corporate Report - R 150/2021) was approved on November 8th by City Council which included the designation of the Emergency Information Officer and authorities of the Acting Mayor.

This revision of the ERP includes a Plan Maintenance and Revisions section that formalizes the requirement for ongoing review and updates.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A – Draft By-law 087-2026 (A By-law to establish an Emergency Management Program and Plan), including Schedules A and B.

REPORT PREPARED BY

Dave Tarini, Acting Fire Chief – Thunder Bay Fire Rescue

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kayla Dixon, Commissioner – Infrastructure & Operations

March 20, 2026



Memorandum

Corporate By-law Number: 087-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Thunder Bay Fire Rescue

TO: Office of the City Clerk **FILE:**

FROM: David Tarini, Acting Fire Chief
Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, Infrastructure & Operations

DATE PREPARED: February 7, 2026

SUBJECT: By-law 087-2026 - A By-law to establish an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan – Repeal and Replace

MEETING DATE: City Council – April 7, 2026

By-law Description: A By-law to establish an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan and to identify key individuals for the protection of public safety, health, environment, critical infrastructure and to promote economic stability and a disaster resilient community in the City of Thunder Bay, in the District of Thunder Bay, and to repeal By-law 76-2021 and By-law 81-2021.

Authorization: Report 068-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Thunder Bay Fire Rescue - City Council – April 7, 2026.

By-law Explanation: The purpose of this By-law is to repeal and replace the outdated 2021 By-Law to establish a new Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan for the protection of public safety, health, environment, critical infrastructure and to promote economic stability and a disaster resilient community in the City of Thunder Bay, in the District of Thunder Bay. This By-law also identifies the membership and Chair of the Emergency Management Program Committee, and the membership of the Municipal Emergency Control Group.

Schedules and Attachments:

Schedule “A” – Emergency Management Strategy
Schedule “B” – Emergency Response Plan

Amended/Repealed By-law Number(s):

DRAFT



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF THUNDER BAY
BY-LAW NUMBER BL 87-2026

A By-law to establish an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan for the protection of public safety, health, environment, critical infrastructure and to promote economic stability and a disaster resilient community in the City of Thunder Bay, in the District of Thunder Bay, and to appoint members to the Emergency Management Program Committee and Municipal Emergency Control Group, and appoint the Chair of the Emergency Management Program Committee pursuant to the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and its regulations, and to repeal By-laws 76-2021 and 81-2021.

Recitals

1. The Province of Ontario enacted the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9 (the “Act”), which requires every municipality to develop and implement an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan to help protect public safety, public health, the environment, critical infrastructure, and property during an emergency and to promote economic stability and a disaster resilient community;
2. The Act requires that an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan be developed and implemented in accordance with international best practices, including adherence to the five core components of emergency management principles, namely prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery;
3. The Act requires that the emergency plan authorize municipal employees to take action where an emergency exists, but has not yet been declared to exist;
4. Section 2(1) of the Act requires every municipality to develop and implement an Emergency Management Program, which council of the municipality shall adopt by by-law;
5. Section 3(1) of the Act requires every municipality to formulate an Emergency Plan governing the provision of necessary services during an emergency and the procedures and manner in which employees of the municipality and other persons will respond to emergencies, which council of the municipality shall adopt by by-law;
6. Section 11 of Ontario Regulation 380/04 (Standards) requires a municipality to have an Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC) and Chair appointed by Council;

7. Section 12 of Ontario Regulation 380/04 (Standards) requires a municipality to have a Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) appointed by Council;

ACCORDINGLY, THE COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF THUNDER BAY ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

Emergency Management Program and Plan

1. That City Council approve and adopt By-law 87-2026, to establish an Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan.
2. And that the Emergency Management Strategy, attached hereto as Schedule "A" of this By-law, and the Emergency Response Plan, attached hereto as Schedule "B" of this By-law, are hereby adopted, which together form the City's Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan.
3. And that municipal employees are authorized to take action under the Emergency Plan where an emergency exists, but has not yet been declared to exist.

Appointments

4. And that the Emergency Management Program Committee will consist of the following individuals or their designates:
 - Mayor (Head of Council)
 - Community Emergency Management Coordinator (Chair)
 - City Manager
 - Chief of Thunder Bay Fire Rescue
 - Chief of Superior North Emergency Medical Services
 - Chief of Thunder Bay Police Service
 - Commissioner of Infrastructure & Operations
5. And that the Emergency Management Program Committee will be Chaired by the Community Emergency Management Coordinator.
6. And that the Municipal Emergency Control Group will consist of the following individuals or their designates:
 - City Manager
 - Chief of Thunder Bay Fire Rescue
 - Chief of Thunder Bay Police Service
 - Chief of Superior North EMS
 - Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC)
 - Commissioner - Infrastructure & Operations
 - Commissioner - Community Services
 - Commissioner - Corporate Services

- Commissioner - Growth
- Emergency Information Officer (Manager - Communications & Public Relations)
- Community Support Table Liaison (Director - Community Strategies Division)

Schedules

7. This By-law includes the following schedules as annexed hereto and are hereby declared to form part of this By-law,

Schedule “A” – Emergency Management Strategy, and
 Schedule “B” – Emergency Response Plan

Short Title

8. This By-law may be cited as the “Emergency Management Program By-law”.

Repeals

9. By-law 76-2021 and By-law 81-2021 of The Corporation of the City of Thunder Bay are hereby repealed.

10. This By-law shall come into force and take effect on the date it is passed.

Enacted and passed this 7th day of April, A.D. 2026 as witnessed by the Seal of the Corporation and the hands of its proper Officers.

Speaker

Krista Power
 City Clerk

2026

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REVISED:

19/03/2026

INTRODUCTION

Effective emergency management is essential to protecting the safety, resilience, and well-being of Thunder Bay’s residents. As our city faces a growing array of threats, including extreme weather events, wildfires, flooding, cyber attacks, and public health emergencies, it is critical to adopt a coordinated, cooperative, and proactive approach to mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. This Emergency Management Strategy provides a framework and direction guiding the ongoing work of the City of Thunder Bay Emergency Management Program.

In recent years, the impacts of climate change have become increasingly evident in Northwestern Ontario. Thunder Bay is experiencing more frequent and intense storms, rising temperatures, and shifting precipitation patterns, all of which heighten the risk of flooding, infrastructure failure, and wildfire-related emergencies. This Strategy embeds climate resilience principles, ensuring that emergency management efforts are grounded in science, support adaptation, and enhance the community’s long-term capacity to withstand and recover from climate-driven events as well as other community emergencies.

Equally important is the recognition that emergencies do not affect all residents equally. In Thunder Bay, social and economic disparities can amplify the impacts of disasters on vulnerable populations, including low-income households, seniors, people living with disabilities, Indigenous community members, newcomers to Canada, and those experiencing homelessness. A commitment to social equity is embedded throughout this plan, guiding how risks are assessed, how resources are deployed, and how communities are engaged and supported before, during, and after emergencies. By investing in climate-informed, equity-focused emergency management today, Thunder Bay is taking decisive steps toward a secure, adaptive, and just future for all its residents.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Thunder Bay is a single-tier municipality situated on the northwestern shore of Lake Superior and is the largest urban centre in Northwestern Ontario. The community has a census population of approximately 108,000 people with more than 130,000 in the metropolitan area. However, research suggests there may be over 20,000 additional residents not represented in these figures, particularly Indigenous populations¹. The City serves as a regional hub for healthcare, education, transportation, and commerce. The City boasts an abundance of natural environments in both the rural and urban areas of the city.

The region is subject to various hazards, with recent past events including severe flooding, severe weather events, and the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an extensive wildland urban interface region; putting significant areas of the community and key infrastructure at risk of forest fire impacts. Climate change is anticipated to increase the frequency of severe weather events, the number of fire spread days each summer, and increase the frequency of extreme heat events.

In addition to local threats, the community also plays a key role in supporting emergency response throughout the region; including regularly hosting communities across Northwestern Ontario evacuated for flood, wildfire, or infrastructure failures.

Hazards are exacerbated by local social inequities that contribute to community vulnerability; including relatively high rates of homelessness, food insecurity, and chronic illness including addiction; compounded by barriers to healthcare access and other critical supports.

Despite these challenges, Thunder Bay benefits from strong community networks, a capable emergency services sector, and a culture of collaboration between government, Indigenous partners, and local organizations. These strengths form the foundation for a resilient, coordinated emergency management system.

¹ McConkey, S., Brar, R., Blais G., Hardy, M., Smylie, J. (2022). Indigenous Population Estimates for the City of Thunder Bay.
March 19, 2026

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (the Act), and its regulations, is the legal authority for all municipal and ministry emergency response plans in Ontario.

The Act requires municipalities to develop, implement, and maintain an emergency management program and plan, and adopt them by a by-law.

An emergency management program must consist of:

- An emergency plan;
- Identification of critical infrastructure, community hazards and risk assessments;
- Training programs and exercises for employees of municipalities and other persons with respect to the provision of required services and procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities. This includes an annual practice exercise for a simulated emergency incident in order to evaluate the municipality's emergency response plan and its own procedures;
- Public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies; and
- Any other element required for municipalities in standards of emergency management programs that may be developed by the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Specific statutory appointments exist for the various key roles to support the overall management during an emergency. Ontario Regulation 380/04 describes emergency management standards for municipal emergency management programs.

The required elements consist of:

- Establishment of an Emergency Management Program Committee, (EMPC).
- Establishment of a Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG)
- Development of an emergency response plan
- Implementation of an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) with appropriate communications systems.
- Designation of an Emergency Information Officer (EIO); and
- Designation of a Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC).

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Overall leadership in the development and delivery of the community's emergency management program is provided by the Thunder Bay Emergency Management Program Committee. The Committee meets a minimum of twice a year and is chaired by the Community Emergency Management Coordinator or their alternate to provide overall leadership in the development and delivery of the community's emergency management program.

The purpose of this committee is to:

- Review the City's emergency management program annually
- Provide advice to the Community Emergency Management Coordinator in the development of the emergency management work plan
- Support the development and delivery of emergency management program objectives, including exercises and staff training
- Make recommendations to Council for the continued development of the emergency management program
- Assist the Community Emergency Management Coordinator in meeting the legislated level of emergency management as dictated by the Province of Ontario

Membership includes:

- Mayor (Head of Council)
- Community Emergency Management Coordinator
- City Manager
- Chief of Thunder Bay Fire Rescue
- Chief of Superior North Emergency Medical Services
- Chief of Thunder Bay Police Service
- Commissioner of Infrastructure and Operations

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

The Emergency Management Program is supported by the Emergency Management Working Group, which incorporates both internal and external stakeholders to guide the continued evolution of the Emergency Management Program and collaboration on emergency management throughout the community.

Meetings do not require all members to be present and include designates from the EMPC committee where appropriate.

HAZARD PRIORITIZATION

As part of the City's Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) process, the City of Thunder Bay has determined that the community is vulnerable to numerous hazards. These hazards are grouped into three major categories:

Natural Events: Events such as severe weather, floods, blizzards, tornadoes, food or human health emergencies.

Human-Caused Events and Accidental Hazards: Incidents intended to do harm to public safety and security, civil disorder, wars, bomb threats, improvised explosive devices and improvised dispersal devices. Chemical, biological, radiological and/or nuclear agents may be used on their own, or in combination with these devices.

Technological & Infrastructure Disruptions: Incidents involving hazardous materials, utility and power failures, transportation accidents, aircraft crashes, water supply failures, building or structural collapse, critical resource shortages, or computer-related incidents.

The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment process incorporates Hazard Probability, Consequence, Vulnerabilities, and Response Capacity in order to estimate impact to the community.

Work will be ongoing to estimate key drivers of risk, such as climate change, community growth, and demographic shifts to anticipate how risks may evolve in the years to come.

The HIRA report, Critical Infrastructure List, and Municipal Essential Services documents are valuable references for all stages of emergency management to understand the impacts of hazards on our community.

MITIGATION

Mitigation involves proactive actions taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risks posed by natural and human-made hazards.

In Thunder Bay, mitigation efforts are essential for enhancing community resilience by addressing vulnerabilities in infrastructure, land use, and environmental systems. These actions lay the foundation for a safer future by reducing the potential impact of emergencies before they occur.

Resilient Infrastructure

- Encourage climate-resilient building standards and retrofits for public facilities, emergency shelters, and vulnerable housing.
- Launch public education campaigns on household-level mitigation.
- Maintain prioritized critical infrastructure list, incorporating both municipally owned and external assets.
- Increase redundancy and spare inventory for critical infrastructure and components where feasible.
- Enhance vegetation management, fire breaks, and other protective measures around key infrastructure and residential zones.
- Promote nature-based solutions, such as green infrastructure, to absorb floodwaters and mitigate heat island effects.

Equity and Vulnerability Reduction

- Identify and map vulnerable populations for targeted mitigation support.
- Explore creation of a vulnerable population registry
- Support affordable housing retrofits to reduce risk from climate hazards.
- Partner with community organizations to engage vulnerable groups and co-develop mitigation strategies.

Integration

- All departments consider identified hazards in their decisions, for land-use planning, infrastructure design, and program investment.
- Use a climate equity lens in corporate reports to communicate the community risk and vulnerability considerations of municipal decisions.

Partnerships and Funding

- Apply for federal and provincial mitigation funding and capacity programs
- Formalize and routinely update agreements with critical stakeholders, including utilities, NGOs, First Nations, and neighbouring municipalities.

PREPARATION

Preparedness focuses on ensuring that individuals, organizations, and the municipality are ready to respond effectively to emergencies. This includes planning, training, public education, and resource coordination.

In Thunder Bay, preparedness activities strengthen the capacity of emergency responders and the public alike, ensuring a coordinated and timely response when disasters strike.

Emergency Planning and Coordination

- Review and update the municipal Emergency Response Plan annually to reflect current risks and lessons learned from recent events.
- Develop hazard-specific annexes (e.g., for wildfires, floods, hazardous materials, pandemics, evacuations) to support rapid, tailored responses.
- Consider opportunities to expand existing contingency plans for responding to some community needs without EOC activation (e.g. Severe Weather Plan for Vulnerable Populations).
- Encourage departments to maintain updated continuity of operations plans; outlining essential services and critical infrastructure dependencies.
- Routinely update critical infrastructure list based on identified impacts and dependences.
- Enhance mutual aid and coordination protocols with community organizations surrounding First Nations, municipalities, and provincial agencies.

Municipal Evacuation Planning

- Develop risk-based evacuation scenarios for both local evacuations and hosting; with associated neighbourhood evacuation strategies for various sizes of evacuated populations
- Clear decision-making criteria for issuing evacuation advisories or orders
- Communication templates with clear guidance for households; incorporating considerations for children, pets, and other population specific needs
- Engage with evacuees previously hosted in Thunder Bay to improve processes.

Staff Training

- Conduct regular IMS training sessions for municipal staff, elected officials, and emergency responders on roles, responsibilities, and procedures.
- All MECG members and alternates receive training on the emergency plan and on the IMS framework
- Support collaborative training opportunities with community partners and surrounding communities to increase regional capacity.
- Front line emergency responders conduct hazard-specific training in collaboration with provincial and federal agencies.
- Include municipal emergency management awareness training for administration, to improve awareness of the role of the MECG and EOC, and what supports may be available in an emergency

Emergency Exercises

- Maintain emergency exercise program, guiding annual emergency exercises.
- Facilitate annual multi-agency emergency exercises, simulating complex emergencies and disasters.
- Incorporate climate and equity lenses into scenario planning to ensure inclusive and forward-looking preparedness.
- Conduct formal debriefs and after-action reports after each exercise or real incident, documenting lessons learned and updating plans and training accordingly.

Public Education and Outreach

- Develop and promote personal preparedness campaigns, encouraging households to have emergency kits, plans, and contact lists.
- Create targeted materials to support groups with elevated or unique risks, particularly those unable to maintain 72-hour preparedness kits.
- Partner with local NGOs, faith groups, and Indigenous organizations to co-design culturally relevant preparedness initiatives.
- Offer recurring training sessions for community volunteers
- Explore implementation of community supported resilience hubs
- Host preparedness training for community groups, schools, and businesses, focused on emergency kits, evacuation planning, and hazard awareness, leveraging Ontario Corps support where possible.

Emergency Alerting and Communication

- Enhance public alerting systems, including integration with Alert Ready, local media organizations, and social media.
- Establish communication protocols for vulnerable and remote populations, including those without internet or cell service.
- Prepare pre-scripted messages for priority hazards to ensure timely and consistent communication.

Resource Management and Logistics

- Maintain and regularly update inventories of emergency supplies (e.g., cots, water, PPE) for reception and evacuation centres.
- Establish agreements with suppliers and service providers for rapid access to food, fuel, transportation, and shelter.
- Develop plans for spontaneous donations and volunteer management during large-scale emergencies

Integration with Provincial and Federal Systems

- Ensure municipal training aligns with Federal and Provincial standards
- Take part in regional emergency exercises where feasible.
- Explore Federal and Provincial training, funding, and guidance documents where available.

Equity-Focused Preparedness

- Ensure preparedness materials and plans address barriers faced by marginalized populations.
- Create tailored outreach for high-risk groups, including people living in poverty, those experiencing homelessness, and Indigenous youth.
- Use an equity impact lens to evaluate preparedness policies and identify gaps.
- Introduce equity and cultural competency training for emergency management personnel

RESPONSE

The response phase encompasses immediate actions taken during and immediately after an emergency to protect life, property, and the environment.

In Thunder Bay, response efforts rely on coordinated operations, clear communication, and rapid deployment of resources; following Ontario IMS 2.0 guidance. This section outlines how the municipality will manage emergencies through efficient command structures and public safety strategies.

Incident Management System Response Goals

- 1. Protect the safety of all incident responders and those affected by the incident*
- 2. Save lives*
- 3. Treat the sick and injured*
- 4. Protect the health of those affected by the incident*
- 5. Safeguard the continuity of government and critical services*
- 6. Protect property and the environment*
- 7. Prevent and/or reduce economic and social losses*

Emergency Response Plan Procedures

- Follow operating procedures, including the Municipal Emergency Response Plan, to respond to community emergencies
- Activate the Emergency Operations Centre as required
- Variations from plan should be clearly communicated and recorded

Emergency Operations Centre Facility

- Should be dedicated area to maintain availability of critical resources, including food; personal rest supplies; as well as regularly updated copies of relevant plans, forms, and procedures.
- Facility selected with accessibility and resilience in mind
- Should have IMS best practice equipment, including position identification vests
- Should be able to support both in-person and virtual meeting attendees in a hybrid format
- Checklists for EOC roles, including technical specialists and external agency representatives

Emergency Communications

- Issue timely, accurate, and accessible public alerts and instructions targeting affected populations
- Coordinate with community organizations to support consistent messaging.
- Create a public facing section of municipal website where citizens can find the most recent emergency releases and specialized instructions
- Produce regular communications updating city council on response progress, as well as guidance on redirecting community members to appropriate resources and informing internal staff on any changes to responsibilities.
- Support access to telecommunications connectivity for affected populations to access information; including considerations for device charging and internet connections at reception centres.

Health, Safety, and Well-being

- Deploy emergency mental health and crisis support services, for affected populations, emergency responders, and emergency managers
- Enforce personnel cycling to manage responder and EOC capacity. Duty time in the EOC should not exceed 14 consecutive hours and be followed by a minimum of 8 uninterrupted hours of rest time.

Resource Management and Mutual Aid

- Track the deployment and status of all municipal and partner resources (personnel, equipment, supplies).
- Request provincial or federal support if local capacity is exceeded.
- Implement mutual aid agreements with neighbouring communities

Special Populations and Equity Considerations

- Support seniors, people with disabilities, Indigenous residents, and non-English speakers through targeted outreach and tailored services.
- Use pre-identified community liaisons or navigators to provide inclusive response.

Documentation and Information Management

- Maintain detailed incident records, including decisions, actions, and resource deployment using IMS compliant forms.
- Prepare situation reports for internal and external partners.
- Begin collecting data for financial recovery and reimbursement tracking.

RECOVERY

Recovery is the process of restoring and rebuilding after an emergency, with a focus on returning the community to safe and sustainable conditions.

In Thunder Bay, recovery efforts will be guided by principles of resilience, equity, and collaboration. This section outlines short- and long-term recovery actions that support healing, rebuilding infrastructure, and strengthening the community for the future.

Recovery Coordination and Leadership

- Following significant incidents, designate a Recovery Coordination Team with relevant cross-sector representation.
- Develop a Recovery Action Plan with clear timelines, roles, and resource needs.
- Coordinate with external stakeholders as appropriate

Transition from Response to Recovery

- Formally declare transition from response to recovery phase.
- Deactivate EOC when appropriate and shift coordination to the Recovery Coordination Team.
- Conduct initial impact and needs assessment across sectors (housing, infrastructure, economy, etc.).

Restoration of Essential Services

- Prioritize restoration of:
 - Power, water, natural gas, and sewer services
 - Transportation routes
 - Telecommunications
- Coordinate closely with service providers and contractors.
- Monitor service accessibility, especially for vulnerable populations.
- Rebuild damaged infrastructure, evaluating opportunities to “build back better” with climate resilient design

Community Support and Social Services

- Provide ongoing support for displaced individuals and families.
- Re-establish and expand access to:
 - Housing and shelter support
 - Food, clothing, and transportation
 - Mental health and trauma counselling
- Collaborate with community partners (e.g., NGOs, health units, Indigenous organizations).

Public Communication and Engagement

- Continue regular communication with the public on progress and restored services
- Consider hosting community meetings and feedback sessions.
- Use accessible and inclusive communication channels.

Financial Recovery and Reimbursement

- Track and document all eligible costs related to emergency response and recovery.
- Apply for provincial (e.g., Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance) and federal funding.
- Support residents and businesses in accessing relief funds and insurance claim

After-Action Review and Improvement Planning

- Hold one or more critical action debriefs following significant response actions to inform continual improvement.
- Publish mandatory After-Action Reviews (AAR) following exercises or EOC activation.
- Gather input from all responding agencies, stakeholders, and community members.
- Identify lessons learned and update emergency and recovery plans accordingly.
- Provide training and briefings based on AAR findings.

PROGRAM MAINTENANCE, REVISION, AND TESTING

The City of Thunder Bay's Emergency Management Program is developed and maintained by the Emergency Management Program Committee and Emergency Management Working Group under the authority of Municipal By-law 087-2026 and in accordance with the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Ontario IMS Guidance 2.0
- Emergency Response Plan
- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Report (*anticipated 2026*)
- Critical Infrastructure List
- Municipal Essential Services
- Contingency Plans
- Evacuation Plan
- Recovery Plan
- Severe Weather Plan for Vulnerable Populations
- Emergency Food Plan (*external*)

2026

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

REVIEWED:

19/03/2026

INTRODUCTION

The Emergency Response Plan (ERP) outlines a centralized controlled and coordinated response to support responders and safeguard property, the environment and the health, safety and welfare of the residents and visitors of the City of Thunder.

Based on the Incident Management System (IMS), the ERP is designed to support individuals and agencies, both internal and external, which may become involved in a municipal emergency response to become aware of their respective roles and responsibilities during an emergency.

The ERP scope addresses incidents that warrant the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre, not addressing emergencies that are handled on site by appropriate first responding agencies. The ERP is intended to complement existing contingencies, standard operating procedures, and other emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and recovery initiatives that make up the municipal emergency management program.

The following response goals are applied to all emergency situations:

1. Protect the safety of all incident responders and those affected by the incident
2. Save lives
3. Treat the sick and injured
4. Protect the health of those affected by the incident
5. Safeguard the continuity of government and critical services
6. Protect property and the environment
7. Prevent and/or reduce economic and social losses

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The legislation, regulations, related standards, and By-Laws under which the municipality and its employees are authorized to respond to an emergency are:

- The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, RSO 1990, c. E.9, as amended (the *Act*) and its regulations, including Ontario Regulation 380/04 (Standards).

The *Act* requires municipalities to develop, implement, and maintain an emergency management program, and adopt it with a by-law.

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY CONTROL GROUP

In the case of an emergency, the Emergency Operations Centre will be activated and operated by the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) and support staff as needed.

The City Manager, or in their absence, an Acting City Manager, will assume the EOC Commander role and chair the MECG.

The City of Thunder Bay's MECG consists of the following members or their designates:

- City Manager
- Fire Chief
- Police Chief
- EMS Chief
- Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC)
- Commissioner Infrastructure and Operations
- Commissioner Community Services
- Commissioner Corporate Services
- Commissioner Growth
- Emergency Information Officer
- Community Support Table Liaison

The City of Thunder Bay's Manager, Communications & Public Relations, is appointed as the Emergency Information Officer.

The City of Thunder Bay's Director, Community Strategies Division is appointed as the Community Support Table Liaison.

When activated, the MECG is additionally supported by the Scribe, Safety Officer, and relevant Technical Specialists.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, external agencies and organizations not normally part of the MECG may be asked to send a representative to attend the MECG meetings.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a central hub for the MECG and support personnel to carry out the functions of managing the emergency at the strategic level.

During an emergency, EOC personnel will meet at regular intervals or as required to provide and receive situation updates relating to the emergency. The EOC will consider strategic objectives and develop an action plan for a defined operational period. This interval will be known as the EOC operational period.

All members of the MECG shall assign designates to attend the EOC and act for them in their absence as required.

ACTIVATION

The Emergency Response Plan and Emergency Operations Centre may be partially or fully activated when there is an identified need for significant coordination. This can include active or imminent hazards threatening the community; support of other communities' emergency responses; or to manage risks during a planned event.

Response Level	Description	Criteria
<p>Normal Operations</p>	<p>Activities that are normal for the EOC when no incident or specific risk or hazard has been identified</p> <p>The CEMC will coordinate routine watch and warning activities as they emerge.</p>	<p>Routine operations, including emergency responses within the scope of first responders</p>
<p>Partial Activation</p>	<p>Select EOC team members/organizations are activated to monitor a credible threat, risk, or hazard and/or support risk management during a planned event.</p>	<p>Significant potential impact to citizens, property and environment.</p> <p>Significant media attention</p> <p>Significant demand on resources</p>
<p>Full Activation</p>	<p>The EOC team is activated, including personnel from assisting agencies, to support response to a major incident or credible threat.</p>	<p>Major impact on citizens, property and environment</p> <p>Major public interest</p> <p>Major demand for resources impacting business continuity</p>

ACTIVATION OF THE PLAN

The City of Thunder Bay's Emergency Response Plan can be activated:

- Directly by any member or acting designate of the MECG directly **and/or**
- By request to a member of the MECG by the municipal department, community partner, or emergency responder most directly involved in the response and/or mitigation of an emergency. The request for activation will be considered based on the size, seriousness, or complexity of the emergency and the response capability of that agency.

On receipt of instructions from a member of the MECG, the POLICE COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE (684-1555) will call out the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG), MECG alternates if the primary member is unavailable, and named Support Positions by telephone or the most effective means. The member of the group giving the call-out instruction will decide if this is to be a call-out or standby.

The primary Emergency Operations Centre is:

- Superior North EMS, 105 Junot Avenue South

Alternate Emergency Operations Centres are:

- Thunder Bay City Hall, 500 Donald Street
- Thunder Bay Fire Rescue Station #3, 60 S. Water Street

Depending on the nature of the incident, a virtual Emergency Operations Centre may be established in lieu of a physical Emergency Operations Centre.

DECLARATION OF AN EMERGENCY

The Mayor, or acting head of council, may declare that an emergency exists in the municipality, or in any part thereof, and such emergency declaration will only be made, if the Mayor, or acting head of council, has consulted the ERP, consulted with the MECG, and is satisfied that the taking of an authorized action is necessary to address the situation or impending situation without the risk of serious delay. They may make such orders as they consider necessary and are not contrary to law to implement the emergency plan of the municipality and to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area for the duration of the declared emergency.

Should circumstances warrant an emergency declaration, the Mayor or acting head of council must complete and submit a formal written "Declaration of Emergency" to Emergency Management Ontario.

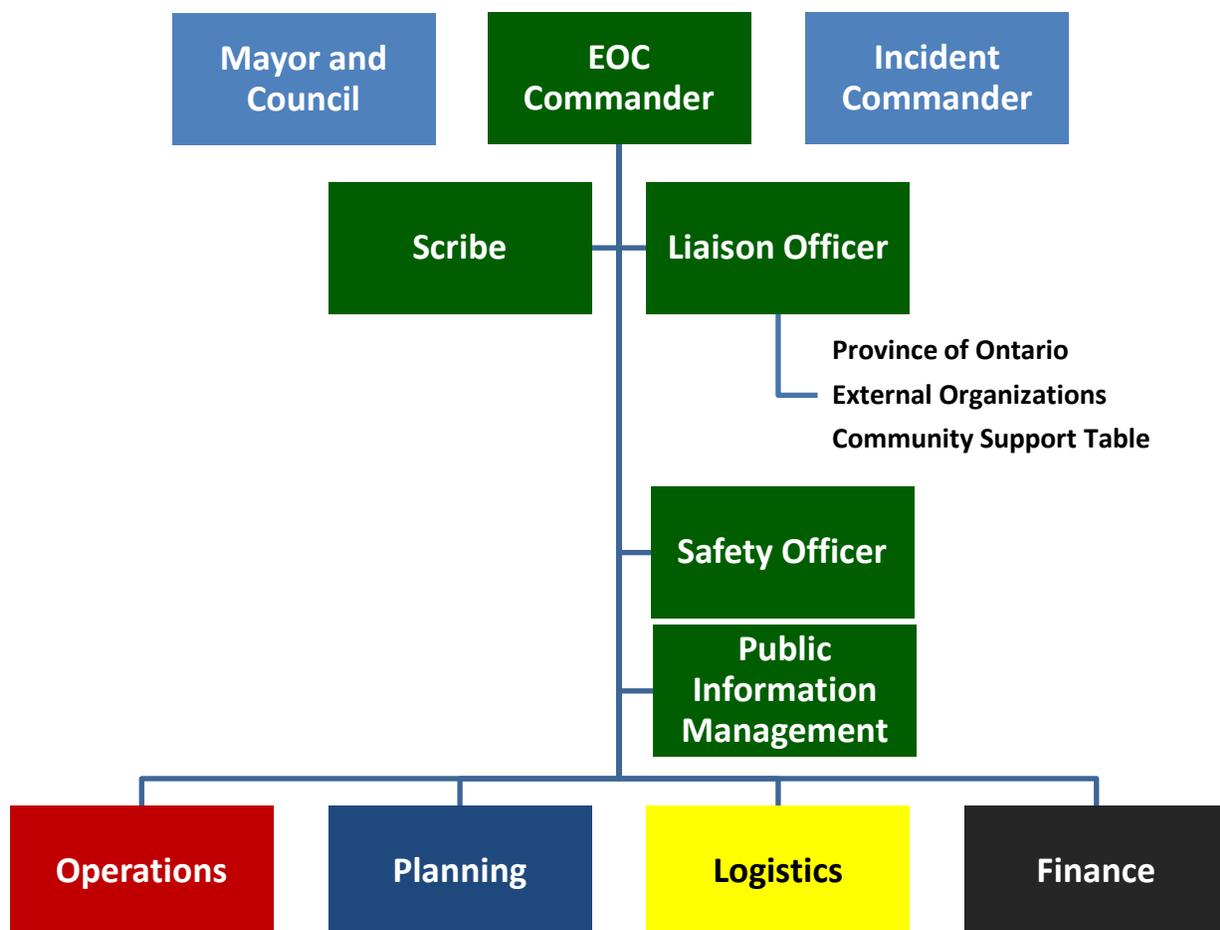
A municipal emergency may be declared terminated at any time by the Head of Council or the Council of a municipality, and/or by the Premier of Ontario through submission of a written "Termination of a Declared Emergency" to Emergency Management Ontario.

An emergency declaration is not necessary to activate the plan, convene the MECG, or request assistance from outside agencies, surrounding communities, or higher levels of government.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Incident Management System (IMS) is a standardized command and control approach to emergency management encompassing personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. Standardized processes and terminology allow incident responders to formulate a unified plan to manage the situation. The standardized terminology reduces the risk of miscommunication among the many responders.

The position summaries to follow are intended to guide collaboration and complement IMS training and position checklists.



ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE (EOC)	<p>The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is where the MECG carries out the functions of managing the emergency at the strategic level.</p> <p>The functions performed in the EOC include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting on-site incident response • Collecting, gathering and analyzing data • Making decisions that protect life and property • Maintaining continuity of municipal operations • Disseminating decisions to response agencies and the public <p>EOC functions do not include tactical decisions for on-site responders or resources. That responsibility lies with the Incident Commander.</p> <p>Not all IMS positions are required to be filled in an emergency, but all IMS functions must be assigned. One person may be assigned to multiple IMS roles.</p> <p>All personnel should reference relevant contingency plans and procedures, use established templates and resources such as the Critical Infrastructure List, and be aware of their responsibilities listed in this plan, the IMS Common Responsibilities Checklist and the Position Checklist for their assigned role(s).</p>
MAYOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declare and terminate an emergency, in accordance with the Act and its regulations • Ensure members of Council are notified of the emergency and updated on response

<p>ACTING HEAD OF COUNCIL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifying the Mayors of adjoining municipalities of the emergency if required and providing any status reports • promptly notify the Minister of a declaration of emergency • regularly report to the public respecting the declaration of emergency until it has terminated • report to Council, every 30 days, until the declared emergency has terminated outlining the reasons why it remains necessary for the emergency declaration to be in effect • after a termination of the emergency, report to the Minister, in accordance with the Act and its regulations
<p>CITY COUNCILLORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist the Emergency Information Officer to relay information to community members • Liaise through acting head of council regarding any concerns from constituents
<p>INCIDENT COMMANDER SITE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain command of the incident site (when incident has specific location) • Coordinate with EOC for support, considering unified command where appropriate • Set the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities.
<p>EOC COMMANDER CITY MANAGER</p>	<p>Overall authority and responsibility for the activities of the EOC.</p> <p>Until otherwise delegated, all EOC functions are the responsibility of the EOC Commander.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets priorities and objectives for operational periods and ensures they are carried out. • Approves EOC Incident Action Plan (IAP) • Liaises with the Incident Command and Mayor • Approves emergency information releases. • Determine what sections are needed, assign section chiefs as appropriate

SCRIBE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record all critical decisions, actions, briefings, and resource requests in real time Support clear and traceable information for continuity, accountability, and after-action review
PUBLIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT EMERGENCY INFORMATION OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as the primary media and public contact for the municipality in an emergency Collects and disseminates accurate and timely emergency information both during and following an emergency Develops and shares messages to the public, through the media, and through other trusted community sources Activates Emergency Information Centre Tracks media reports including social media feeds for trends or misinformation Liaises with other organizations' communication leads
SAFETY OFFICER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors physical and mental safety of EOC and response personnel Recommends safety modifications to operations Assesses and monitors response risks and halts operations if necessary
LIASON OFFICER CEMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invites required or requested agencies and stakeholders to the EOC Provides orientation to agencies and stakeholders entering the EOC Supports coordination with engaged local, provincial, and/or federal partners
COMMUNITY SUPPORT TABLE LIAISON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support communication and coordination between the EOC and Community Support Table member organizations Primary contact will be Liaison Officer, may be redirected as appropriate
OPERATIONS SECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the incident objectives and priorities stated in the IAP Manages tactical operations. Develops the operations portion of the IAP

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains contact with Incident Commander, subordinate Operations personnel, and other agencies involved in the incident.
PLANNING SECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects, confirms, analyzes and shares incident information gathered from incident responders Develops EOC IAP in coordination with other IMS functions. Conducts advance planning activities Plans for EOC demobilization
LOGISTICS SECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arranges and provides services and supports including personnel, supplies, facilities and other resources to an incident Provides other support services such as arranging for food and lodging for workers within the EOC and other sites.
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION SECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages incident-specific finance and administration activities including payroll, vendor contracts and incident cost tracking. Coordinates claims and compensation. Tracks and reports on personnel time.
TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical observations, recommendations, and other support as needed to incident staff Report to Planning Section chief by default, may be reassigned as appropriate
EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the essential needs of individuals, households, and communities affected by disaster. Report to Operations Section chief by default, may be reassigned as appropriate
ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent partner organization to support coordination of incident response Primary contact will be Liaison Officer, may be redirected as appropriate

Municipal Emergency Control Group and Designates must be aware of the contents of the Emergency Response Plan and must be trained on how to carry out their assigned roles and responsibilities as outlined in the plan.

EMERGENCY DOCUMENTATION

It is extremely important to accurately document all major decisions, individuals contacted, instructions issued, and actions taken in an emergency. Emergency record keeping should utilize Incident Management System forms from Emergency Management Ontario or other NIMS compatible formats.

All EOC positions are required to keep an activity log during events and completed forms must include contact information for the individual completing the document and other individuals involved in response efforts.

All documentation developed during an event is to be submitted, retained, and managed by the Planning Section. Staff are required to submit completed forms regardless of their usage in the IAP or other formal document planning.

DEACTIVATION AND RECOVERY

Deactivation of the EOC will be performed once all objectives associated with the developed demobilization plan have been achieved.

Criteria considered for EOC deactivation is, but not limited to:

- The incident is resolved
- All resources assigned to the incident have been released and returned to their home base
- The EOC is/are no longer required as the incident has been stabilized
- On-going recovery operations are to be managed from a separate entity such as normal municipal operations.

The deactivation will be announced to all personnel including any assisting or cooperating agencies during the final briefing. If the general public was informed of facility activation, deactivation will also be communicated.

A critical incident debrief shall be held following EOC activations, and an after-action report shall be created following exercises, full EOC activations, and emergency declarations to inform corrective actions and continual improvements to emergency management procedures.

For significant incidents, a Recovery Coordination Team should be designated to support recover actions.

A report summarizing the event, actions taken, and evaluation of responsibilities, including any recommended changes to the Emergency Response Plan and its associated documents, should be produced after the event concludes.

PLAN MAINTENANCE, REVISION, AND TESTING

The City of Thunder Bay's Emergency Response Plan is developed and maintained by the Emergency Management Program Committee under the authority of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, and its regulations.

The group is chaired by the Community Emergency Management Coordinator, and membership includes:

- Mayor (Head of Council)
- Community Emergency Management Coordinator
- City Manager
- Chief of Thunder Bay Fire Rescue
- Chief of Superior North Emergency Medical Services
- Chief of Thunder Bay Police Service
- Commissioner of Infrastructure & Operations

The plan is reviewed and revised on an annual basis by the Emergency Management Program Committee and circulated to all plan holders.

The Emergency Management Program Committee is supported by the Emergency Management Program working group, which includes both internal and external representatives and subject matter experts.

Annual exercises are conducted in order to test the overall effectiveness of the City's Emergency Response Plan and provide training to emergency response and recovery stakeholders in the City of Thunder Bay. Recommendations stemming from these exercises are incorporated into the plan where necessary.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACRONYMS

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

EOC Forms
IMS 201 – Incident Briefing
IMS 202 – Incident Objectives
IMS 209-G – Incident Status Summary
IMS 211 – Check-In List
IMS 214 – Activity Log

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

IMS Position Checklists
Meeting Agenda Templates
Communication Templates
Contact lists
HIRA
Critical Infrastructure List
Hazard-Specific Contingencies
Evacuation Plan
Recovery Plan
Corporate Pandemic Plan