

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Great Trillium Fire

At three o'clock in the afternoon of June 23, 1991, the Superior Wood Products factory in Trillium, Ontario, exploded. The wood products plant is the largest employer in Trillium, and the blast was strong enough to break windows in a four-block area.

Police, fire, and ambulance services arrived at the scene in minutes. A number of workers were seriously injured, some were missing, and the explosion had started a fire that was sending a plume of acrid smoke into the sky. The factory used a number of flammable solvents and industrial chemicals which were fuelling the fire; the firefighters believed the fumes were toxic.

The police established road-blocks to keep sightseers out of the area, and alerted the OPP detachment that it might be necessary to re-route traffic on Highway 499 if the wind changes direction.

Given the size of the fire, the toxic nature of the fumes and the direction of the wind, which is

blowing toward a subdivision where about 150 families live, the senior firefighter at the scene confers with his chief. They decide to recommend that the town implement its emergency plan. The fire chief calls the community's chief administrative officer, describes the situation, and recommends that an emergency be declared.

The Chief Administrative Official immediately asks the police force to implement the notification procedure in the emergency plan. The members of the Community Control Group — the mayor, the fire chief, the police chief, the medical officer of health, the public works manager, the hospital administrator and the director of social services — are notified and report to the Emergency Operations Centre.

At the same time the Chief Administrative Officer and two assistants begin converting the council chamber into an Emergency Operations Centre. Another room in the building is designated as the communications centre. The public information centre is located in a building near by.

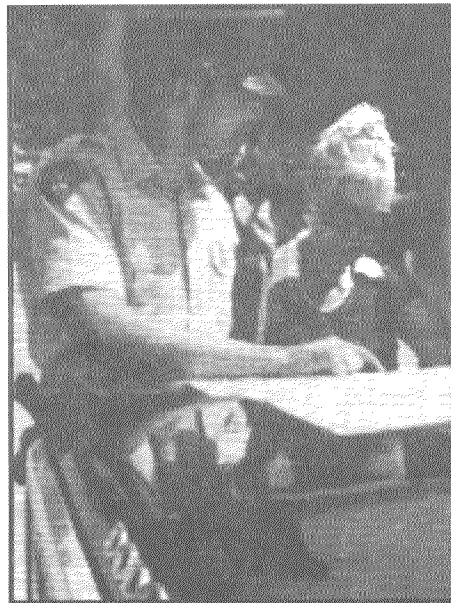
The deputy fire chief takes control at the site. A search is started for survivors; he also activates the mutual aid agreement Trillium has with neighbouring communities, and calls for more personnel and equipment. The Ministry of the Environment is informed.

The Community Control Group assembles in the Emergency Operations Centre, and establishes communications with the emergency site.



The emergency plan allows you to make the best use of the existing resources. It also helps you find additional resources, like mutual aid from a neighbouring fire department.

Police, fire and ambulance services are almost always the first to respond to an emergency. Be sure they are included in the planning and testing process.



The mayor listens to the report from the site, confers with the other members of the control group, and decides to declare an emergency. The Deputy Fire Chief is appointed Emergency Site Manager.

The number of anticipated casualties has increased, and the hospital administrator decides to activate the hospital's emergency plan. Additional staff are called in, and some patients are discharged to make room for the casualties. Additional ambulances are requested through Central Ambulance Despatch, and the local OPP detachment is advised that an emergency has been declared. The OPP notify the Ministry of the Solicitor General through Emergency Planning Ontario.

The Community Control Group decides to evacuate the subdivisions downwind from the fire. The local high school, located on the other side of town, is designated as the reception and evacuation centre. Police begin notifying people in the subdivision to leave. The local radio station is contacted and begins to broadcast evacuation instructions.

At the conclusion of the first meeting of the Community Control Group, the town's Business Development Officer, who has been appointed Public Information Coordinator, holds a news conference for local and regional media. He provides a concise account of the incident and the details that are then available, and describes the emergency measures that have been taken.

Casualties from the explosion

have been moved to the hospital, and the firefighters continue to attack the blaze. With the help of crews from neighbouring communities they gradually bring the fire under control during the night. By eleven the next morning the fire is out; by two p.m. the Community Control Group decides the evacuees can return to their homes.

The Community Control Group holds one more meeting to assess the effectiveness of the emergency response procedure. The Chief Administrative Officer is assigned responsibility for reporting on the way the emergency was handled and for recommending improvements in the emergency plan. The Operations Centre is disbanded, the mayor officially declares that the emergency has ended, and informs the Solicitor General. Trillium begins the process of cleaning up the mess.

The real world

That's the way it's *supposed* to work; unfortunately, Trillium exists only in the mind. But the lessons to be drawn from the Great Trillium Conflagration can be put to use in describing how an emergency plan works in the real world. Trillium, for example, demonstrates :

- how a community might learn about an emergency, procedures for assembling the Community Control Group and notifying the public;
- the procedure for declaring an emergency;
- the importance of arrangements for getting help from neighbouring

communities and other levels of government:

- how to manage the operations centre and the information centre;
- typical arrangements for ensuring public safety through medical assistance, evacuation and emergency shelter;
- how and when to resolve the emergency and return people to their homes;
- the process of reporting the effects of the emergency to senior levels of government;
- post-emergency assessments, which can also include recovering the costs, rehabilitation of the affected area, and fixing any shortcomings in emergency response procedures.

Notification procedures

The first responders to an emergency will almost always be community agencies — usually, police, fire or ambulance services. The community emergency plan and emergency training for these agencies should clearly indicate who to notify when an emergency begins to develop. The plan should also provide a method for notification and assembly of the Community Control Group, and establishment of an operations centre, including a communications centre and an information centre. If an emergency is declared, notify the Ministry of the Solicitor General & Correctional Services immediately.

During office hours you can reach Emergency Measures Ontario at (416) 314-3723, or through the OPP. At night or on weekends,

you can reach Emergency Measures Ontario through the OPP Duty Officer at (416) 314-0751.

Emergency Measures Ontario will co-ordinate the response of provincial agencies, and help arrange for additional material and human resources as needed.

Site management

The Operations Centre is not located at the site of the emergency, and the Community Control Group is not responsible for managing the emergency site itself. In fact one of the first actions of the Community Control Group is to appoint an Emergency Site Manager who is responsible for co-ordinating all of the activities of the emergency response team at the site.

The Emergency Site Manager is usually appointed from one of the lead agencies responding to the emergency, usually a senior officer of the police force or the fire department, although other officials may be named depending on the nature of the emergency. Once the Site Manager is appointed, he or she is responsible for directing the activities of all agencies at the scene, and should be relieved of all other responsibilities.

The Emergency Site Manager's first action should be to isolate the emergency site. Normally it is necessary to establish an outer perimeter and an inner perimeter. Access to the outer perimeter is restricted to the emergency response team and others — the media, for example — with a specific function to perform.

Remember that some emergencies are prolonged, meaning that workers must be organized in shifts. Guard against the tendency to burn out everyone in the first 12 to 24 hours of an emergency.

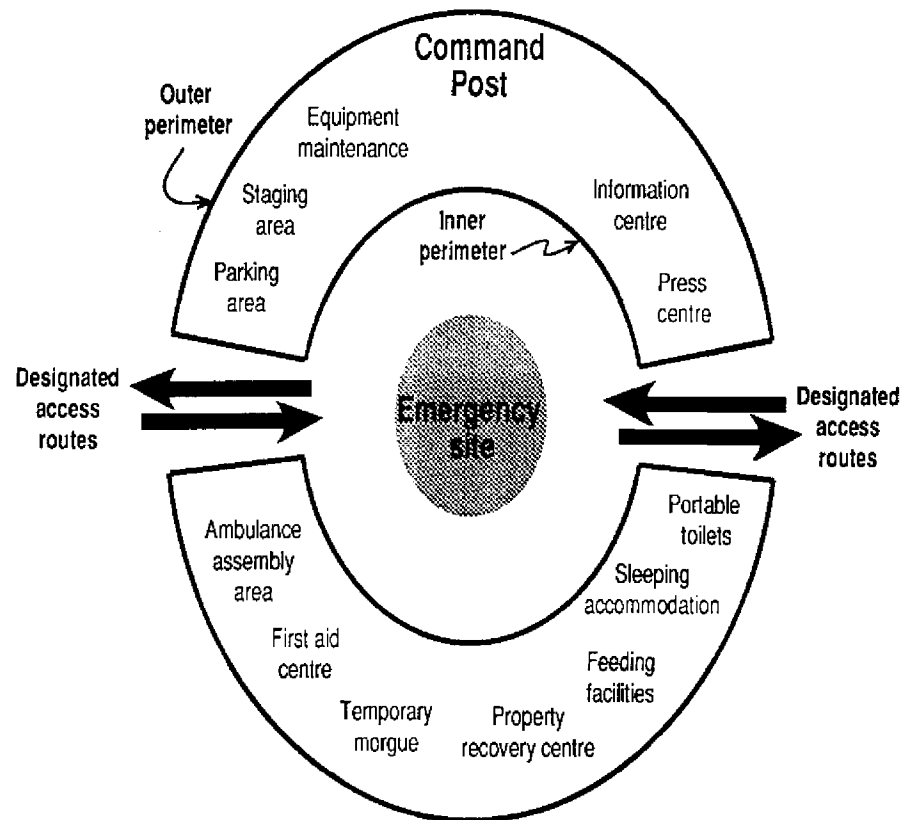
In the event of a protracted emergency the outer perimeter should include staging areas for equipment and vehicles, rest areas for emergency workers, facilities for feeding workers, communications equipment, a treatment area, and whatever other facilities may be necessary.

Within the outer perimeter an inner perimeter should be established around the actual site of the emergency, with access limited to those directly involved in dealing with the emergency. The Site Manager should also establish routes for traffic moving into and out of the site. The map on the next page illustrates a typical emergency site plan.

The emergency site must be thoroughly searched for survivors and/or casualties, and to fully assess the damage. It is also necessary to look for secondary effects of the emergency — spills of dangerous goods resulting from a tornado, for example.

The Site Manager is responsible for all activity at the site, for ensuring that accurate information is passed along to the Community Control Group, and for determining the best method of dealing with the emergency. Often this involves determining what the aim of the emergency response team should be: to attempt to contain the emergency, or to

EMERGENCY SITE LAYOUT



wait for it to pass, and clean up the mess afterward.

The Site Manager should also have the authority to allocate resources at the site, and to request additional resources — more heavy equipment, perhaps, or additional firefighters — if necessary. The Community Control Group is responsible for finding those resources and making them available to the Site Manager.

The following are some of the responsibilities of the Site Manager. Note that many of them must be discharged simultaneously.

- ensure access to the site is limited to essential personnel, and that the site is appropriately organized
- establish and maintain communications
- decide what is the *aim* of the emergency response. (Can the problem be solved, or should you allow the event to run its course and simply act to preserve life or property? Do you fight the emergency, or flee from it?)
- define priorities, because resources are limited. In doing this, it is helpful to remember what the aim is.
- administration and logistics — food, fuel, sanitation, rest areas, etc.
- acquire information about the emergency and the actions which are being taken to bring it under control, and make sure that information is disseminated to the appropriate agencies
- establish a meeting and briefing cycle where all agencies involved

with the site operations meet to exchange information, make decisions and ensure all information is disseminated.

- establish and maintain communications. ensure that information flows from the site to the EOC, and direction from the EOC is transmitted to the site.
- learn what resources are available within the community and from other sources
- maintain a reserve of resources and manpower to deal with the unexpected
- arrange shifts, and ensure rest schedules are enforced in a protracted operation.

Duties of the Community Control Group

The Head of Council, in consultation with the Community Control Group, is responsible for making the decision to declare an emergency, and to terminate it once it is safe to do so. The Community Control Group must also provide ongoing services to the parts of the community which have not been affected by the emergency. (Just because many of the police are occupied with an emergency at the north end of town, burglars should not have carte blanche at the south end!)

It also must find the resources which have been requested by the Emergency Site Manager. This might be equipment, or might be workers to fill sandbags, or second and third shifts to relieve police, fire and

ambulance workers at the site. It could also be hot meals for the site workers.

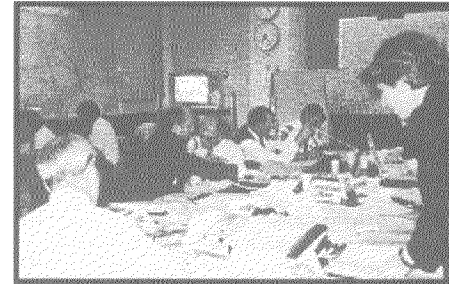
The Community Control Group must also make decisions which affect the health and safety of the citizens. Should the evacuation area be widened? Should the electricity or natural gas be turned off? Is the water supply safe, or must water be brought from another source.

In an emergency such as a tornado which causes wide-spread damage to homes and businesses, the Community Control Group must look ahead to the restoration phase — returning life to normal. This might include assembling insurance representatives, welfare and unemployment insurance counselors, etc to assist the public. Long term accommodation — trailers, perhaps — must be provided for those who have lost their homes.

The Community Control Group should also keep accurate logs of the decisions it has made, and the money it has spent. These are crucial after the emergency if legal action arises, or cost recovery action must be taken

Managing the Operations Centre

The Community Control Group is responsible for directing the emergency agencies, for longer-range planning, and for activities away from the emergency site. For example, if homes are destroyed, it is the Community Control Group that will be responsible for finding accommodation for the evacuees.



The Emergency Operations Centre must contain all the facilities the Community Control Group will need. Your emergency plan should designate the site of the operations centre and an alternate site. In an emergency, admission to the operations centre is limited to members of the Community Control Group and their staff.