

**EXERCISE ICE COLD**

**AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EXERCISE**

**2018**

**FOR THE**

**COUNTY OF WELLINGTON AND MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES**



Prepared July 18, 2018

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

## **Executive Summary:**

On May 16 and 17, 2018, members of the Municipal Emergency Control Groups (MECG), their alternates and support staff for the County of Wellington, and member municipalities of Centre Wellington, Erin, Guelph/Eramosa, Mapleton, Minto, Puslinch and Wellington North participated in Exercise Ice Cold.

Exercise Ice Cold was a functional exercise held in real time that required members to respond to messages/inputs from a variety of communication sources. The exercise was a functional exercise using a variety of communication devices internally and amongst municipalities to provide a virtual EOC operation across the County.

There were three main objectives of the exercise

- I. to conduct emergency notification drills,
- II. test the variety of communication tools/devices available, and
- III. to test the IMS response system for their EOCs.

There were many observations and recommendations from the exercise but the main ones seem to involve the proper set up and use of the EM1 channel on the radio system, access and proper use of the Common Operating Picture, and the complexity and duplication of information on the IMS forms. Along with these observations, there were recommendations to include proper written procedures and to provide additional training for staff.

Several of the noted observation and recommendations will be included in the upcoming 2018 mandatory control group training being held during the summer and early fall months.

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## **Background:**

In accordance with the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O., 1990, the County of Wellington and Member Municipalities conducted an exercise as required by Regulation 380/04 Section 12 (6) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

## **Exercise Overview:**

On May 16-17, 2018, the County of Wellington and Member Municipalities jointly held an Operations based – Functional exercise. Exercise Ice Cold was held over one and half days in real time. Municipal Emergency Control Group members, their alternates and support staff participated in the exercise.

In 2017, a discussion based – workshop exercise was held in June and November for the County and Member Municipal Emergency Control Groups. The purpose of the exercise was to encourage members to apply their specific IMS functions based upon specific training provided. The exercise encouraged members to use specific IMS forms for an EOC and to practice using the forms applicable to their roles.

Exercise Ice Cold built on the exercise and training from 2017 and applied in a virtual EOC situation with all municipalities operating from their own municipalities. The exercise also involved a communication component.

## **The Scenario:**

The scenario was a spring storm event including freezing rain and snow. Severe weather events (winter and summer) are on all municipal Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments as a high community risk with the potential to require a complex municipal emergency response.

The amount of inputs and requirement for regular circulation of briefings was extensive and took more time than staff was prepared for. Stretching over two days was difficult to manage while balancing regular operations yet the functional exercise provided a real time practiced response for many municipal staff who have not had the experience of a major community emergency in recent years.

Using multiple methods of messaging (BBM/Cell/Email) created some confusion when trying to disseminate and track the updates.

## **Exercise Objectives:**

The following objectives were identified for Exercise Ice Cold.

1. **Control Group Notification procedures and Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Activation Procedures** – Member Municipalities were encouraged to implement their emergency notification procedures as set out in Section 4 of the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and Addendum 1 of the Emergency Operation Centre Procedures.
2. **Test telecommunications systems and procedures** – Teleconferencing, telephones, faxes, radios, emails, and BBM were the forms of communication used and tested during Exercise Ice Cold. Section 8.1 of the ERP identifies the Telecommunications Plan for emergency response.
3. **Test Incident Management System (IMS) functions** – Section 7 of the ERP contains policies for the use of the Incident Management System. In addition to the establishment of specific IMS functions, the exercise encouraged the establishment of a planning cycle including the creation of Incident Action Plans and Incident Status Summaries. Exercise Ice Cold was developed and implemented to test the use of specific IMS documentation rather than the overall response to a situation. The following forms were used during the exercise.
  - i. EOC Check-in-list
  - ii. Incident Briefing (IMS 201)
  - iii. Incident Action Plan (IMS 1001)
  - iv. Incident Status Summary (IMS 209-G)

## **Observations and Recommendations:**

The following observations and recommendations were received from the individual municipal debriefs and compiled into an overall exercise evaluation synopsis.

### **Emergency Notifications:**

Some municipalities noted changes to their notification call out procedures which will be reviewed and updated.

Notification lists among members was not consistent. Most up-to-date version should be contained in the EOC procedures. This point will be reviewed and discussed during Control Group Training sessions.

### **Telecommunication Systems:**

Some observed that using multiple methods of messaging (BBM/Cell/Email) created some confusion when trying to disseminate and track the updates. Some municipalities have made decisions on which form of communication they will use internally for local emergencies.

## **1. Radios**

- a. Portable Radios are not typically used by Administrative staff and it would be helpful to arrange a training session with Fire Services. It was also suggested that operational instructions be created. The mandatory Control Group Training will include a training component on the use of the County Radios (Portables and Mobiles) using the EM1 channel. Procedures have been developed and are included in the EOC Procedures for each municipality.
- b. It was suggested that more inputs using the radio communications would have been helpful to better understand the functionality of the units.

## **2. Common Operating Picture:**

- a. The Common Operating Picture (COP) yielded an error message when being loaded by some users. County GIS staff found restarting the computer displaying the error resolved the issue.
- b. Many control group members did not have their log-in credentials for the Common Operating Picture (COP). There is a section in the EOC Procedures that contains the log-in information and credentials. This will be re-affirmed during the Control Group Training.
- c. It was recommended that the procedures also identify who is able to edit the COP and how to access the resource during an emergency.

## **3. Telephone Systems:**

- a. Some EOC main phone lines were not active when called. EOC Procedures should include information as to the active telephone numbers available and these lines should be tested at least annually. Emergency Management Staff will ensure equipment in the EOCs is tested when updating supplies and documentation or at least annually.

## **Incident Management System:**

### **1. IMS Forms:**

- a. Fillable PDF forms were created for use during the exercise. However, the forms did not always work properly and several municipalities requested word versions instead.
- b. Some of the information contained in the IMS forms were repetitive. A better understanding of the purpose of each form is requested. More training required on how to complete and formatting is required. Additional training is planned for the mandatory Control Group Training in 2018. Specific training for users of the forms should be scheduled for 2019.
- c. Request for a central electronic location to access forms. The County EM Division is in the process of exploring options for an EOC software solution that could be accessed by all municipalities and could act as repository for this type of information.

- d. Some found that the IMS forms were extensive and time consuming to complete. There were noted differences between status reports circulated from County. Would like to have seen more cross-communication between municipalities and the County.

#### **4. IMS Roles/Responsibilities**

- a. Additional dedicated staff is needed to fill roles in the Planning section for Scribes, Duty Officers and documentation/completion of IMS Forms. More training for the Planning Section functions is necessary.
- b. For the purposes of IMS some municipalities observed that having all control group members representing operations for the municipality was not feasible or functional. Moving forward, certain Control Group members may serve a specific role to represent the Operations Section in the EOC. They will serve as each others back-up during emergencies so some cross training may be necessary.
- c. Some members observed that during such extensive events it is not possible to continue normal day to day activities. Having a suitable back-up to ensure continuity of municipal services is necessary.
- d. Internally, communication amongst the IMS functions/roles were generally good but there needs to be continued improvement in communications amongst all municipalities and particularly in the development and posting of external communications. A major update to the Emergency Response Plan is being considered for later this year and into 2019. The Telecommunications/Emergency Information Section of the plan needs considerable updating. A working group made up of Emergency Information representation from all municipalities will be formed to review and revise the policies in this section of the Plan.

#### **Summary:**

Exercise Ice Cold was a culminating functional exercise, built on the past few years of training and testing to the IMS response set out in the Emergency Response Plan. The exercise as designed and conducted did meet the objectives of the exercise. Many good recommendations were taken from the exercise to improve the response and the tools used to include communication devices, and the forms. Ongoing training is a focus, but the exercise outcomes will assist in targeting specific control group and support staff training in the coming years. It will also form some recommendations to consider as EM staff and municipal emergency management program committees conduct a major review of the Emergency Response Plan beginning at the end of 2018