



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 October 17

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## HEALTH UNIT PARTICIPATES IN MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY EXERCISES

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that Report No. 115-13 re Health Unit Participates in Municipal Emergency Exercises be received for information.*

### **Key Points**

- The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (1990), requires all municipalities to test their emergency response plans by conducting an annual exercise
- On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Middlesex County conducted emergency exercises in Middlesex Centre and Southwest Middlesex
- The Emergency Preparedness Protocol in the Ontario Public Health Standards also requires Health Units to exercise at least once annually all or some components of their emergency response plans
- In June 2013, the Health Unit's emergency exercise tested the assigned staff in alternate positions on the Incident Management Team in a "Heat Alert" scenario

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (1990), requires all municipalities to test their emergency response plans by conducting an annual exercise. The Emergency Preparedness Protocol in the Ontario Public Health Standards also requires Health Units to exercise at least once annually all or some components of their emergency response plans.

On September 17, 2013, Middlesex County conducted emergency exercises in Middlesex Centre and Southwest Middlesex. Other municipalities in Middlesex had been tested in rotation over the past few years. Observers and Evaluators came from neighbouring municipalities.

Mayor Al Edmonson (Middlesex Centre) and Mayor Doug Reycraft (Southwest Middlesex) led their municipalities through the "Host Haste" exercise which tested the set-up and decision-making of the Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) and Evacuation/Reception Centres in Ilderton/Komoka and in Glencoe.

The theme of this exercise centered on the possibility of a mass evacuation of First Nation citizens from various communities in the northern parts of Ontario due to raging forest fires. These families were theoretically to arrive within mere hours and thus would need to be sheltered locally for at least five days in this region.

The Medical Officer of Health attended the EOC in Middlesex Centre and the Manager of Emergency Preparedness represented the MOH in Southwest Middlesex. Public Health Nurses and Inspectors attended the Evacuation/Reception Centres to ensure that the health needs of the 'evacuees' were met. Approximately twenty members of the health unit's Community Emergency Response Volunteers (CERV) joined with the full County CERV team and role played as evacuees presenting with various

medical and health needs. Some of the CERV team members assisted with the Registration and Inquiry process as well. In all, the Health Unit was well represented, participated fully and learned some valuable lessons which will be incorporated into the next revision of the Health Unit's Emergency Response Plan.

In June 2013, the Health Unit's emergency exercise tested the assigned staff in alternate positions on the Incident Management Team in a "Heat Alert" scenario. This was also an opportunity for many of the staff to meet and work with the new Medical Officer of Health.

The Health Unit's Manager of Emergency Preparedness is a member of the emergency planning committees in all eight municipalities as well as for Middlesex County itself and a regular member of the County's exercise design team. She also serves the same functional roles on the City of London planning and exercise design committees.

The City of London has planned its annual Emergency Exercise for Thursday, November 14, 2013, and the Health Unit will be active participants in the planning, development and execution.

This report was prepared by Ms. Patricia Simone, Manager of Emergency Preparedness.



Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

**This report addresses** the following requirement(s) of the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines:

The Ontario Public Health Standards – Emergency Preparedness Protocol (requirement #7)