

Toronto East Community Awareness and Emergency Response Association - Overview of Discussions and Next Steps

Date: October 5, 2021

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Acting Fire Chief and General Manager - Emergency Management, Toronto Fire Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to a request from City Council, on May 5 and 6, 2021, that the Director, Office of Emergency Management, meet with the Toronto East Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) Association and local Councillors to establish how the City of Toronto can support the organization. The Director, Office of Emergency Management was asked to provide an update on these discussions to the Economic and Community Development Committee.

The Office of Emergency Management met with the Toronto East CAER and representatives from local Councillors' offices on June 15, 2021 to review the Toronto East CAER's existing risk mitigation and preparedness measures, including its risk communication protocols to inform the public of hazards in the community. The meeting participants also discussed how the City could support and enhance the efforts of the Toronto East CAER.

As a result of the meeting, the Office of Emergency Management worked with the Toronto East CAER and Strategic Communications to develop and implement a communications plan to share information with key partners and the public in advance of the siren system test scheduled for July 24, 2021, including messaging on required protective actions in the event of a chemical emergency. The Office of Emergency Management will use the communications plan for future system tests, and will continue to work with a wide range of community stakeholders to support awareness of, and emergency preparedness for, chemical emergencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Fire Chief and General Manager - Emergency Management, Toronto Fire Services recommends that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 5 and 6, 2021, City Council requested the Director, Office of Emergency Management to meet with representatives of the Community Awareness and Emergency Response Association as well as local City Councillors, to establish how the City of Toronto can assist in supporting the success of the Community Awareness and Emergency Response Association and provide an update on these discussions to Economic and Community Development Committee in the fourth quarter of 2021.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.MM32.21>

COMMENTS

At its meeting on May 5 and 6, 2021, City Council requested the Director, Office of Emergency Management, to meet with representatives of the Toronto East Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) Association and local City Councillors to establish how the City of Toronto can assist in supporting the success of the organization.

The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada developed the CAER program to support their members to cooperate with the local community to develop integrated preparedness and response strategies that address the unique public safety challenges posed by the chemical industry. CAER Associations include members from chemical manufacturers, refiners and supporting distribution facilities, along with local and provincial government agencies such emergency services (fire, police, and paramedics), water treatment plants, public health units and emergency management agencies.

CAER requires member companies to understand the hazards and risks of their operations, then advise and assist the community so that the public is aware and protected. There are two parts to CAER—community awareness and emergency response:

- Community awareness calls for each member company to reach out to the community and involve interested citizens and others in a dialogue process, so concerns can be identified and addressed. A key principle is the public's right to know what's made and used in their community, and what is being done to make sure these materials and processes are being handled safely.

- Emergency response calls for companies and the community to be prepared in the event of an emergency.

There are CAER associations throughout the country, including three associations in Toronto:

- Toronto East CAER
- Toronto West CAER
- Toronto North CAER

The Office of Emergency Management is a long-standing member of all three CAER associations in Toronto, along with Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police Service.

Toronto East CAER is the only group that maintains a siren system to alert residents of potential chemical hazards. Toronto East CAER tests the system three times per year to ensure optimum performance, and increase public awareness of protective actions to take in the event of a chemical emergency.

In advance of these system tests, Toronto East CAER provides messaging and information to the public about what they can expect during the system test using social media and other forms of communication. The Office of Emergency Management amplifies this messaging and provides updates on its own dedicated Twitter channel.

The Office of Emergency Management also provides proactive messaging and information to its partners about upcoming system tests to ensure operational awareness, such as 311, 911, Toronto Paramedic Services, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Police Service, Strategic Communications and the Region of Durham.

On June 15, 2021, staff from the Office of Emergency Management met with the Toronto East CAER and representatives from the local Councillors' offices to discuss ways that the City can continue to support the organization. As a result of the meeting, the Office of Emergency Management worked with the Toronto East CAER and Strategic Communications to develop a formal communications plan to share information with key partners and the public in advance of the siren system test scheduled for July 24, 2021, including messaging on required protective actions in event of a chemical emergency.

The plan, which will be used ahead of all future tests, includes the following actions:

- distributing a media release to inform the public of hazards in the community and the risk mitigation and preparedness measures in place, as well as the details of the siren system test;
- working with the Toronto East CAER to expand communications and update the siren system test flyer;
- alerting 311 and 911 with regard to the siren system test, including providing messaging for members of the public who may call in because of the system test;
- posting signs along Coronation Drive and Manse Road;
- expanding the social media strategy to include the Toronto East CAER Facebook and Twitter channels, City of Toronto Twitter channel, Office of Emergency Management Twitter channel; and Toronto Police Service Twitter channel;

- providing messaging through Toronto East CAER to the surrounding Community Associations;
- communicating the details of the siren system test and communications plan to Councillors whose wards may be affected by the system test;
- communicating with the City's Emergency Services, Metrolinx (Rouge and Guildwood Go Train Stations) and Rouge National Urban Park (Rouge Beach); and,
- providing media support through Strategic Communications.

The Office of Emergency Management is already working with Toronto East CAER in preparation of the next siren testing in October 2021 and will continue to work with CAER Associations across Toronto to support their work on both community awareness and emergency response for chemical emergencies.

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SIGNATURE

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