

City of Toronto

Base Emergency Response Plan

Version 1.0

2025

Toronto Emergency Management
www.toronto.ca/oem

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Revision History

<i>Date</i>	<i>Revision Summary</i>	<i>Version No.</i>	<i>Revised by</i>	<i>Approved by</i>
<i>May 2005 – September 2024 (annually)</i>	Annual review and revisions of the City's Emergency Management Plan, as per Chapter 59	n/a	TEM	TEMPC
<i>October 2025</i>	New Base Emergency Response Plan that incorporates lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies, as per Chapter 59	Version 1	TEM	TEMPC

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CEMC	Community Emergency Management Coordinator
DAC	Divisions, Agencies, and Corporations
DOC	Divisional Operations Centre
DRAO	Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EIO	Emergency Information Officer
EMCPA	Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act
EMO	Emergency Management Ontario
EMWG	Emergency Management Working Group
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
HIRA	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
IMS	Incident Management System
IMT	Incident Management Team
MDRA	Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance
PEOC	Provincial Emergency Operations Centre
TEM	Toronto Emergency Management
TEMPC	Toronto Emergency Management Program Committee
TEOC	Toronto Emergency Operations Centre

Section 1: Introduction

Toronto is Canada’s largest municipality, home to approximately three million residents¹ across 158 distinct neighbourhoods², distributed among 25 municipal wards³, each with its own unique characteristics and needs.

As the country’s most populous and diverse urban centre, Toronto faces a broad spectrum of natural, human-caused, and technological hazards. These risks highlight the need for a clear and adaptable approach to emergency response — one that prioritizes life safety, public health and well-being, infrastructure and environmental protection, and the continuity of social and economic systems.

1.1 Purpose

Toronto Emergency Management (TEM) developed the Base Emergency Response Plan (Base Plan) to outline how the City of Toronto (the City) responds to an emergency impacting Toronto. The Base Plan provides a strategic, all-hazards framework to guide coordinated municipal action.

The Base Plan supports a timely, coordinated response across the City’s divisions, agencies, and corporations (DACs) and fosters collaboration with other levels of government and external stakeholders who play critical roles in emergency response. This integration is guided by strategic oversight from the Emergency Control Group and enabled through operational coordination at the Toronto Emergency Operations Centre (TEOC).

The Base Plan is designed to be read and understood prior to an emergency and serves as a reference for:

- City DACs
- elected officials
- other levels of government and external stakeholders seeking to understand Toronto’s emergency response and recovery processes

The [*Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act \(EMCPA\)*](#) defines an emergency as:

“a situation or an impending situation that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk, an accident or an act whether intentional or otherwise”

¹ [Toronto at a Glance, 2022](#)

² [City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles](#)

³ [Ward Profiles – City of Toronto](#)

1.2 Scope

The table below outlines the characteristics and conditions addressed by the Base Plan.

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>lead time</i>	covers emergencies with varying degrees of warning—from sudden, no-notice incidents to those with a defined period for preparation
<i>rate of progression</i>	emergencies that evolve at different speeds—from fast-moving incidents (e.g., explosions, flash floods) to slow-developing situations (e.g., pandemics, droughts, civil unrest)
<i>risk</i>	significant threats to life safety, public health and well-being, infrastructure, the environment, and the continuity of social and economic systems
<i>complexity</i>	situations requiring multi-DAC coordination, cross-jurisdictional support, or specialized resources beyond routine operations
<i>impacts</i>	potential for casualties, displacement, infrastructure damage, environmental harm, economic disruption, or strain on support systems
<i>hazards</i>	all-hazards approach includes emergencies and major events, which are planned, large-scale activities that may pose significant risks or disrupt normal operations (e.g., large public gatherings, high-profile entertainment or sporting events, demonstrations)
<i>integration with other plans</i>	interfaces with DAC emergency response and business continuity plans (BCPs) to ensure coordinated action
<i>jurisdictional boundaries</i>	a municipal coordination aligned with but not governing provincial or federal emergency operations, complements broader emergency frameworks
<i>response</i>	focus on the response and initial recovery of an emergency, mitigation, prevention, preparedness and long-term recovery addressed through other municipal strategies and plans

Section 2: Plan Administration

Effective administration of the Base Plan ensures that emergency response in Toronto is well-structured and strategically aligned across DACs, other levels of government and external stakeholders. This section outlines the elements that support the Base Plan’s lifecycle — including governance, version control, roles in maintenance, and mechanisms for review and improvement.

2.1 Authorities

The Base Plan is grounded in a robust legal and regulatory foundation that empowers the City of Toronto to prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency. The following instruments govern its development, implementation, and maintenance.

2.1.1 Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act

The [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) (EMCPA) is Ontario’s primary legislation for emergency management. It mandates that each municipality implement a comprehensive emergency management program, including:

- an emergency plan, adopted by by-law, that governs the provision of services and emergency response procedures
- training programs and exercises for emergency response staff
- public education on local hazards and preparedness
- hazard and risk assessment and infrastructure identification
- any other elements required by provincial standards

2.1.2 Ontario Regulation 380/04

Under the EMCPA, [Ontario Regulation 380/04](#) (O. Reg. 380/04) sets out the standards that Ontario municipalities and provincial ministries must meet to ensure effective emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

As required by the regulation, municipalities must:

- designate a Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC)
- establish an emergency management program committee
- form an emergency control group
- maintain an emergency operations centre
- appoint an Emergency Information Officer (EIO)
- develop and maintain an emergency response plan
- conduct annual training and exercises for the emergency control group
- ensure 24/7 notification procedures are in place
- identify and assess hazards and risks
- conduct public education and awareness activities
- review and update the emergency management program annually

Designated Roles under O. Reg. 380/04

The City has designated the Executive Director of TEM as the primary CEMC. This role is supported by a team of designated alternate CEMCs, including directors and managers within TEM.

The City has designated the City’s Chief Communications Officer as the EIO.

These requirements establish the minimum compliance standards. Municipalities may choose to exceed these standards to further strengthen their emergency management programs and enhance community resilience.

2.1.3 Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 59, Emergency Management

[Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 59, Emergency Management](#) (Chapter 59) of the Toronto Municipal Code formally adopts Toronto’s emergency management program, including the Base Plan. It enables expedited decision-making during emergencies and delegates Council’s authority to the Toronto Emergency Management Program Committee (TEMPC) to update and revise program components.

TEMPC is the leadership body for emergency management and includes senior city officials and representatives from appropriate DACs, such as Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Public Health. TEMPC provides strategic oversight of the emergency management program. The full membership is outlined in Chapter 59 of the Toronto Municipal Code.

Under Chapter 59, TEMPC designates staff to serve on the Emergency Management Working Group (EMWG), a subordinate, management-level group focused on operational planning and preparedness. It is composed of representatives from DACs with mandates related to emergency response, such as Toronto Water and Toronto Shelter and Support Services.

The EMWG supports the coordination of preparedness activities, shares DAC perspectives, and contributes to the development and implementation of emergency management initiatives.

To support specific planning efforts, the EMWG may establish subordinate sub-groups or networks composed of subject matter experts and leads from DACs, other levels of government, and external stakeholders. These sub-groups focus on specialized areas of emergency management and report to the EMWG (see sidebar).

Under the direction of TEMPC, TEM oversees and coordinates the City’s emergency management program, including the Base Plan and annexes.

Chapter 59 is enacted under the authority of the EMCPA, which mandates that Ontario municipalities establish emergency management programs through by-law. This provision forms the legal foundation for Toronto’s emergency management framework and ensures alignment with provincial standards.

Sample EMWG sub-groups

Hazard-Specific Working Groups: support the development and maintenance of hazard-specific annexes; examples include the Flooding Working Group and Extreme Winter Weather Working Group

Emergency Risk Communications Network: coordinates public information strategies and messaging during an emergency

2.1.4 Business Continuity Management Policy

The City's Business Continuity Management Policy establishes the governance framework that enables the organization to maintain the delivery of critical services within an acceptable time frame during a disruption.

This Policy sets compliance requirements, defines roles and responsibilities, and provides a mechanism for regular program review to ensure that business continuity management and planning is coordinated and standardized across City divisions. It is supported by the Business Continuity Steering Committee, which provides strategic oversight, and Business Continuity Working Group, with focuses on operational planning and implementation.

The Policy applies exclusively to City divisions and does not currently extend to agencies and corporations. However, agencies and corporations are welcomed to adopt the Policy as a best practice. They may also be required to comply with sector-specific standards for business continuity planning.

The Policy incorporates best practices from the EMCPA, ISO 22301, and CSA Z1600 and was approved by TEMPC in accordance with Chapter 59.

Under the Policy, City divisions must develop and maintain business continuity plans (BCPs) for critical business processes. BCPs provide guidance, strategies and recovery actions to respond to and recover from disruptive events, strengthening the City's overall resilience.

The Base Emergency Response Plan provides the framework for responding to emergencies, while the Business Continuity Management Policy establishes the direction for maintaining and restoring critical services during and after disruptions. Together, these documents create an integrated approach to resilience.

2.2 Plan Structure

The City's Emergency Response Plan (the Plan) is comprised of the Base Plan, Functional Annexes, Hazard Annexes, and Support Annexes. All these combined make up the Plan. [Figure 1](#) illustrates how the components fit together to form the overall Emergency Response Plan and identifies the approval authority for each component.

2.2.1 Base Plan

The Base Plan is the City's strategic, all-hazards framework for managing emergencies. It establishes the legal and administrative foundations for emergency response, defines the City's emergency response structure, outlines decision-making authorities, the concept of operations to support coordination, escalation, notifications, and scaling down.

2.2.2 Annexes

Annexes offer detailed guidance on specific emergency response functions, hazard responses, and other supporting information relevant to the Base Plan.

2.2.2.1 Functional Annexes

Functional Annexes (previously referred to as Emergency Support Functions) describe common emergency response functions, such as evacuation or debris management. These annexes support the Base Plan but can be referenced independently. They outline the roles, responsibilities, and actions of relevant DACs.

2.2.2.2 Hazard Annexes

Hazard Annexes address the unique risks and response requirements of individual hazards such as nuclear, flooding, and extreme heat. These are informed by the City's Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA). Like Functional Annexes, they support the Base Plan but can be referenced independently. Not all hazards will have a dedicated Hazard Annex; these annexes are developed based on the complexity, impact and need for specialized response planning.

2.2.2.3 Support Annexes

Support Annexes serve as essential supplements to the Base Plan, providing detailed guidance, specialized procedures, and protocols that enhance the overall understanding and implementation of emergency response measures.

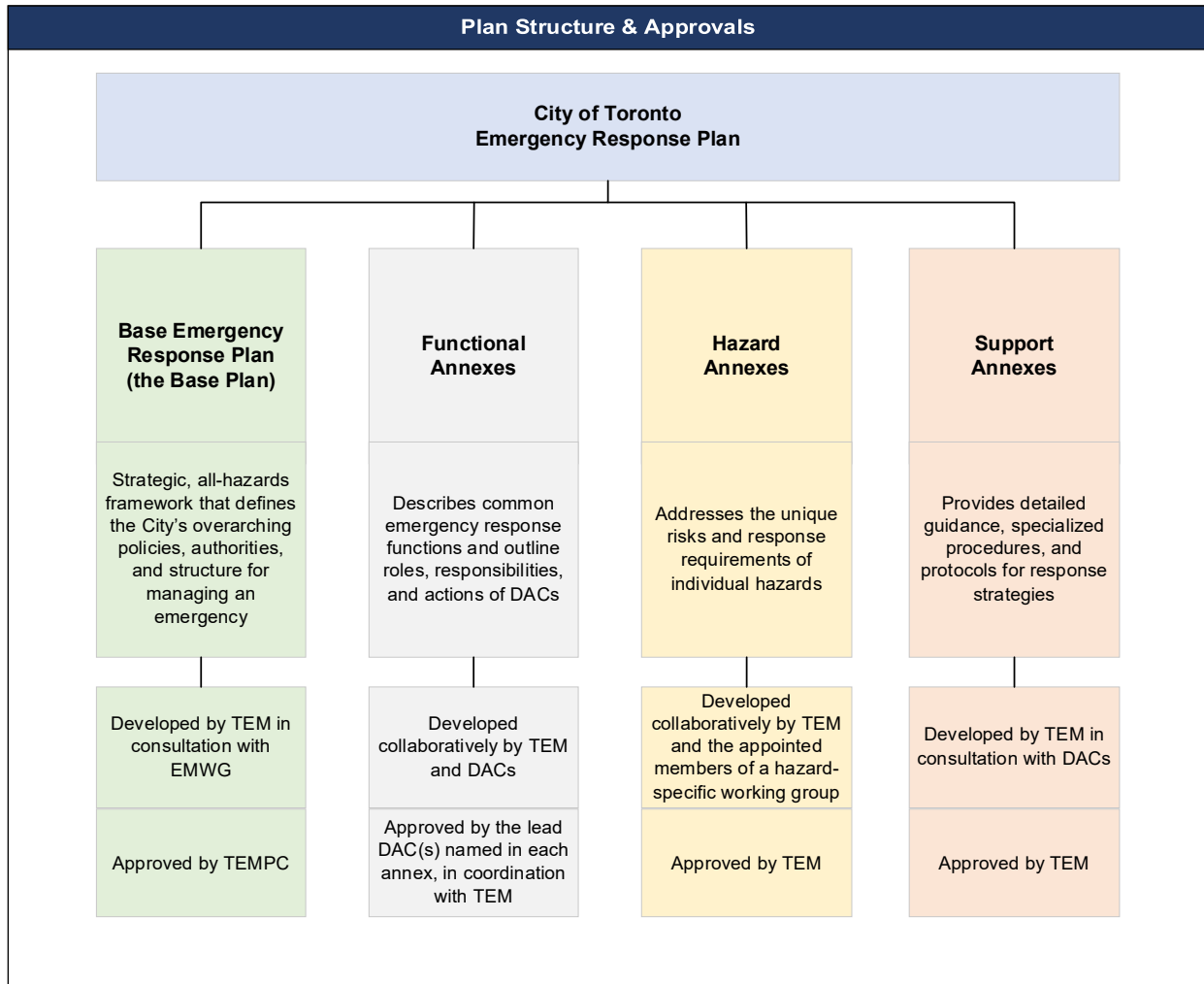


Figure 1. components of the Emergency Response Plan and the approval authorities

2.3 Maintenance and Distribution

TEM reviews and updates the Base Plan at least annually and makes additional revisions as needed following significant emergency responses, such as those classified as Level 4 (see [Section 4.2. Response Levels](#)).

TEM is responsible for distributing the Emergency Response Plan (which consists of the Base Plan and its annexes) to all TEMPC and EMWG members annually. The Base Plan is also made publicly accessible on the City of Toronto website. TEM will notify TEMPC and EMWG of any updates to the Base Plan or annexes and will distribute updated documents accordingly.

TEM may distribute the Base Plan and relevant annexes with additional DAC staff, other levels of government, and external stakeholders involved in a City response.

As required under the EMCPA, TEM submits a copy of the Base Plan to the Chief, Emergency Management Ontario annually and ensures that the Chief has the most current version.

2.4 Version Control

To maintain clarity and traceability, a structured versioning system⁴ is used for the Base Plan and annexes. TEM manages and updates version numbers as part of the Base Plan revisions. This approach ensures users are referencing the most current guidance and supports transparency in the evolution of emergency management documentation.

- Major revisions — such as changes to structure, roles, or core procedures — result in a new version number (e.g., Version 2.0 → Version 3.0).
- Minor updates — including housekeeping edits, formatting adjustments, or clarifications — result in a decimal update (e.g., Version 2.0 → Version 2.1).

⁴ Prior to 2025, the City's Emergency Management Plan did not have version numbers. Now that the City has transitioned to a new planning structure, version numbers will be incorporated into the Base Plan and annexes going forward.

Section 3: Emergency Response Structure

Toronto's emergency response is structured to support coordinated action across all levels of the organization. Roles are activated based on the characteristics of the emergency, ensuring the appropriate teams are engaged as the situation unfolds. This section describes how leadership, support teams, and frontline responders work together during an emergency. [Figure 3](#) illustrates the overall emergency response structure at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

3.1 Municipal Elected Officials

Municipal elected officials, particularly the Head of Council (the Mayor), have key responsibilities under the EMCPA and Chapter 59. While municipal staff lead the implementation of strategic, operational, and tactical activities, elected officials play an important role in strategic-level decision-making, particularly in areas related to governance, public communication, and intergovernmental coordination.

3.1.1 Mayor

Under the EMCPA, the Head of Council, the Mayor⁵, has the authority to declare a local emergency for the City. While this authority exists under the EMCPA, such a declaration is primarily procedural and communicative in nature. It does not provide the Mayor any additional powers beyond those outlined in Chapter 59.

Declaring an emergency can serve to emphasize the seriousness of a situation and facilitate coordination with other levels of government and external stakeholders. However, it does not create new legal authorities for the Mayor, nor does it suspend existing agreements.

The Mayor may terminate an emergency at any time and should do so when the declaration is no longer required. In addition, under the EMCPA, Council and the Premier of Ontario have the authority to terminate the Mayor's emergency declaration at any time.

Neither the declaration of an emergency nor the exercise of the Mayor's powers under Chapter 59 provides the City with automatic access to funding from provincial or federal governments. Access to such funding typically requires separate applications, agreements, or approvals.⁶

Separately, Chapter 59 delegates Council's authority under the City of Toronto Act to the Mayor for use during an emergency, even if a formal emergency declaration has not been made⁷.

⁵ The Mayor is the Chair of the Emergency Control Group. The Control Group is outlined in [Section 3.2. Emergency Control Group](#).

⁶ For example, Ontario maintains two disaster recovery programs: [Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance \(MDRA\)](#) and [Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians \(DRAO\)](#). Neither program requires a municipality to declare an emergency to be eligible.

- MDRA may be activated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing following a natural disaster. To apply, a municipality must pass a resolution of council and submit an initial claim within 120 calendar days of the event.
- DRAO is activated at the discretion of the Minister and does not require a municipal request. It provides financial assistance directly to affected individuals, small businesses, farms, and not-for-profit organizations.

⁷ This authority is delegated to the Mayor under [Chapter 59, Article 6](#).

This delegation empowers the Mayor to act independently, as a “Council of one”, to take actions and issue orders that are:

- necessary to implement the Emergency Response Plan and
- intended to protect property and safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of individuals in the affected geographic area

The Mayor may only exercise this delegated authority when all conditions outlined in the table below are satisfied.

Condition	Description
timeliness	the authority is needed to address the emergency promptly
effectiveness	the Mayor reasonably believes the action will alleviate harm and is a reasonable alternative to other measures
proportionality	actions must reasonably limit intrusiveness
geographic scope	authority is exercised only in necessary areas of the city
duration	authority is exercised only for as long as reasonably necessary

All actions and decisions taken under this authority must comply with applicable legislation (e.g., EMCPA, City of Toronto Act, and Chapter 59) and remain consistent with the scope and intent of the delegated emergency powers conferred under Chapter 59. There is also a time limit on this delegated authority.

3.1.1.1 Time Limit on Delegated Authority

The Mayor’s delegated authority under Article 6, Chapter 59, is effective for 30 days from the first exercise of that authority. To extend this authority beyond 30 days, Council must authorize the extension. If the 30 days lapses without Council approval of an extension, the delegation of authority ends.

3.1.1.2 Reporting Requirement

Within 30 days of first exercising the delegated authority, the Mayor must submit a report to Council via the Executive Committee that includes:

- justification for having exercised the delegated authority
- outline of actions taken under the delegated authority
- recommendations arising from the emergency

Whether or not an emergency has been declared or the Mayor has exercised their delegated authority, the Mayor must keep Council informed of the City’s response to the emergency (refer to sidebar).

The Mayor also has obligations around notifying key personnel when exercising delegated authority and when declaring or terminating an emergency (see sidebar). These requirements ensure transparency and coordination across the City and with the provincial government.

3.1.2 Council

During an emergency, whether or not an emergency has been formally declared, Councils' legislative authority under the *City of Toronto Act* is complementary to, not displaced by, the delegated powers to the Mayor.

As outlined in [Section 3.1.1. Mayor](#), Council has delegated its authority to the Mayor; however, this delegation is conditional and only applies when specific conditions described are met. If those conditions are not met, responsibility for decision-making remains with Council.

When urgent decisions are needed, Council may convene on short notice under the provisions for emergency meetings, as outlined in [Chapter 27, Council Procedures](#) of the Toronto Municipal Code. Council may be required for strategic and policy level decision-making. Council would not be part of any tactical or operational level decision-making.

3.2 Emergency Control Group

During an emergency TEMPC transitions into the Emergency Control Group (Control Group), which directs the City's strategic coordination efforts. Chaired by the Mayor, the Control Group provides overarching direction to the Toronto Emergency Operations Centre (TEOC) and DACs, ensuring the response aligns with the City's broader goals and adapts to the evolving nature of the emergency.

Not all emergencies will require the Control Group to make decisions or direct response efforts. In many cases, DACs and City staff can manage impacts through existing mandates and authorities. In these situations, the Control Group may still be convened to maintain oversight and situational awareness, even if a full escalation of the City's emergency response structure is not warranted. The City's emergency response levels are described in [Section 4.2. Response Levels](#).

Control Group members may formally request escalation of the City's emergency response level when they identify a need for increased coordination. These requests are considered as part of the escalation process outlined in [Section 4.3. Escalation](#).

Under Chapter 59, the Control Group can take specific actions during an emergency, whether or not an emergency has been formally declared by the Mayor⁸.

⁸ This authority is granted to the Control Group under [Chapter 59, Article 7](#).

Mayor Authority & Notification

Mayor exercises delegated authority: Mayor (through the Toronto Emergency Operations Centre) notifies Council within 24-hours

Mayor declares an emergency: Mayor immediately notifies Council, the Control Group, the provincial minister responsible for emergency management, and the public

Mayor terminates an emergency declaration: Mayor immediately notifies Council, the Control Group, the provincial minister responsible for emergency management, and the public

The responsibilities of the Control Group are outlined in the table below.

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>implement the Plan</i>	initiate, coordinate, direct and implement the Emergency Response Plan and undertake other necessary activities to address the emergency
<i>expend funds</i>	expend funds for the purposes of responding to and recovering from the emergency
<i>secure volunteer support</i>	obtain volunteer support from public agencies and other persons
<i>advise the Mayor</i>	advise the Mayor on using their delegated authority and/or declaring and terminating an emergency
<i>keep Council informed</i>	support the Mayor in updating Council on the progress of the emergency response
<i>liaise with other levels of government</i>	liaise with other levels of government on areas of collaboration, cooperation, and assistance
<i>support resource management</i>	determine if municipal resources are adequate or if further resources are required
<i>designate a spokesperson</i>	ensure that a City spokesperson is appointed to provide a coordinated approach in directing public information activities within an acceptable timeframe

The Control Group operates within the bounds of Council-delegated authority. Decisions must be escalated to Council when they:

- exceed staff's delegated authority (e.g., involve policy changes or by-law amendments)
- involve significant financial commitments beyond pre-approved limits
- affect multiple jurisdictions or require intergovernmental agreements that need Council oversight
- could expose the City to substantial legal, reputational or political risk
- involve matters where public accountability or transparency would warrant Council-level discussion (e.g., changes to public-facing services, civil liberty considerations)

The Control Group may initially meet virtually and determine if further in-person meetings are warranted. The TEOC and City Clerk's Office provides secretariat support to the Control Group.

The membership of the Control Group is outlined in Chapter 59⁹ and summarized in the table below.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Council</i>	Mayor (Chair)
<i>Council</i>	Deputy Mayor
<i>City Manager's Office</i>	City Manager
<i>Development & Growth</i>	Deputy City Manager
<i>Community Development and Social Services</i>	Deputy City Manager
<i>Community and Emergency Services</i>	Deputy City Manager
<i>Corporate Services</i>	Deputy City Manager
<i>Infrastructure Services</i>	Deputy City Manager
<i>Toronto Fire Services</i>	Fire Chief and General Manager
<i>Toronto Paramedic Services</i>	Chief and General Manager
<i>Toronto Public Health</i>	Medical Officer of Health
<i>Strategic Public & Employee Communications</i>	Chief Communications Officer
<i>People and Equity</i>	Chief People Officer
<i>Transportation Services</i>	General Manager
<i>Toronto Water</i>	General Manager
<i>Toronto Shelter and Support Services</i>	General Manager
<i>Legal Services</i>	City Solicitor
<i>Finance and Treasury Services</i>	Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer
<i>Toronto Building</i>	Chief Building Official & Executive Director
<i>Parks and Recreation</i>	General Manager
<i>Solid Waste Management</i>	General Manager

⁹ [Chapter 59, Article 3](#) establishes the Control Group membership.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Position</i>
<i>Corporate Real Estate Management</i>	Executive Director
<i>Technology Services</i>	Chief Technology Officer
<i>Insurance and Risk Management</i>	Director
<i>Toronto Emergency Management</i>	Executive Director
<i>City Clerk's Office</i>	City Clerk
<i>Environment, Climate and Forestry</i>	Executive Director
<i>Engineering and Construction Services</i>	Executive Director
<i>Toronto Police Service</i>	Chief of Police
<i>Toronto Transit Commission</i>	Chief Executive Officer
<i>Toronto and Region Conservation Authority</i>	Chief Executive Officer & Secretary Treasurer
<i>Toronto Hydro</i>	Executive Vice-President

Each Control Group member should have an alternate or designated representative with equivalent decision-making authority, to ensure continuity in the event the primary member is unavailable. TEM maintains a confidential contact list with all primary and alternate members. It is the responsibility of the Control Group member to provide TEM with any updates to representatives.

3.3 Toronto Emergency Operations Centre

The Toronto Emergency Operations Centre (TEOC) is the City's central hub for coordinating emergency response across DACs. It also serves as a key point of contact with other levels of government and external stakeholders.¹⁰

The TEOC translates strategic guidance from senior leadership into practical support for response measures, helping to ensure that resources, information, and decisions flow effectively across the City's emergency response system. It does not replace the command structure at the emergency site or within DACs, nor does it make tactical decisions.

Instead, the TEOC supports and aligns the City's response efforts, ensuring that actions taken at the site and DAC levels are consistent with overall direction.

TEM maintains a primary facility for the TEOC that is fully equipped and ready for activation 24/7. This facility features robust telecommunications equipment, dedicated computing

¹⁰ Other levels of government and external stakeholders may activate their own emergency operations centres (EOCs) in support of the response. City staff may be requested to attend these centres to facilitate inter-organizational coordination.

resources, and large-format, multi-screen displays to support a stable and visible emergency response hub for the City. To ensure continuity of operations, TEM also maintains a back-up location.

The core responsibilities of the TEOC are summarized in the table below.

Responsibility	Description
information management	receive and analyze data to maintain a common operating picture and ensure appropriate documentation
support responders and DACs	support emergency responders at emergency site(s) and enable DACs to manage the broader consequences of the emergency
logistics coordination	anticipate, mobilize and dispatch resources
coordination	coordinate efforts with other levels of government and external stakeholders
business continuity management	support city divisions to ensure their continued delivery of critical services during a disruption within acceptable timeframes
support senior leadership	support strategic decision-making by senior leadership, including providing secretariat support to the Control Group

While the TEOC is capable of continuous operation, staffing levels and the pace of activities are adjusted based on the characteristics of the emergency. For example, during slow-developing or lower risk emergencies, the TEOC may reduce staffing or scale down operations after hours. In these cases, TEM's On-Call Function remains available to DACs for notification of any time-sensitive issues requiring immediate attention.

Advancements in technology and communications infrastructure allow the TEOC to operate in physical, hybrid, or virtual formats (see sidebar). This flexibility ensures continuity of operations when in-person staffing is not feasible or optimal.

The format of TEOC activation may evolve over the course of a response—for example, beginning virtually and transitioning to hybrid or physical as needed.

Types of TEOC activations

Physical: All staff attend the TEOC in-person

Hybrid: Some staff attend the TEOC in-person, others work remotely

Virtual: All staff work remotely

3.3.1 TEOC Director

During an emergency or event that requires the TEOC, the Executive Director of TEM assumes the role of TEOC Director, overseeing operations to support coordinated action across the City. If the TEM Executive Director is unavailable, a TEM Director will assume responsibility as the TEOC Director. The key responsibilities of the TEOC Director are outlined in the table below.

Responsibility	Description
lead the TEOC	oversees TEOC operations, including determining the appropriate activation format (i.e., physical, hybrid, virtual), approving the incident action plan, and directing the staffing and structure of the Incident Management Team (IMT)
liaise with the PEOC	act as the primary liaison between the City and Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC), including notifying the province about an emergency impacting Toronto (see Section 4.4.2. Provincial Notification)
liaise with other municipalities	coordinates with other municipal CEMCs and EOCs to share information and align response efforts
request assistance	requests assistance from other levels of government ¹¹ on behalf of the City when municipal resources are insufficient to support the emergency response, such as the Ontario Corps
brief senior leadership	provides situational updates and status reports to senior leadership
support the Control Group	facilitates communication between the TEOC and Control Group, ensuring the flow of accurate and timely information to support strategic decision-making

¹¹ Any request for additional support or assistance must be directed to the PEOC, in alignment with Ontario's emergency management protocols. The PEOC assesses the situation and determines the appropriate level of engagement, including whether escalation to the federal government is warranted. The City of Toronto does not request support directly from the federal government. For more information, see [Public Safety Canada's Requests for federal assistance](#) webpage.

3.3.2 Incident Management Team

The TEOC is organized using the Incident Management System (IMS), as outlined in Ontario’s [Incident Management System \(IMS\) Guidance: Version 2.0](#) (refer to sidebar). IMS is a best practice that the City has adopted and implements during responses.

The Incident Management Team (IMT) refers to the staffing structure of the TEOC. Composed of City staff and other representatives, this team is responsible for carrying out the TEOC’s core responsibilities as outlined in [Section 3.3. Toronto Emergency Operations Centre](#). The IMT is led by the TEOC Director.

The IMT structure is scalable and flexible, allowing staffing levels to be adjusted based on the characteristics of the emergency. The team typically includes:

- TEM staff, who are always part of the IMT and take on key leadership roles (e.g., IMT Manager, Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief)
- additional representatives from other DACs (it is the responsibility of the DAC to provide an appropriate representative)
- other levels of government and external stakeholders who may be requested to join the IMT for coordination purposes

Incident Management System (IMS)

IMS provides a standard structure for coordinating the response to an emergency, built on the principles of *communication, coordination, collaboration* and *flexibility*.

It defines key function roles – such as Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration to support effective management of personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures and communications

[Figure 2](#) illustrates the IMS sections that the TEOC may activate during a response: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance & Administration. The activation of specific sections is dependent on the needs of the emergency.

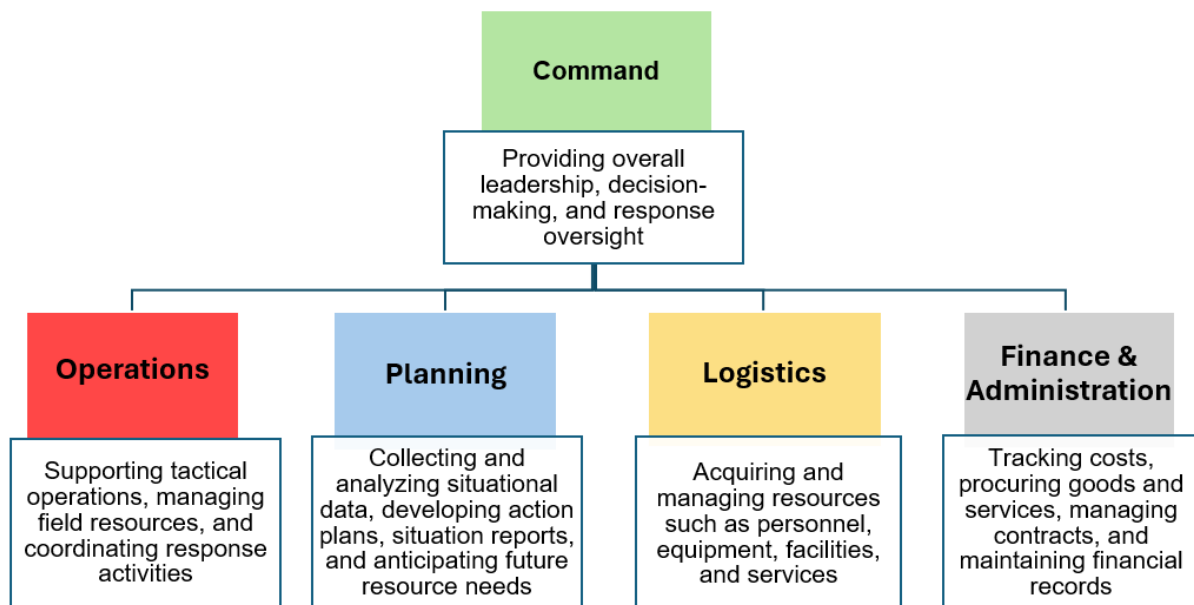


Figure 2. IMS structure in the TEOC

3.3.3 Mission and Priorities

When activated, the TEOC's mission remains consistent for any type of emergency or major event (refer to sidebar).

The TEOC supports the continuity of critical services, facilitates coordination across DACs, and serves as a key liaison with other levels of government and external stakeholders.

TEOC Mission

The TEOC coordinates the City of Toronto's response to and recovery from emergencies and major events

During a response, multiple, and sometimes competing priorities may emerge. To address these effectively, the TEOC focuses on the following priorities:

1. life safety – protecting emergency responders and the public, including saving lives and preventing injury
2. incident stabilization – minimize, contain, reduce the impacts of the hazard
3. public health and well-being – support access to food, water, and shelter to maintain health and safety
4. infrastructure and environment – protecting critical infrastructure and natural resources
5. continuity and recovery of critical services – minimizing operational, social and economic disruption

3.4 Divisions, Agencies and Corporations

The City is comprised of Divisions, Agencies, and Corporations (DACs), each with distinct emergency management responsibilities aligned with their existing mandates.

While DACs routinely collaborate to manage hazards and major events, their day-to-day operations are governed by existing standards, policies, processes, and procedures.

The Base Plan supplements these practices when elevated coordination is required. It does not replace DAC-specific plans but provides a framework for integrating efforts across the municipality.

During an emergency, DACs play a critical role in managing response efforts within their areas of responsibility.

As part of preparedness, DACs are expected to maintain a high level of emergency readiness by:

- developing and updating internal emergency response plans
- training staff in emergency procedures
- conducting exercises to validate plans and build response capacity

The table below summarizes the key responsibilities that DACs are expected to perform when the TEOC is activated.

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>activate plans</i>	activate internal emergency response and business continuity plans
<i>support response</i>	tailor response measures to the characteristics of the emergency
<i>mutual assistance</i>	initiate mutual assistance agreements for additional support, or escalate requests for support from other levels of government or to the TEOC
<i>subject matter expertise</i>	provide subject matter expertise and leadership in their areas of responsibility
<i>assign staff</i>	assign staff to the TEOC, other DAC EOCs, site-level facilities, and community facilities to provide subject matter expertise and decision-making ability
<i>situational awareness</i>	maintain situational awareness and report to the TEOC, Control Group, and Elected Officials (as required)
<i>communication</i>	support public and employee communications and to Elected Officials (as required)
<i>coordination</i>	coordinate with DACs, counterparts in other levels of government, and external stakeholders to ensure an effective response

3.4.1 DAC response structures

DACs implement a range of response structures depending on their mandate, resources, and the characteristics of the emergency, as summarized in the table below.

Structure	Description
site facilities	DACs may activate tactical response structures at or near the emergency site, such as an Incident Command Post to manage direct, on-the-ground response activities
community support facilities	DACs may establish facilities beyond the immediate impact zone to support emergency responders and affected populations; these could include an Emergency Reception Centre, Emergency Information Centre, or Family and Friends Assistance Centre
internal EOCs	DACs may activate an internal EOC to coordinate their response efforts and serve as a liaison between site-level and community support facilities and the TEOC, some DACs may refer to their EOC as a Divisional Operations Centre (DOC)
alternative models	DACs without an EOC may manage emergency response through existing organizational structures using internal processes and leadership appropriate to their mandate and level of involvement



Figure 3. emergency response structure at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels

DACs may activate their response structures independently of TEOC activation. Likewise, activation of the TEOC does not automatically require DACs to activate their own response structures. If a DAC EOC is activating independently of the TEOC, they may inform TEM to provide awareness.

DACs may also continue operating their response structures even after the TEOC has been deactivated, particularly if localized or DAC response needs persist.

Some DACs operate from dedicated internal EOCs, distinct from their regular operations centres, to manage localized response and coordination. DACs without dedicated EOCs utilize their operations centres to fulfill the functions of an EOC during emergency responses.

The following DACs currently maintain internal EOC functionalities:

- Corporate Real Estate Management
- Office of the Chief Information Security Officer
- Seniors Services and Long-Term Care
- Technology Services
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Hydro
- Toronto Paramedic Services
- Toronto Parking Authority
- Toronto Police Service
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto Shelters and Support Services
- Toronto Transit Commission
- Toronto Water
- Transportation Services
- Exhibition Place

Since DACs may rely on one another during emergency responses, each DAC's business continuity plan or internal response plans should identify and address any interdependencies to ensure coordinated and resilient operations.

Example Site-level response structures

Incident Command Post: physical location initiated on-scene or near the site of the emergency and is responsible for primary site command functions and can oversee multiple jurisdictions and/or organizations related to the emergency

Event Command Centre: physical location at or near the site of a large scale planned event to perform site command functions

Examples Community Support Facilities

Emergency Reception Centre: temporary facility established to provide critical Emergency Social Services to individuals and families who have been displaced due to an emergency

Emergency Information Centre: facility specifically designated and equipped to gather and issue emergency information

Joint-Emergency Information Centre: facility for multiple DACs to operate out of to coordinate emergency information

Family and Friends Assistance Centre: a secure and centrally located facility for family members and friends of persons impacted by a mass victimization incident to obtain information and a range of support services

Section 4: Concept of Operations

The concept of operations defines how the City transitions from routine activities to emergency response. It outlines the mechanisms for notification, escalation, and coordination across DACs and with other levels of government. This section provides a roadmap for mobilizing resources, assigning responsibilities, and adapting to evolving conditions.

4.1 Guiding Principles

The City's emergency response is guided by a set of principles that support coordinated, effective, and equitable action across all response structures, as shown in the table below.

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>proactive engagement</i>	the City actively monitors incidents, assesses the adequacy of existing response measures, and determines whether escalation or additional coordination is required
<i>informed decision-making</i>	all staff involved in emergency response—at strategic, coordination, and tactical levels—receive timely, accurate information to support effective and coordinated decisions
<i>equity-centred approach</i>	an equity lens is applied to all response efforts, aligned with the Toronto Public Service values , this includes identifying barriers, ensuring access to critical services, and supporting equity-deserving communities

4.2 Response Levels

The City's response levels categorize emergencies and guide the activation of the City's emergency response structure. Each level corresponds to specific characteristics and informs decisions about resource allocation, personnel deployment, and other response measures. These levels and their defining features are summarized in the table below.

Response level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Status	Routine Monitoring	Enhanced Monitoring	Coordination Activation	Command Activation
TEM escalation protocol	TEM On-Call	TEM On-Call or assigned TEM staff	TEM On-Call to IMT	TEM On-Call to IMT
Emergency Response Plan	Not activated	May be activated	Activated	Activated
IMT status	Not activated	May be activated	Activated	Activated
Response structure	TEM	TEM + DACs (as required)	Control Group + TEM + DACs	Council + Control Group + TEM + DACs
TEOC status	Not activated	Not activated	Activated	Activated
Control Group	Not activated	Not activated	Activated + Informed	Activated + Decision making
DAC engagement	Contact as needed	Proactive information gathering	Formalized via TEOC	Formalized via TEOC
Council engagement	Not required	Not required	Not required	May be required; may convene during scheduled or special meetings
Mayor's use of delegated authority	Conditions not met	Conditions not met	Conditions not met	Conditions may be met
Mayor's declaration of an emergency	Not required	Not required	Not required	Possible
Request for support from other levels of government	Not required	Not required	Not required	Possible

4.2.1 Level 1: Routine Monitoring

At Level 1, TEM's On-Call Function (refer to sidebar) monitors a range of sources, including weather forecasts, news reports, and other forms of situational intelligence. The On-Call Function may also be notified about incidents by DACs, other levels of government and external stakeholders.

Once aware of an incident, TEM's On-Call Function conducts a risk assessment to determine the appropriate emergency response level. This assessment draws on:

- pre-identified triggers from function-specific and hazard-specific annexes (e.g., Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) weather alerts, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) flood messages)
- experience and best practices to assess issues not explicitly covered by existing annexes

This level maintains a steady-state posture.

4.2.2 Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring

Level 2 begins when an incident or emerging risk (such as potential for severe weather) requires additional review and a more in-depth risk assessment.

The enhanced monitoring function is assigned to TEM's On-Call Function and includes:

- gathering information and analyzing more detailed data
- conducting proactive outreach to DACs, which may include emails, phone calls, or hosting a Joint Assessment Meeting
- liaising with surrounding municipalities, other levels of government and external stakeholders
- consulting with TEM leadership

This level supports early coordination and preparedness across DACs.

TEM On-Call Function

TEM maintains an On-Call Function that serves as a central point of contact on a 24/7 basis for DACs regarding emerging issues and significant disruptions to service delivery. TEM On-Call is also the primary point of contact provided to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

The On-Call Function is carried out by a TEM On-Call Coordinator and On-Call Manager, who work collaboratively to assess situations, initiate notifications, and provide support to DACs.

This function serves as a vital link between steady-state operations and emergency response, enabling the City to maintain situational awareness and rapidly mobilize leadership and resources when needed.

It supports timely escalation in response to incidents, ensuring a seamless transition from routine operations to an effective response posture.

4.2.3 Level 3: Coordination Activation

Level 3 begins when a situation requires activation of the TEOC to coordinate the City's implementation of emergency response measures. This level may be triggered when the response exceeds the capacity of DACs to manage using their routine resources.

This level involves:

- activation of the TEOC and IMT
- informing the Control Group through regular briefings and situation reports

While the Control Group is not required to provide strategic direction at this level, it should be prepared to engage if the situation escalates.

4.2.4 Level 4: Command Activation

Level 4 begins when an incident has or is anticipated to result in significant threats to life safety, public health and well-being, infrastructure, the environment, or the continuity of social and economic systems.

This level involves:

- activation of the TEOC and IMT
- activation the Control Group to provide strategic direction and decision making
- engaging Council, which may be briefed and convene during scheduled or special meetings
- assessing the need for the Mayor's use of their delegated authority, declaration of an emergency and requests for support from other levels of government

This level represents the City's highest level of emergency response coordination.

4.3 Escalation

Escalation refers to increasing the City's response level to address an emerging incident or worsening conditions. It may be prompted by:

- monitoring and risk assessment by TEM's On-Call Function
- formal requests from Control Group members
- concerns raised by DACs, other levels of government, and external stakeholders

Escalation requires formal approval from the appropriate authority, or their designate. The table below outlines the approval process for each response level.

Dispatch Centres and On-Call Duty Officers

DACs that operate around the clock typically maintain a 24/7 dispatch centre that supports regular service delivery, manages routine operations, and facilitates internal coordination.

Dispatch centres may notify TEM about a potential incident.

For some DACs that do not operate 24/7, continuous accessibility is maintained by assigning staff to serve shifts as on-call duty officers, ensuring that incidents can be addressed outside of regular business hours.

Response Level	Can Be Escalated To	Approval Required From
Level 1: Routine Monitoring	Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	TEM On-Call Coordinator in consultation with the On-Call Manager
Level 1: Routine Monitoring	Level 3: Coordination Activation	TEM Director in consultation with the On-Call Manager
Level 1: Routine Monitoring	Level 4: Command Activation	TEM Executive Director in consultation with the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services (or equivalent senior executive)
Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	Level 3: Coordination Activation	TEM Director in consultation with the On-Call Manager
Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	Level 4: Command Activation	TEM Executive Director in consultation with the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services (or equivalent senior executive)
Level 3: Coordination Activation	Level 4: Command Activation	TEOC Director ¹² in consultation with the Chair of the Control Group

In urgent circumstances where delay may compromise public safety or the effectiveness of the response, TEM On-Call may temporarily escalate the response level. Immediate notification must be provided to TEM’s leadership team, followed by formal approval.

4.4 Notifications

When the City’s emergency response level increases, timely notifications ensure that designated parties are informed and ready to initiate their internal activation procedures and response measures.

¹² The TEM Executive Director is assigned as the TEOC Director role during Level 3 and Level 4 responses.

4.4.1 Internal Notifications

The table below outlines the entities that receive a notification when the City escalates to a higher response level.

Notification to	Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	Level 3: Coordination Activation	Level 4: Command Activation
TEM leadership and staff	✓	✓	✓
Hazard-Specific Working Group¹³	✓	✓	✓
EMWG	X	✓	✓
Control Group¹⁴	X	✓	✓
Councillor(s)¹⁵	✓	✓	✓

Notifications are generally initiated by TEM's On-Call Function. If the TEOC is activated, it assumes responsibility for issuing notifications.

4.4.2 Provincial Notification

When the City's response level escalates to Level 4, it is at the discretion of Toronto Emergency Management's Executive Director—or the TEOC Director to notify the province through the PEOC. Notification should be considered when the emergency:

- may exceed the City's capacity to respond
- could result in significant financial impact to the City
- is likely to generate high public or media attention

This notification may be made in the absence of a formal municipal emergency declaration by the Mayor, or in the absence of the Mayor's use of delegated authority. Upon receiving notification, the PEOC determines the appropriate type of provincial engagement.

¹³ If a Hazard-Specific Working Group has been established for the incident, TEM notifies the group at all response levels. If no such group exists, TEM identifies and notifies other appropriate personnel—such as the Business Continuity Working Group, subject matter experts, DAC leads, 24/7 dispatch centres or DAC on-call duty officers—based on the characteristics of the emergency.

¹⁴ Since the Mayor is the Chair of the Control Group, the Mayor does not need a separate notification.

¹⁵ Typically, only Councillors of impacted wards would be notified of an emergency, however, during a Level 4 response, all Councillors will be notified of the emergency, even if their ward is not impacted. TEM's On-Call Function does not typically notify Councillors. Notification is typically completed by emergency services or other DACs through regular processes or through the City Clerk's Office. A Councillor liaison function may be established during a Level 4 response to support information sharing with Councillors.

4.4.3 Public Notifications

Public notifications and emergency information may be delivered through multiple platforms to ensure that critical messages reach all affected residents, including vulnerable populations.

The City’s Emergency Information Officer (EIO) generally leads the coordination of emergency information. However, for specific notification types – outlined in the table below - emergency services or the CEMC (or TEOC Director, if activated) may take the lead in issuing a notification.

The public may be notified by one or more of the methods listed in the table below.

Notification type	Description
city website and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> official updates posted on the City’s website alerts and updates shared via verified social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram)
311 Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emergency information recorded on 311’s interactive voice response
media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information shared through television networks, radio stations, and newspapers
public signage and community boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> digital and physical signage at key locations such as municipal buildings, community centres, and highway/roadway signage (variable messaging signs and portable variable messaging signs)
door-to-door notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when necessary and safe, emergency services staff, other City staff or volunteers may conduct direct outreach to inform residents
Alert Ready¹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alerts broadcast to mobile devices, TV, and radio in accordance with provincial guidelines

4.5 Scaling Down

Scaling down refers to reducing the City’s response level once conditions stabilize or the urgency diminishes. This decision is based on:

- monitoring and risk assessment by TEM’s On-Call Function or the TEOC (if activated)
- current and projected response measures
- coordination with relevant DACs and external stakeholders

¹⁶ [Alert Ready](#) is Canada’s emergency alerting system. Alert Ready delivers critical and potentially life-saving alerts to Canadians through television, radio and LTE-connected and compatible wireless devices. The City’s CEMC can request use of the Alert Ready system through the PEOC.

The authority to scale down the City’s response level is determined by the level of response, as shown in the table below.

<i>Response Level</i>	<i>Can Be Scaled Down To</i>	<i>Approval Required From</i>
<i>Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring</i>	Level 1: Routine Monitoring	TEM On-Call Manager (in consultation with the On-Call Coordinator)
<i>Level 3: Coordination Activation</i>	Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	TEOC Director in consultation with the TEM On-Call Manager
<i>Level 3: Coordination Activation</i>	Level 1: Routine Monitoring	TEOC Director in consultation with the TEM On-Call Manager
<i>Level 4: Command Activation</i>	Level 3: Coordination Activation	TEOC Director in consultation with the Chair of the Control Group
<i>Level 4: Command Activation</i>	Level 2: Enhanced Monitoring	TEOC Director in consultation with the Chair of the Control Group
<i>Level 4: Command Activation</i>	Level 1: Routine Monitoring	TEOC Director in consultation with the Chair of the Control Group

As the City scales down its response efforts, some operations may transition into recovery. This may involve a formal recovery team or be integrated into DAC-led operations.

4.5.1 Demobilization

Demobilization is initiated prior to formally scaling down the City's response level. It applies primarily when transitioning from a Level 4 or Level 3 response to Level 2 or Level 1, indicating that centralized coordination through the TEOC is no longer required.

The TEOC Director initiates the demobilization process to scale down the IMT in a safe, orderly, and efficient manner. This ensures that all necessary coordination and resource release activities are completed before the response level is officially reduced.

Key activities include:

- releasing personnel and resources no longer required
- conducting formal check-out procedures
- addressing health and safety concerns
- storing all records, data, and reports
- transferring remaining operations to recovery teams
- demobilizing the Control Group and supporting the termination of a declared emergency and/or the conclusion of the Mayor's use of delegated authority (if applicable)
- initiating the after-action process, if not already started (see sidebar)

4.5.2 Deactivation

Deactivation follows demobilization and marks the formal closure of the TEOC, signifying the end of centralized emergency coordination and a transition down to Level 2 or Level 1 response level.

Once all IMT resources have been safely and efficiently demobilized, the TEOC Director confirms that centralized coordination is no longer required.

TEM then notifies DACs and external stakeholders of the TEOC deactivation and confirms the shift to recovery operations or a return to normal municipal functions.

After Action Process

The *after-action process* captures key observations, lessons learned and recommendations for improvement following an emergency. It is essential for continuous improvement and future preparedness.

While the process typically begins during the demobilization phase, it may continue into the recovery phase, even after the City has deactivated TEOC.

The after-action process includes:

- conducting a debrief
- documenting observations, best practices and lessons learned
- finalizing an after-action report

TEM is responsible for leading the after-action review of the TEOC, Control Group, and Mayor's use of delegated authority and/or declaration of an emergency.

DACs may conduct their own after-action review for their areas of responsibility.