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RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment 2023 Tantallon Wildfire Response After-Action Review

Unclassified

Approved by OIC HRD, Chief Supt. Jeff Christie

August 2, 2024

Background

- NS experienced an unprecedented level of wildfires in May of 2023 which directly impacted Upper Tantallon, HRM.
- The nature and complexity of fires resulted in a multi-agency response with significant property damage and losses.
- Localized access and travel restrictions were put in place.
- Over 16,000 people were displaced, many for up to twelve days.
- Response was led by DNRR and HRFE with RCMP HRD directly supporting response efforts.



Purpose

Demonstrate continuous improvement in HRD's response capabilities by identifying areas for improvement and best practices to:

- Enhance HRD's capacity for coordinated emergency response.
- Validate multi-organizational and multi-stakeholder communication and coordination processes.

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RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment

2023 Tantallon Wildfire Response

After-Action Review

Submitted by:

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A/Supt., Senior Operations Officer

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Methodology

- Conducted direct engagement sessions and interviews with RCMP staff and external partners directly involved in the response to inform recommendations.
- Analyzed information using "SWOT" (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to identify common themes and similarities that indicate trends.
- To be considered a key finding, supporting observations were required for validation.
- Provided a recommendation for each finding.



Functional Themes of HRD's Response

Resource Management

- The ability to sustain an emergency response through resources, equipment and support mechanisms.

Training and Exercises

- The knowledge and experience of employees required to fill emergency response roles.

Information Management

- Effective communication both internal and external of HRD.

Business Continuity

- The ability to continue core operations concurrent to supporting an emergency response.



Findings: Strengths

1. Expedited, effective problem-solving and decision-making.
2. High level of multi-agency coordination and collaboration.
3. HRD's flexibility, adaptability and teamwork within in a rapidly changing environment.
4. Extraordinary professionalism and resiliency of employees.
5. Working relationships with partners strengthened.
6. Leadership and subject matter expertise prevalent.
7. Effective mobilization of police officers and employees.
8. Review of HRD's Emergency Operations Plan to reflect current requirements.
9. Interoperability with HRP/HRFE supported the movement of people out of high-risk areas.

Findings: Strengths (Continued)

10. Identification/mitigation of a lack of a respiratory protection policy (RPP) has spurred positive change.
11. The use of innovative technology (ATAK) enhanced situational awareness.
12. The rapid deployment of an HRD-based public information officer enabled timely information sharing.
13. The identification of evacuation-related best practices.
14. The expertise and responsiveness of RCMP Legal Services Unit (LSU) supported frontlines.



Findings: Room for Improvement

Resource Management

1. Community Action Response Team (CART) should serve as the Diverse Communities Liaison.
2. Review HRD's Victim Services Program to determine the optimal model to support HRD's operational mandate.
3. HRD to identify current gaps within the Wellness program to the Employee and Management Relations Officer (EMRO)/Wellness program.
4. HRD Emergency Operations Plan should reflect Incident Command System (ICS) principles to support employee health and safety.
5. HRD should establish an HRD Tantallon Fire Recognition Committee for formal and informal RCMP recognition.

Findings: Opportunities for Improvement (Continued)

Equipment and Supply Management

6. The HRD Emergency Operations Plan should reflect the principles of ICS for enhanced logistical support.
7. HRD to identify shared gaps within the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program to the Employee and Management Relations Officer (EMRO)/OHS program.
8. The HRD Emergency Operations Plan should reflect the ICS principles to support financial protocols.

Training and Exercises

9. HRD continues to develop its ICS capacity/competence.



Findings: Opportunities for Improvement (Continued)

Information Management

10. The HRD Emergency Operations Plan should reflect the principles of ICS (with exercises) to support an ICS command structure during emergency responses.

Business Continuity

11. HRD's Business Continuity Plan should ensure that offices are effectively supported by an emergency back-up power plan.
12. HRD should evaluate the feasibility of establishing an HRD-based mobile command post (and drivers).

Next Steps...

Our Commitment

HRD is committed to working internally and with partner agencies to optimize interoperability and enhance the collective response to large scale events.

Our Actions

Actions to improve HRD-based emergency responses and recovery are underway, with more to follow.

Our Accountability

To support continuous improvement, HRD's Superintendent is leading an Improvement Plan designed to strengthen HRD's response capabilities and mitigate issues in future responses.

Concluding Comments

- We can never lose sight of the significant impact to our community.
- HRD demonstrated some successes but there is room to learn and improve.
- HRD's Superintendent of Operations is tasked with leading and tracking those improvements.
- Stakeholders will be informed of progress as we work with our partners (HRM Public Safety, Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency, Halifax Regional Police and more) to improve HRM's collective response.

.....Now over to Halifax Regional Detachment's Officer in Charge for final remarks...

Questions

