

Re: Item 9.3

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October 1, 2025



Halifax Regional Police/ RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment
HRM Police Use Of Emergency Alerts

Background

- On June 4, 2025, the BoPC directed the Chief Officer of HRP and recommended that the Officer in Charge of RCMP HRD prepare a staff report outlining the policies governing the use of emergency public alerts for each organization
- Specifically, the Board requested information related to:
 - The number and nature of incidents for which such alerts were issued in the past 24 months, and;
 - The number and general nature of incidents in the past 24 months where an alert could have been issued in keeping with the governing policies but was not

Alert Ready

- Alert Ready is Canada's emergency alerting system and has been operational nationally since March 2018
- Alert Ready delivers critical and potentially life-saving alerts to Canadians through television, radio and LTE-connected and compatible wireless devices
- Alert Ready does not require a subscription and has a distinctive alert tone which cannot be shut off
- Public alerts issued through the Alert Ready system are intended for:
 - The most serious and time-critical emergencies
 - Soliciting the public's attention
 - Directing the public to act (be on the lookout for, shelter in place, evacuate, etc.)

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Alert Ready

- Alert Ready is intended to provide warning for threats including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Urban fires that threaten multiple properties
 - Natural disasters such as tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, Tsunami and earthquakes
 - Biological, chemical, nuclear, radiological threats and drinking water contamination
 - Environmental emergencies such as poor air quality
 - Terrorist attacks
 - Civil emergencies such as public safety emergencies, AMBER Alerts or a disruption to 911 service

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Access to Alert Ready

- All 13 provinces and territories are connected to the Alert Ready system, with each jurisdiction responsible for issuing alerts
- Only authorized government agencies can issue alerts through the Alert Ready system
- In July 2021, HRP and the Nova Scotia RCMP were given direct access to the Alert Ready system. Prior to that, only the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) had access to the Alert Ready system
- Currently, HRP, NS RCMP and DEM are the only organizations authorized to issue an alert through the Alert Ready system in Nova Scotia
- HRP and RCMP NS both have direct access to the Alert Ready system through a website log in

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HRP Policy

- HRP issued its “Alert Ready - Direct Access” policy on July 5, 2021
- The policy is aligned with provincial and federal policies and regulations relating to the Alert Ready system
- The policy establishes roles, responsibilities and procedures related to HRP’s use of the Alert Ready national public alert system, including:
 - That authorization for any Alert Ready message must come from the Chief of Police, or their designate (e.g., Deputy Chief, Superintendent)
 - Only HRP staff who have been designated as Authorized Alert Issuers and who have been trained to use the Alert Ready system issue public alerts
 - That pre-approved message content is available to Authorized Alert Issuers for use within the public alert system

HRP Use of Alert Ready

- Since gaining direct access to the Alert Ready system in 2021, HRP has issued two alerts – both within the last 24 months:
 - On August 28, 2023, HRP issued an alert through the Alert Ready system for a vulnerable 16-year-old non-verbal youth who was reported missing from a local shopping mall. The youth was safely located
 - On April 30, 2024, HRP issued an alert through the Alert Ready system in relation to a man, believed to be armed with a firearm and dangerous, in Dartmouth. Following an investigation, the suspect was arrested the following day and charged in connection with this incident

Alert Ready Criteria

- HRP officers are dispatched to approximately 100,000 calls for service per year. During the course of any critical incident, HRP would consider whether issuing an alert would benefit the unfolding situation
- In accordance with HRP's policy, prior to issuing a public alert through the Alert Ready system, the following criteria shall be met:
 - There is an active threat/ immediate action rapid deployment (IARD) incident; and
 - The circumstances are believed to cause imminent threat to the public of serious bodily harm or death; and
 - There is sufficient descriptive detail and information of the threat, and the geographical location involved to provide clear direction and guidance to the public; and
 - The issuance of a public alert would not place the public and/or responding emergency personnel at greater risk than not issuing an alert

Alert Ready Criteria

- As noted in the criteria, there needs to be sufficient detail and information about a threat and its location prior to issuing an alert through the Alert Ready system – something that is often difficult in an unfolding situation
- There is no data available from HRP to reflect the number of times an alert was considered but not issued
- In situations when an alert was not issued, other communications tools may have been used to assist police, such as media releases or social media posts

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Alerts considered, but not sent by HRP

- Shooting on Gottingen Street on June 26, 2025:
 - There were no reported injuries. Officers were able to quickly locate the vehicle and suspects involved. As this incident was believed to be contained, an Alert Ready message was not issued
- Weapons call at Mount Saint Vincent University on May 29, 2025:
 - It was quickly determined that there was no threat, and the incident did not warrant an emergency alert. In this particular incident, there were second-hand reports that an armed robbery may have taken place at the university's café. There were no reports of gunshots and no reports of injuries
- Shooting at the Africville National Historic Site on July 27, 2024:
 - Shots were fired while hundreds of people were gathered to celebrate the 41st annual Africville Reunion, injuring five people. Police were able to quickly determine that this was an isolated and contained incident. An alert was not issued as there was no indication of any potential for further harm to the community outside of the original incident

RCMP HRD Policy

- RCMP HRD is guided by the Nova Scotia RCMP (H Division) policies when it comes to Serious Incident Alerts
- If at any time an incident poses imminent risk to the public, RCMP H Division may issue a Serious Incident Alert via the Alert Ready system
- The Division may also use other communications tools to inform and provide updates to the public about an incident; these tools include social media channels, the RCMP NS website, and interaction with the media
- As per the Nova Scotia RCMP policy, a Serious Incident Alert can only be activated/cancelled by those who have the delegated authority

RCMP HRD Use of Alert Ready

- In the last 24 months, the RCMP has issued 12 alerts in the province of Nova Scotia
 - Two of the 12 alerts were sent province-wide. HRM received these alerts, but they were not the original requestor
- The following two alerts were issued on behalf of RCMP HRD:
 - March 2, 2023: A Dangerous Person Alert went out for a man who was allegedly armed with a knife in Cole Harbour. The man was later taken into custody
 - October 30, 2023: A Dangerous Person Alert was issued as police responded to a hit and run on Shrewsbury Road in Cole Harbour. RCMP officers learned that a Good Samaritan was rendering assistance to a woman that was being held against her will in a vehicle. The vehicle and suspect were located at a nearby residence, and the suspect was taken into custody

Alerts considered, but not sent by RCMP HRD

- There is no data available from RCMP to reflect the number of times an alert was considered but not issued
- There are many instances where an alert was being drafted but not needed as the incident was resolved
- In instances when an alert was not issued, other communications tools may have been used to inform and provide updates to the public about an incident; these tools include social media channels, the RCMP NS website, and interaction with the media

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Questions?

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