

SEPA Report 2019

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Wadena Emergency Measures Coordinator.

Location: Saskatoon Inn – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The Theme for 2019 was “Piecing it Together”

The Town of Wadena was exempted from paying the Conference fee of as I was able to provide my services as Audio/visual technician to SEPA in lieu of.

Sunday October 27, 2019. 16:00 hrs. Arrive Saskatoon and begin set up of Audio/visual equipment for conference.

Monday October 28, 2019. 08:00 hrs. MECC workshop.

This year I was able to attend a training workshop hosted by the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency and facilitated by their Emergency Service Officers. Last year they were reported as ESO's from EMFS; same people, different name. Emergency Management Fire Services have been integrated into the new Provincial Crown.

MECC stands for Mobile Emergency Command Center.

The ESO's took us through each module of the MECC. This entire unit fits in a Rubbermaid tub and it is their recommendation that we have a similar package at an alternate location in the event that we are unable to operate out of the Town Office.

Once the kit was covered, the workshop went into more detail on the “how tos” and “what ifs” of emergency planning.

It was their recommendation that we need to exercise our plan on a regular basis. This means a financial commitment from council would be needed.

They emphasised that “Life Safety” is the number one concern in an emergency. This is placed ahead of any response effort that might take place.

The steps for managing an emergency took up the remainder of the day.

Step one: Declaration of Emergency by, In Wadena's Bylaw, Mayor or his designate. Other communities have a by law which states “quorum of council”

This raised the question of having the need for a trained council. The SPSA Emergency Training program has a specific module exclusively for elected officials. It will be part of the Wadena EMO 2020 plan to get our council trained.

There was much discussion around the area of when do you declare an emergency and when do you merely activate your EOC. Some communities have very specific definitions around that process.

In Wadena we have one policy statement in regards to an automatic activation of our EOC. It concerns power outages. If the power is out 4 consecutive hours in Winter or 8 consecutive hours in the summer our EOC automatically activates. The question of whether or not to include other considerations will be on our next regular agenda.

Outside of this example, our EOC will activate only on direction from the Mayor or their designate, this would include the CAO. In the event that none of those folks are available the EOC can be activated by the Wadena EMO Coordinator or their designate.

When to declare an emergency? The best answer I heard was when your event extends beyond your normal ability to respond. In other words, when you yell for help include a declaration of emergency to back up your request.

Tuesday October 29, 2019. MECC Workshop Continued.

0800 Review and table top exercises.

Wednesday October 30, 2019 Saskatchewan Emergency Planners Association Annual Conference.

09:00 Greetings from City of Saskatoon. SPSA President Marlowe Prichard. SEPA President Tracy Gerwing.

09:30. Presentation by SPSA Vice President of Operations, Duane McKay, indicated the plan is to eventually have all first responder organizations under the SPSA umbrella. This will make for a uniform response with accuracy and timeliness as prime objectives and a single point of contact essential. With EMFS having just joined the fold the next will be the Wildfire Management group and that process will begin in November 2019.

Mr. McKay pointed out that the current number of ESO's does not translate into extensive coverage for the province. It is his hope that municipalities will buy into the idea of developing larger EMO regions. This can be done by creating mutual aid agreements with neighbors to create a larger resource list and to help provide a more uniform level of education and response to rural Saskatchewan.

Wadena has already got the jump on this program as the first “Regional Meeting” is set for Wadena, December 5, 2019 19:00 hrs in the town office. There is going to be some cost to this process therefore it encouraged that Council be represented as well as the EMO Coordinator. **Note:** There was some backlash with the term “Regional” (too many bad experiences with amalgamations).

Mr. McKay pointed out that the new SPS Agency is part of the Treasury Board Crown and is somewhat at arm’s length from government. This allows them more flexibility to respond. It also allows them to ally themselves with non-government organizations like SEPA to better liaise with the private sector. McKay also pointed out that Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada attempting this program and as such there is no working model to follow. Mr. McKay is asking for feedback on how the process is going what is good and constructive feedback on what needs help.

I asked Mr. McKay if there was some way that the documentation process could be streamlined as it is impossible to find someone to volunteer for this task. He apologized and said if anything it will get worse.

The next phase of development in their world is the creation of an ISAT team. The Intelligence & Situational Awareness Team will be conducting DAILY risk assessment for the province. They will be tasked with gathering information and alerting communities at risk before an event occurs if at all possible. This might get to the level where ISAT might post, “statistics show that this July 1st weekend there is an 80% chance that an accident is likely to occur at the junction of Hwy. 35 and Hwy. 16.” To help create a proactive data base communities will be encourage to CC: ISAT with large event plans such as: Wadena Town and Country Fair - date and project attendance projections, including blocking of Main Street for the parade.

Heather Scheidt out of the Melville Office remains as our ESO but she has also taken on the area north of us which includes Nipawin through Hudson Bay.

The keynote speakers covered many areas of Critical Incident Stress Management. The main theme was that each EMO actively seek out a trained CISM member of the community to take an active role on the Local EOC. This will be added to next agenda for consideration.

At the annual AGM a full slate of directors for the 2020 Board were elected. The annual membership fee will remain the same.

The conference ended with an interesting presentation on Cyber Terrorism by an RCMP member who is one of their Counter Terrorism Information Officers. His message was pretty intense and he indicated that the RCMP do not have the resources to police this new wave of crazy! The RCMP have developed an awareness course designed for emergency response organizations to take. Your EMO coordinator has the contact information if this would be of interest.