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REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

SUBJECT **Capital Regional District Emergency HazMat Team Service Review**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To introduce the Capital Regional District (CRD) Emergency HazMat Team (EHT) Service Review report and to seek approval to engage interest holders toward the development of an implementation plan in response to the recommendations in the report.

BACKGROUND

It is generally expected and understood that an emergency hazardous materials (HazMat) response team arrives with the ability to perform the services it was requested for. Ideally, having in-place a properly resourced, trained, and equipped program creates a truly mission ready package that can be deployed with reasonable expectations for success. The protection of lives, property, and the environment form the very basis of these assumptions.

The CRD provides for the administration and operation of the regional EHT in partnership with the region's 25 fire departments. Each of these 25 fire departments have a seat on the EHT Advisory Committee that acts as a conduit for information sharing and coordination between the CRD and the member municipal fire services.

In 2008, the CRD entered a contractual relationship with the Central Saanich Fire Department to organize team training, house operational response equipment, and coordinate day-to-day response operations.

The existing EHT service delivery model is unique in Canada whereby 14 fire departments contribute personnel to the team composition. In addition, there are 11 fire departments that do not have members on the team but receive the response services offered by the CRD. The dynamics of the fire service throughout the region and provincially have changed considerably since the EHT inception in 2008, thus requiring a review of the existing model and service delivery approach. CRD undertook a Request for Proposal (RFP) process and retained Emergency Management Group (EMG) to facilitate the review and report.

A service review such as this one requested by the CRD, is the process to collect, organize, analyze, interpret, and share relevant information to improve the structure and governance of the EHT program. The purpose of this EHT service review is to enhance success through the development of insight and intelligence about the program.

The recommendations provided have been developed based upon an extensive consultation process with the EHT Contractor, CRD Senior Manager, CRD Fire Services Coordinator, Contract Training Provider, EHT Team Leads, the 14 fire departments with team members, several fire departments in the region without team members, a third-party HazMat response provider, Nanaimo Fire Rescue, and a law enforcement representative of the Greater Victoria Emergency Response Team. In total, EMG conducted 26 interviews, in-person or virtually, and each EHT Team Member/Technician was provided the opportunity for feedback through an anonymous survey, with 35 team members completing the online survey.

Further, the analysis and recommendations have been developed in consideration of industry best practices, industry organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and provincial legislation. A wholesome review and consideration of the recommendations in this report must involve engagement between CRD leadership, regional fire department leadership via the EHT Advisory Committee, EHT team leads, and by extension, local municipal governments that could be impacted by a HazMat incident.

When considering options for the EHT service delivery model, it is critical to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option. The sustainability and success of the EHT must be considered in the context that services delivered are effective, efficient, and meet local expectations for emergency HazMat operations.

Primary consideration must be given toward:

- Ensuring efficacy and efficiency of HazMat response to incidents regionally.
- Clearly defining and articulating roles and responsibilities of the EHT.
- Scheduled training and curriculum that provides team members with knowledge, skills, and abilities to confidently and safely conduct response operations at the Technician Level.
- Communicating training expectations and requirements, ensuring accountability for required competencies and Job Performance Requirements per NFPA 472.
- Enhancing the roles and responsibilities of regional fire service leaders through the EHT Advisory Committee.
- Open and transparent relationships fostered between the CRD and fire department stakeholders.
- Consensus for the fire department stakeholder agreement and support for the chosen service delivery model.
- All HazMat equipment and apparatus maintained in a state of readiness.
- Identifying, communicating, and adherence to all health and safety requirements.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to distribute the report and to engage interest holders and to report back to the Committee with an implementation plan.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Planning and Protective Services Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

A CRD Board priority for the 2023-2026 term is the effective advocacy, coordinated and collaborative governance, and leadership in organizational performance and service delivery. Initiative 16g-3 is to review and modernize fire and emergency management programs.

Financial Implications

The contractor (District of Central Saanich) has provided notice to terminate the existing contract on February 19, 2024, to renegotiate a new contract or allow the CRD to undergo an RFP for the delivery of HazMat response. To maintain the existing model, the CRD would be required to

increase the annual contractor fee on a prorated schedule from \$70,640 to \$177,000. This is a 151% increase measured in real costs as a \$106,360 difference annually.

The CRD and the contractor have agreed to extend the current service contract to the end of 2024, and the fee for service formula is within the 2024 approved provisional financial plan. The interim agreement amendment allows for the continued housing, vehicle and equipment checks, and response of the vehicle and trailer to calls by Central Saanich for a monthly fee of \$5,000. The operational oversight and coordination of the EHT has been removed from the amended contract to mitigate the cost increase. EHT coordination is expected to be managed by Protective Services through contract while the plans for the service are being developed.

Service Delivery Implications

Staff will distribute the report to the EHT Advisory Committee, which has representation from all fire departments in the CRD, and engage the Advisory Committee to develop a plan to sustain and support the EHT service into the future based on the recommendations and report back to the Planning and Protective Services Committee with an implementation plan. Staff do not anticipate any service delivery interruptions in 2024 while this planning process evolves.

CONCLUSION

This service review of the EHT highlights strengths, current challenges, and opportunities, and provides several prioritized recommendations for moving the program forward. As such, this report seeks to understand and identify the issues impacting the EHT, to provide an opportunity for short and long-term financial, administrative, and operational planning to meet service level needs and to increase local emergency response capability. Within this, opportunities exist to leverage the experience and expertise of engaged fire and emergency services leaders within the region. This is best facilitated through the CRD EHT Advisory Committee. Selection and implementation of the recommendations in this report will require a future-focused lens, one of several critical elements necessary to meet the future needs of the EHT.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to distribute the report and to engage interest holders and to report back to the Committee with an implementation plan.

Submitted by:	Shawn Carby, CD, BHSc, MAL, Senior Manager, Protective Services
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Emergency Hazardous Materials Response Team Service Review