


The Journey Towards an Integrated System of Emergency Preparedness - A Rural Public Health Unit's Experience

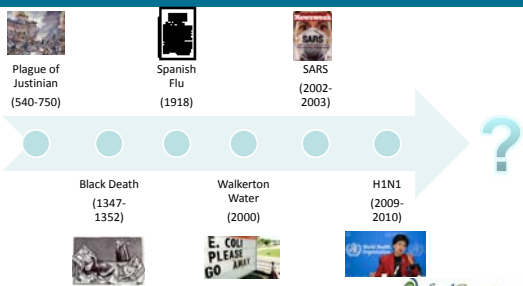
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Background


- Ontario's Public Health Units are expected to be prepared to prevent, mitigate and manage public health emergencies.
- Ontario's *Public Health Standards* require Health Units to:
 - Identify hazards and attempt to prevent/mitigate a public health emergency;
 - Develop an Emergency response plan (ERP) and a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP);
 - Engage community stakeholders; and
 - Implement emergency training exercises.



Public Health Emergencies - Timeline



Event	Year(s)
Plague of Justinian	540-750
Spanish Flu	1918
Black Death	1347-1352
Walkerton Water	2000
SARS	2002-2003
E. COLI PLEASE GO	2000
H1N1	2009-2010



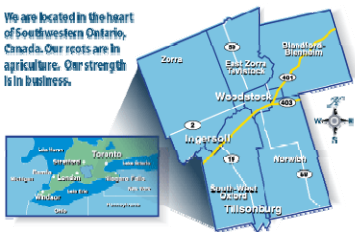
Many Emergencies Impact Public Health



Oxford County Overview

- Oxford County is comprised of eight area municipalities with an approximate population of 106,000.

We are located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario, Canada. Our roots are in agriculture. Our strength is in business.



Oxford County Health Sector

- Oxford County is home to a number of health care organizations offering diverse services in a number of settings.
 - Each with unique and often independent emergency planning processes.
- Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services provides a voice for health care at the emergency planning and management tables.
 - Coordinating body to support collaborative planning and knowledge exchange.



Where We Need To Go

▪ **Effective emergency preparedness requires a system that utilizes:**

- Strong planning methods and training;
- Evidence-based knowledge;
- Collaboration and team work;
- The strengths of each organization involved;
- Clear and effective communication and knowledge exchange; and
- Ongoing evaluation and refinement.



How Do We Get There?



Integrated Emergency Preparedness



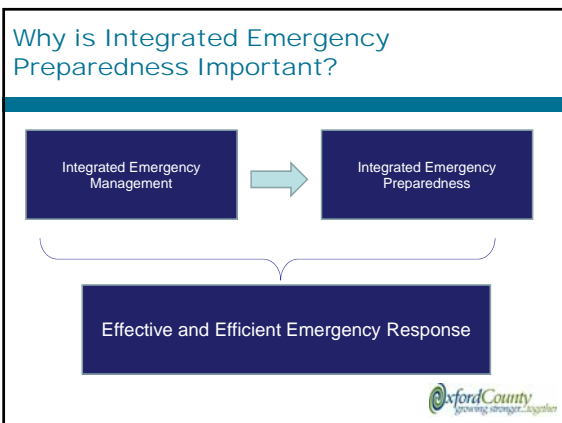
What is Integrated Emergency Preparedness?

▪ **Integrated Emergency Preparedness:**

- Involves working together at the outset, rather than scrambling “when the time comes”;
- Is proactive rather than reactive;
- Involves aligning the strengths and expertise of stakeholders with the roles and responsibilities' required for effective emergency response.

Is a process of collaboration needed to harmonize emergency plans/training and collectively prepare for emergencies.





Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services Approach

- ### Activities To Date
- Activities accomplished to date included:
- Establishing a county-wide Health Sector Emergency Preparedness Group with broad representation;
 - Holding large and specialized group meetings;
 - Distributing and analyzing a needs survey;
 - Hosting an initial joint training session on crisis communications; and
 - Establishing and verifying a needs model.
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Health Sector Group

- Oxford County's Health Sector Emergency Preparedness Group is coordinated by a Public Health Nurse and has representation from:
 - Public Health;
 - Emergency Medical Services;
 - Municipal Community Emergency Management Coordinators (CEMCs);
 - Hospitals;
 - Long-Term Care Homes;
 - Retirement Homes;
 - CCAC;
 - Community Nursing Organizations;
 - Mental Health; and
 - Social Services.



Summary of Meeting Themes

- Significant variability in planning processes exists across organizations.
- There is a need for enhanced collaboration and support.
 - Engaging each other in emergency exercises;
 - Facilitating joint-training opportunities; and
 - Reviewing and contribution to each other's plans.
- Mutual dependences exists across the County.
- Transportation concerns in the event of a large-scale community evacuation.
- Challenges engaging front-line staff in emergency planning and training.



Survey - Background

- In response to findings from the specialized group meetings, Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services developed a survey in collaboration with our health sector partners.
 - The purpose of this survey was to identify opportunities that support collaborative emergency planning in Oxford County and to identify overlapping dependencies.
- 13 organizations responded to the survey.



Preliminary Survey Results - Themes

- Most organizations reported having an Emergency Response Plan developed.
 - Variable incident-specific plans exist. Examples of these plans include: fire, pandemic, evacuation, spills, loss of utilities, severe weather, etc.
- Very few formalized relationships have been developed with external agencies.
 - Some organizations have formal transportation agreements.
- Varying evacuation plans exist.
 - Most organizations able to deploy staff to evacuation centres.
 - Few have shelter-in-place plans.
- Organizations report a number of training opportunities currently underway and interest in other opportunities.



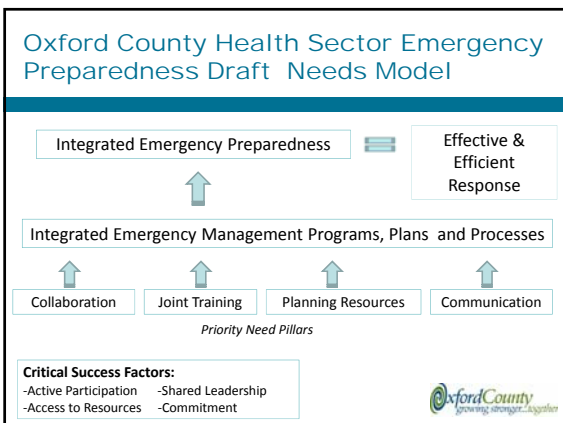
Preliminary Survey Results - Themes (cont.)

- Most organizations identified having a local municipal planning and 24/7 contact.
 - Those that did not were encouraged to contact OCPHES and we would provide them with the contact information of their municipal CEMC.
- Most organizations identified resources (e.g. generators and food supplies) to support continued operations procedures during an emergency.
- Most organizations would need to assess their ability to offer support at the time of emergency.
 - Comments included that the priority would be to ensure that internal needs are met before offering external support.



Oxford County Health Sector Emergency Preparedness Needs Model





Challenges Encountered

- Health care organizations are balancing multiple priorities.
 - Challenges committing time and resources to emergency planning efforts.
- Shared leadership vision for health sector emergency preparedness group is a work in progress.
- Significant variability in planning work completed to date across organizations.
- Change in Emergency Preparedness staff lead at Public Health

Moving Forward

- Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services is planning a county-wide health sector emergency tabletop exercise in Fall 2012.
 - A fictitious (yet realistic) scenario will be provided to the group for analysis and review.
 - Guiding questions will be provided to stimulate discussion amongst the group.
 - A debrief will occur to identify next steps.
- The aim of this exercise will be to identify emergency planning strengths and gaps within Oxford County's health sector.

Implications for Public Health & Nursing

- Public Health Unit's established presence within the health sector, coupled with an evolving expertise in emergency planning, can be leveraged to emerge as the coordinating resource for local health sector emergency planning.
- Public Health Nurses' skills in collaboration, coordination and planning along with their knowledge of and connection to the community are key assets to effectively lead this initiative.
 - These skills align closely with CHNC PHN competencies



Questions