

AFTER ACTION REVIEW	
Participants (Name and Position)	
<p>Pascal Meunier – Primary CEMC and Fire Chief; Diane Smithson – CAO (Operations Officer), Doug Black - Mayor; Sgt. Rob Croth – OPP; Guy Bourgon – Director of Public Works; Graham Patterson – Public Works; Joanne Henderson - Manager of Recreation & Culture; Amanda Charania – Communications Coordinator; Stephanie Tuffin – Alternate CEMC</p>	
Date of After-Action Review	
2022-06-01	
Exercise/Incident Date	
2022-05-21	
Exercise/Incident Type	Hazard Type
Incident	Electrical Energy Failure
Introduction	
<p>On Saturday, May 21, 2022, a derecho swept through Ontario and reached Carleton Place just after 3:00 p.m. At approximately 3:30 pm, power went out for the whole Town. Over time, as reports of the widespread outage began to come in, it became clear that there were a large number of power lines down within Town limits, and that throughout Lanark County, crews would be dealing with massive infrastructure damage.</p> <p>Staff also learned quickly that internet and cell phone coverage was affected, as contacting each other was challenging. This event occurred on the May long weekend.</p>	
Responding agencies	
<p>Hydro One, Carleton Place Public Works (PW), Carleton Place Fire Department (CPFD), Carleton Place Recreation Department, OPP, Lanark County Social Services (LCSS), Lanark County Transportation (LCT), Lanark County Paramedic Service (LCPS)</p>	
Events	
<p><i>Saturday, May 21, 2022</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power goes out in Carleton Place • Managers and Directors begin checking in on various Town facilities and calling in more staff. It is determined at this time that there is very limited cell and internet service. Staff mobilize to canvas neighbourhoods for damage • A message is released telling residents that staff is aware of the outage and directing them to Hydro One's outage map for updates • Messaging is posted to remind residents of candle safety, food spoilage, etc. Council is sent the same information • Required MCEG members were in contact with each other throughout the day 	

- OPP staff were upped to ensure the town was well-policed through the night
- Roads were made safe through the installation of barricades on impacted streets and the placement of stop signs at signalized intersections

Sunday, May 22, 2022

- Staff begin process to set up generator at Arena
- message is released asking residents to check on neighbours and share information with them
- generator is running at Arena, with immediate message sent out that charging station is open
- Public Works monitoring roads, liaising with Hydro One and Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA)
- Council is provided an update on the situation as it stands
- updates as information is received are posted via social media and are announced on Lake88
- Required MCEG members were in contact with each other throughout the day

Monday, May 23, 2022

- discussions continue throughout day with members of MCEG
- Upper Canada District School Board and Mississippi Mills Mayor contacted re: shower availability at Carleton Place High School / Almonte Arena respectively
- CPFD begins wellness checks on vulnerable persons; a staff member is stationed at the Fire Department to take calls
- Council and Senior Management are notified of status and that messaging would be released soon
- Lanark County is contacted re: social assistance support
- Lanark Transportation Authority (LTA) and Carebridge are contacted re: assistance with transportation
- message sent to Council re: Hydro's presence in Town
- messaging put out re: charging station, extra bags of food waste which can be put out at curb for collection this week, wellness checks, etc.
- the Mayor sent out a statement to residents
- updates as information is received are posted via social media and are announced on Lake88
- the compost yard opened from 12pm-5 pm

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

- MCEG meets at Arena. Members provide updates on their respective duties/undertakings
- Grocery transportation shuttle is announced and implemented for both Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday

- CERV volunteers are requested to assist the following day at food waste dumpsters to be located at the Bates PW yard and the Patterson Compost Yard
- power begins to come back on in parts of Carleton Place, including Arena and Town Hall
- updates as information is received are posted via social media and are announced on Lake88
- work at Town yards, clearing trees in road allowances and in parks, wellness checks, and monitoring of situation continues
- compost yard was open from 8 am-5pm
- LCSS was at arena to distribute water and gift cards to residents in need
- A second Mayor's message was released, with the most up-to-date information available

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

- Dumpsters are available in two (2) locations for residents to safely dispose of spoiled food in addition to weekly collection option
- MCEG meets at Arena to provide updates. It is noted that messaging was sent as soon as it was received throughout the outage.
- messaging continues to be sent out reminding those still without power that charging station remains open, wellness checks are continuing, etc.
- compost yard open from 8am-8pm
- LCSS was at arena to distribute water and gift cards to residents in need

Thursday, May 26, 2022

- MCEG meets at Arena. The Town's power is largely restored with some pockets still remaining without power. Discussion focussed on what went well during the event and what the challenges were.

Impacts

The entire power grid in this area was affected which meant all homes and businesses were without power. Power lines were down, as were trees, some falling onto homes and cars.

Branches and other debris were strewn across roads. Some small sheds were overturned. Public Works and Fire Department staff were immediately mobilized to assess the damage.

As internet, cell phone and land telephone line infrastructure was damaged, some communications were particularly challenged.

As the outage continued, residents began to lose food items in fridges and freezers.

OPP had to revert all light-controlled intersections to 4 way stops not owned by the Town of Carleton Place; Public Works looked after the Town-owned intersections

What strengths were demonstrated? What worked well?

The Town of Carleton Place has an emergency plan which is revisited every year. Contacts are kept up to date, which allowed staff to contact others easily and be in contact throughout the event. Having alternates for many of the positions was a benefit since the event happened on a long weekend while some people were on vacation.

The sharing of information with the public, although challenging, was undertaken regularly. Information was shared on social media and the Town's Scoop e-newsletter, which was picked up by Lake 88 radio and shared further. Facebook analytics of posts during the event show that despite the challenges, residents were being reached.

MECG staff were mobilized very quickly to discuss messaging, canvas the streets for damage, and determine next steps.

The Fire Department responded to more than 20 calls in the immediate hours following the power going out. Fire Department members also conducted many wellness checks over the days following the initial event, which was a comfort to many of the at-risk residents and provided some peace of mind for out-of-town family members who called to request we check on their loved ones.

Public Works was able to provide extended hours/days at the Town compost yard to allow people to dispose of brush and trees. Garbage collection was amended to allow residents to put more than one (1) bag at the curb with no additional sticker. Dumpsters were placed in two (2) locations for residents to dispose of spoiled food.

Contact with outside agencies, such as Lanark County Social Services (LCSS), was made quickly. LCSS was able to assist with residents' food supply issues on site at the Arena. A bus was arranged through Lanark Transportation to bring residents to surrounding municipalities who had power so they could pick up essential groceries, supplies, etc. Though very few people chose to use the assistance, the option was presented several times via social media.

It was fortunate that the storm occurred when the weather was not particularly cold nor hot which meant many people were able to remain in their own homes during the event.

OPP reported no injuries or fatalities from the derecho or the outage.

The OPP communications grid was not impacted by the outage.

What was challenging?

The fire hall, which is the primary Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) location, is not fully powered by the generator it has. Many offices had no power; shower facilities were in the dark as well. During this event, extension cords had to be used around offices and hallways, which created a hazardous situation for staff, particularly in areas which were unlit.

The generators which were in place at the Arena were not sufficient to power the elevators. Because the charging stations were on the second floor, people with mobility issues could not bring their own devices up to be charged.

As both the MCEG and the Fire Department (FD) were using the same space, there were challenges. The generator at the FD does not power the AC or heat for the building, which made the building very uncomfortable which would be problematic in extreme temperatures.

Staffing was a challenge as following the pandemic, things have started to open up resulting in many staff being away and unavailable on the long weekend.

The lack of internet for staff was difficult to manage, as we had moved our records to the cloud prior to the pandemic. These could not be accessed because of the failure of the internet grid.

The Town Hall had no phones during the power outage because there is no generator there. The Town Hall is often the first place people call for information, particularly those who do not have access to the internet.

The Central Bridge was under construction, making travel for residents, staff, and first responders difficult in Town.

There were calls for CERV to be used more, however given the nature of the event, it would not have been safe for them to be out in the community. Questions from residents mainly required the expertise of fire department, public works, and hydro personnel.

Areas for improvement

The charging station set up at the Arena were on the second floor, which was difficult for those with mobility issues to navigate. This was due to the generator at the facility only being able to power some parts of the building.

Communications to the public and Council were limited due to the severity of the storm which knocked out the telecommunications grid for some time.

A way to provide the public with internet access would be helpful as was requested by many people at the charging stations.

Education on the roles and membership of the MECG was not sufficient before the storm to allow an understanding of what was taking place behind the scenes as the event developed.

Conclusions: Recommendations and Suggested Corrective Actions

A number of recommendations have come out of this event and its aftermath.

A generator capable of powering the entire Fire Department facility would allow for staff to safely continue working.

The Fire Hall, which is currently connected to the internet through Rogers, was completely without internet/wifi. A possible solution would be to have Bell as a backup provider.

The EOC is currently located at the Fire Hall in part because Town Hall does not have a generator. If Town Hall is able to get a generator to power the building, a change of EOC location should be considered as Fire Hall space was at a premium while firefighters were responding at the same time as the MECG was meeting.

Action Items

Observation (Identified strength or challenge)	Recommended improvements or actions
Those living alone (particularly elderly and physically challenged residents had challenges.	Promotion of a buddy system for vulnerable residents.
Not everyone was aware that the MEEG met quickly in the hours following the initial outage.	Ensuring a message is sent to Council to update on MEEG meetings. Make the public aware MEEG is meeting and monitoring the situation. Contact to be made either via text or phone call, as an event permits.
Generators in Town facilities were not sufficient to power entire building, leading to gaps in service.	Identifying where generators should be placed for maximum efficiency; budget planning for replacement or upgrading, where required. Budget discussions should include the cost of undertaking these upgrades.
Cell service for staff trying to communicate internally was spotty, particularly in the early hours of the outage.	Review of Town's cell service provider.
Residents were unable to use their internet as many providers' grids were damaged.	Once wifi is restored or available to charging area at Arena, public should be able to connect there. Discussions with IT should be undertaken to determine how more people could be connected at once.
Current EOC location at Fire Hall is not adequate during an emergency.	EOC should be relocated to a location other than the Fire Hall which would allow full use of fire hall for emergency services personnel responding to calls. A review of EOC requirement should be undertaken to determine a better location.
Public were unaware of updates from Town.	A non-technological method of dissemination information should be advertised before an event. Determine central locations such as poster boards on front window of Arena/Carambeck Community Centre for information/updates to be posted.
Many residents did not have their own emergency kits with essentials like flashlights .	Residents should be reminded regularly of the recommended 72-hour emergency kit that should be accessible in their own home. Staff will continue to post reminders of the need for residents to be prepared to tend to themselves for 72 hours allowing emergency personnel to attend to the situation at hand and those most in need of emergency assistance.
Some feedback was received that CERV was underutilized.	A review of the role of CERV should be undertaken so they can be given tasks for which they have adequate training and the future role of CERV.

Observation (Identified strength or challenge)	Recommended improvements or actions
There was some confusion about the role of the MECG and who was making decisions	More regular training for Council on the role of the MECG and the responsibilities of members of the MECG. OEM Field Officer to attend a training session for Council at Orientation and again at ½ way during Council term to explain roles.
Gas stations and grocery stores were closed as they did not have backup generators to allow them to continue operating	While this is not an area of responsibility for the municipality, Council could draft a motion to send to the Ontario government expressing their desire to see regulations mandating backup generators for essential businesses.
Those with limited financial resources have told Council that they cannot afford an emergency kit	Council should consider a program to allow for the purchase of items for those in need. Council could embark on a program which provides applicants with a kit at no cost. A recommendation should be made to LCSS to have a certain number of their own kits on hand to give to their most vulnerable residents to supplement those provided by Council.
Communication through our radio partners at Lake 88 was not widely known by the public	Ensuring that residents are aware of our partnership with Lake88 for emergency/situation messaging is important. Regular posts reminding residents to tune into the station. Posting this message regularly in CP Scoop and reminding residents to have a battery-powered or crank radio to allow them to hear important messaging would help with this area of concern.
It was noted that the Manager of Recreation and Facilities was not on the previously approved MECG members	Although the Manager of Recreation and Facilities was a part of the MECG meetings from the start of the event, it is recommended that the position be added to the list of members in the Emergency Plan.
In an event that is not declared an emergency, there may still be essentials that need to be provided to the public.	It is recommended that a reserve be set up for the purchase of items like food and water for events where there is not an official declaration of emergency.
The Town of Carleton Place does not have records of vulnerable residents locations.	It is recommended that Lanark County housing maintain a list of their vulnerable residents and do wellness checks on them using their own staff.
The role of Lanark County Social Services is unclear.	It is recommended that LCSS do a presentation to Council as part of Council Orientation or otherwise to create a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Items requiring further discussion between Emergency Management partners

(Items requiring further discussion that cannot be actioned within your jurisdiction)

Discussion at ROMA and AMO would be warranted as many Eastern Ontario municipalities have experienced similar challenges during the aftermath of the storm, focusing on funding for purchases of necessary equipment like generators.

Discussion with Hydro One to understand the power grid and what could be done to mitigate another potential power grid failure.

Discussion with provincial government regarding supply chain issues when a large scale power outage event occurs.