

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health  
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa  
25 April 2022 / 25 avril 2022**

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**Submitted by  
Soumis par:**

**Dr / Dre Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health / Médecin chef en santé publique**

**Contact Person  
Personne ressource:  
Andrew Hendriks, Director,  
Communicable Diseases / Directeur, Maladies Transmissibles  
613-580-2424, x24151, [Andrew.Hendriks@Ottawa.ca](mailto:Andrew.Hendriks@Ottawa.ca)**

**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS2022-OPH-HPS-0001**

**SUBJECT: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AT OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH –  
ANNUAL UPDATE**

**OBJET: GESTION DES URGENCES DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE OTTAWA – MISE À  
JOUR ANNUELLE**

#### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for information.**

#### **RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la Ville d'Ottawa prenne connaissance de ce rapport à titre d'information.**

## BACKGROUND

The [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) (2021) state, “*Emergency management is a critical role that boards of health play in ensuring that they have the capacity to respond to new and emerging events and cope with a range of disruptions.*” It is one of four foundational standards that underlie and support all Ottawa Public Health (OPH) programs.

This report outlines emergency management activities since January 2021 and emphasizes OPH’s central role in supporting the Board of Health to make informed decisions on emergency management policy and direction.

OPH’s extensive work in emergency management has ensured that the organization is able to sustain prioritized core services when challenged with emergencies of significant magnitude and at times concurrent emergencies, as experienced during this year’s appearance of the COVID-19 Delta and Omicron variants as part of the ongoing pandemic response, which has had a substantial impact on the community.

This report is an update to ensure that the Board of Health remains aware of emergency management activities, which include work to reinforce emergency management systems and supporting business continuity for core critical public health services across the health unit. Ongoing relationships with health system and municipal partners have allowed OPH to successfully respond to emergencies in the community and to other situations with potential negative public health impacts.

## DISCUSSION

OPH Emergency Management supports emergency preparedness, prevention / mitigation and ensures integrated, safe, and effective response to, and recovery from, emergencies with public health impacts. To this end, OPH has been a leader and key contributor in many responses in our city during 2021 and in 2022 to-date.

A complete listing of all emergency responses in which OPH participated during the period covered by this report can be found in Document 2, attached. In addition to meeting the pressures of responding to large-scale emergencies during the reporting period, OPH maintained its ongoing commitment to protect the health and safety of Ottawa residents by:

- Ensuring 24/7 access to critical public health services through an on-call program for timely follow-up of urgent infectious diseases, food-borne illnesses, adverse drinking water events, environmental health hazards, and other emergencies with public health impacts

- Keeping area health care practitioners updated with timely mass communication health alerts and information impacting their practice
- Continuing to promote and provide guidance on emergency preparedness through public information channels
- Ensuring that OPH employees receive the emergency management training and education needed to fulfill their responsibilities during an emergency response

As staff remained deployed to the COVID-19 response, OPH's Continuity of Operations plan allowed the health unit to successfully contribute to emergency responses as well as maintain time-critical public health services. Below are highlights from three significant responses during this reporting period.

### **Heat responses**

OPH continues to enhance preparedness for extreme heat-related events to ensure residents are protected. OPH chairs the City of Ottawa Extreme Heat, Cold and Smog (EHCS) Planning Committee, which meets twice yearly to review and update the EHCS Plan.

OPH continued to ensure residents were aware of strategies to keep cool and safe during periods of extreme heat in 2021, given that many City and community amenities remained closed or had limited access due to pandemic restrictions. As a member of the City of Ottawa Extreme Heat Working Group, OPH contributed to update the City's *Heat Response Guide*, to prevent and mitigate adverse health impacts associated with these events, particularly during the state of emergency. This collaboration, with several City departments and stakeholders, ensured residents had accurate and timely information about how to stay safe during periods of extreme hot weather.

There were 4 heat warnings issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2021, resulting in 16 days overall of emergency monitoring (formerly situational awareness).

Emergency cooling centres were stood up by the City of Ottawa to provide air-conditioned spaces for residents. Public health staff were onsite to perform health inspections, review COVID-19 precautions and provide psycho-social support. As well, COVID-19 tools were adapted and updated to screen those presenting at the various locations.

Throughout these heat events, OPH continued to inform the City's Emergency Operations Centre related to the public health impacts of extreme heat. Working with the City of Ottawa's Public Information Media Relations, internal and external communications were disseminated with respect to preparedness and mitigation measures.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

OPH has remained involved in the City Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and managed OPH-specific emergency operations pertaining to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response.

COVID-19 Timeline (a description of the emergency response levels can be found in Document 1, attached)

- City escalated to Activated Operations on March 11, 2020, which was the same date that the first positive case was confirmed in Ottawa and the WHO declared the global pandemic.
- Declared State of Emergency on March 25, 2020, which remained in effect until July 22, 2021.
- Ottawa Public Health entered Enhanced Operations and struck the COVID-19 Immunization Incident Management System (IMS) structure on August 16, 2021.
- The City de-escalated to Enhanced Operations on August 18, 2021.
- Re-escalated to Activated Operations, OPH COVID-19 Immunization IMS transitioned into that EOC on December 13, 2021, in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.
- De-escalated to Monitoring on February 24, 2022.
- The City returned to normal operations on March 11, 2022.

OPH contributed its expertise and resources to support vaccine operations. Several mass vaccine clinics were established, and homebound and door-to-door immunization was offered to members of the community. This collaborative work included prioritization and distribution of doses, advocacy and communications. Epidemiological data by neighborhood was utilized to diminish inequities in vaccination rates and increase uptake in neighbourhoods with lower vaccine uptake.

OPH maintained its long-term temporary structure, established in the fall of 2020 to manage the pandemic from a public health perspective, including Case and Contact Management, Community and School Support, Community Engagement and Communications, and restored and maintained service delivery in the following core services: Dental; Healthy Growth and Development; Environmental Health; Sexual Health & Harm Reduction; Mental Health; and Emergency Management. During this period, OPH also ensured other priority COVID-19 services such as, case management, community outreach, communications, and outbreak response.

With the appearance of the Omicron variant in December 2021, an OPH IMS was stood up with the overall objective to limit rates of morbidity and mortality among Ottawa residents, maintain essential services during a period of high levels of community transmission, support employee wellness, promote and support community wellbeing, mental health and community recovery, and limit community transmission as Ontario eased public health measures.

This IMS focused on the following strategies to achieve the objectives listed above:

- Enacting public health measures to limit community transmission
- Supporting the City of Ottawa EOC COVID-19 response
- Protecting essential services, including public health Services with a focus on employee wellness.
- Providing timely and accurate public health information
- Fostering a coordinated response across the health system

#### **Planned Truck Demonstration:**

The City entered the response level of Monitoring on January 25, 2022, in relation to truck convoys travelling across Canada heading towards the Ottawa for a demonstration against COVID-19-related mandates.

OPH was involved in the City's Planned Truck Demonstration EOC to mitigate the public health impacts on:

- physical health - exposure to smell of diesel and carbon monoxide, incessant loud noise, and disruption of OPH and other health care services in the core area; and

- mental health - insomnia, isolation, stress, anxiety, fear related to intimidation, and exposure to hate symbols and racism.

OPH performed several actions during this response. Within the EOC, OPH contributed to preparing messaging, sharing expertise on environmental health and mental health promotion, supporting staff working in the impacted zone and monitoring the suspension and reactivation of services, serving as a member of the Human Needs Task Force (HNTF), and collaborating with United Way Eastern Ontario and other community partners.

OPH worked with clinical mental health providers and connected providers to various community agencies to scope what services and supports could be enhanced for residents. As well, OPH developed and disseminated resources to promote wellness and positive coping strategies during stressful events, which included information on how residents could access mental health and social services supports.

### **Key Emergency Management Activities by OPH**

Communications: At all levels, communication remains one of the most important elements for continued management of any emergency response. Clear, engaging, and timely communications contribute to protective behaviours and adherence to public health measures.

This included:

- COVID-19 Emergency Response Phone Line Unit, staffed by Public Health Nurses, to provide information and assessment
- OPH Emergency Mass Notification System extending reach to health care and social service partners for situational awareness and staff alerts
- Preparedness messaging related to various risks, such as extreme heat and cold and power outages, as well as responding to stressful events
- Regular communications to Ottawa residents on the COVID-19 pandemic via statements, media availability, social media and tailored messages to communities, business sectors and partners

Surveillance and Epidemiology: These activities are cornerstones of all public health emergency responses. During COVID-19 operations, surveillance informed OPH's response through the analysis and interpretation of important metrics on cases and

contacts, hospitalizations, outbreaks, and deaths; cluster detection; societal impact analysis; and COVID-19 vaccination coverage.

Cold Debriefs: During the reporting period, cold debriefs were held to review actions following emergency events, providing insights on what went well and which areas can be improved upon when planning for future responses.

Tabletop Exercises: To meet the provincial [Emergency Management Guideline](#) (2018) requirement that boards of health exercise their emergency management plans, OPH participated in the following tabletop exercises: COVID Vaccination EOC, virtual fire drill at 100 Constellation, EOC-Control Group (EOC-CG) annual exercise, and a large-scale multiple day Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive (CBRNE) exercise (on-site and tabletop) with the City's first responders and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee of Ottawa partners.

Training and Education: Over the course of the year, training was conducted to increase the number of Duty Officers available to OPH and support was provided for staff taking on leadership roles in an IMS structure. These learning opportunities made it possible for the health unit to rapidly scale up operations to respond to multiple emergencies.

To assist staff serving clients experiencing varying and increasing challenges related to the pandemic, OPH provided Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) Verbal Intervention Training to close to 200 employees from various programs.

Partnerships: Strengthened partnerships are the result of the collaborative work between OPH and its many community, business, hospital, and City partners.

From redeploying City staff and infrastructure, to working as a member of the City of Ottawa HNTF to assess and respond to the needs of Ottawa's priority populations who were disproportionally impacted by COVID-19, OPH's relationship with multiple City of Ottawa departments and healthcare and social service and community organizations generated success in numerous initiatives and responses.

The health unit increased community collaboration with partners offering mental health and substance use health services, continued work on engaging priority populations, and focused on equity by integrating social determinants of health and socio-demographic data in its service delivery and emergency planning.

## **Looking Ahead**

Organizational recovery is an important phase in the emergency management cycle. Having led an unprecedented response, OPH has started its gradual COVID-19 demobilization. The recovery planning process has one overarching goal: to build a stronger, sustainable local public health system that collaborates across health and social sectors. This includes three key components: Recharge (support employee wellness), Restore (restore prioritized services and programs), and Reimagine (identify ideas and opportunities for the future).

The OPH Recovery “Roadmap” outlines the approach that OPH will take to transition from our current to future steady state, where addressing COVID-19 is part of routine operations.

As well, evaluation is a key activity of recovery after an emergency and will be an important undertaking in 2022. OPH is pursuing an independent review of its pandemic response given that it was of a much larger scale than usual emergency responses and much can be learned.

OPH is pursuing the work of integrating its emergency personal protective equipment stockpile within a City-wide automation tracking and replenishment system, as this initiative has been on hold for the last year.

Lastly, technology investment is an OPH strategic priority. This will support the creation of an Electronic Public Health Record and enhance emergency response documentation.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

No stakeholder or public consultation was required in preparing this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.



**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

**ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

**ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

This report aligns with all aspects of Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Emergency Response Escalation Levels

Document 2 – Summary of OPH Emergency Responses 2021 - 2002

**DISPOSITION**

This report is provided for the information of the Ottawa Board of Health.

## Document 1

### **Emergency Response Escalation Levels** *(from the document: City of Ottawa's Municipal Emergency Plan 2021)*

Normal Operations consists of operations that service areas carry out according to their standard operating procedures, guidelines, legislation, policies and procedures. When a response to Normal Operations is required, it is coordinated by Incident Commanders and service area Command Centres.

There are four levels of response escalation that require coordination through the Corporate Duty Officer:

- Monitoring (formerly situational awareness)
- Enhanced Operations
- Activated Operations
- State of Emergency

#### **Monitoring**

Monitoring involves City service areas, partners and stakeholders being made aware of a situation evolving municipally, provincially, nationally or internationally, both privately and publicly, to understand how that situation may have an impact or consequences on Normal Operations. At this level, the Corporate Duty Officer and some or all Duty Officers may be notified and engaged.

#### **Enhanced Operations**

Enhanced Operations indicates a situation that is imminent or occurring and could threaten public safety, public health, the environment, property, critical infrastructure and economic stability. This situation may also be politically sensitive. At this level, the Corporate Duty Officer and some or all Duty Officers are notified and engaged.

#### **Activated Operations**

Activated Operations indicates a situation that requires the engagement of the Senior Leadership Team through the mobilization of the Emergency Operations Centre Control Group (EOCCG) and the Emergency Operations Centre Operations Group (EOC OpsGroup).

The Response Escalation Level Guideline document provides a list of criteria, as defined by the respective departments, for Enhanced Operations and Activated Operations levels.

**State of Emergency**

A State of Emergency is considered when the City has entered into an Activated Operations level situation and the Emergency Operations Centre Control Group recommends to the Head of Council that a State of Emergency be declared.

## Document 2

## Ottawa Public Health 2021-2022 Emergency Responses

OPH Emergency Responses				
Description	Activation Level	Start Date	End Date	Days
Health – Infectious Disease – COVID-19	Situational Awareness	2020-01-23	2020-03-04	42
	Enhanced Operations	2020-03-05	2020-03-10	6
	Activated	2020-03-11	2020-03-24	14
	State of Emergency	2020-03-25	2021-07-22	484
	Activated	2021-07-22	2021-08-18	27
	Enhanced Operations	2021-08-19	2021-12-12	115
	Activated	2021-12-13	2022 (cont)	
174 E - Transport Truck Fuel Leak	Situational Awareness	2021-01-28	2021-01-28	1
The Ottawa Hospital Code Grey (Phone System Outage)	Situational Awareness	2021-02-12	2021-02-12	1
Watermain Break - Bronson, btw Riverside and Brewer Way (impact to Brewer Assessment Centre)	Situational Awareness	2021-03-22	2021-03-23	2
Spring Freshet Monitoring	Situational Awareness	2021-03-22	2021-04-16	26
Precautionary Boil Water Advisory, Suntech Greenhouse, 5541 Doyle Road (migrant farm)	Situational Awareness	2021-06-04	2021-06-10	6
Extreme Heat - emergency cooling centres mobilized	Situational Awareness	2021-06-07	2021-06-09	3
Severe Weather Watch	Situational Awareness	2021-06-21	2021-06-21	1
Extreme Heat - emergency	Situational	2021-06-28	2021-06-	2

cooling centres mobilized	Awareness		29	
Via train and truck collision - Barnsdale Road and Eagleson Rd	Situational Awareness	2021-06-30	2021-06-30	1
Special Event - Canada Day	Situational Awareness	2021-07-01	2021-07-02	2
Air Quality Concern - Northern Ontario Forest Fires	Situational Awareness	2021-07-18	2021-07-27	9
Food Recall warning/ Potential Hepatitis A in frozen mangoes	Situational Awareness	2021-07-31	2021-08-12	13
Extreme Heat - emergency cooling centres mobilized	Situational Awareness	2021-08-10	2021-08-13	4
COVID-19 Immunization - OPH	Situational Awareness	2021-08-16	2021-12-13	119
Extreme Heat - emergency cooling centres mobilized	Situational Awareness	2021-08-20	2021-08-26	7
Social Services Assistance Request for family at YOW	Situational Awareness	2021-08-25	2021-08-25	1
McNabb Arena - potential active threat	Situational Awareness	2021-10-29	2021-11-01	4
Special Event - Remembrance Day	Situational Awareness	2021-11-11	2021-11-11	1
Cleary Watermain Disruption (work to start Nov 22 until mid-April 2022) Water Services Enhanced Ops / City of Ottawa - Sit Awareness, Nov 29	Situational Awareness	2021-11-17	2021-12-31	45
OPH Case Management / Contract Tracing - confirmed Omicron variant	Situational Awareness	2021-11-28	2021-11-28	1
Santa Claus Parade of Lights	Situational Awareness	2021-12-04	2021-12-04	1
OPH Case Mgmt System Down	Situational Awareness	2021-12-04	2021-12-04	1
Health Infectious Disease - COVID Immunization	Activated Operations	2021-12-13	2022-11-03	88
health Infectious Disease -	Enhanced	2021-12-18	2022	

OPH - COVID Omicron	Operations		(cont)	
Fire / Exploding on Merivale Rd.	Enhanced Operations	2022-01-13	2022-01-14	2
Truck Demonstration	Monitoring	2022-01-25	2021-01-27	3
	Enhanced Operations	2022-01-27	2022-01-29	3
	Activated Operations	2022-01-29	2022-02-06	8
	State of Emergency	2022-01-06	2022-02-24	18
	Monitoring	2022-02-24	2022-03-02	6
Truck Demonstration (Next Generation Freedom Convoy)	Monitoring	2022-03-25	2022-03-26	2
<b>Extreme Cold - Frostbite Advisory ((windchill -25C or colder) - Warning (windchill -35C or colder)</b>				
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-01-02	2022-01-02	1
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-01-07	2022-01-07	1
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-10	2022-01-10	1
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-01-11	2022-01-11	1
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-14	2022-01-16	3
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-01-18	2022-01-20	3
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-20	2022-01-22	3
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-01-22	2022-01-23	2
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-23	2022-01-24	2
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-25	2022-01-27	3

Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-01-29	2022-01-30	2
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-02-04	2022-02-06	3
Frostbite Warning	Monitoring	2022-02-12	2022-02-13	3
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-02-1	2022-02-15	2
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-02-25	2022-02-26	2
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-02-27	2022-02-28	2
Frostbite Advisory	Monitoring	2022-03-03	2022-03-04	2
<b>Cyber Security Advisories from Ministry of Health - Health System Emergency Mgmt Branch</b>				
Accellion File Transfer Appliance (FTA) Vulnerability	Situational Awareness	2021-01-19	2022 (cont)	
Accellion File Transfer Appliance Vulnerability Situation Report #2	Situational Awareness	2021-01-28	2021-01-28	1
Supply Chain Attack Mimecast	Situational Awareness	2021-02-03	2022 (cont)	
Water Treatment Plant Incident	Situational Awareness	2021-02-26	2021-02-26	1
Out of Band Microsoft Exch Patches	Situational Awareness	2021-03-01	2021-03-01	1
Fraudulent Spoofed Healthcare Site	Situational Awareness	2021-03-05	2021-03-05	1
Out of Band Microsoft Exch Patches Update	Situational Awareness	2021-03-09	2021-03-09	1
Out of Band Microsoft Exch Patches Update #2	Situational Awareness	2021-03-18	2021-03-18	1
Mamba Ransomware	Situational Awareness	2021-03-30	2021-03-30	1
Actively Exploited SAP Vulnerabilities	Situational Awareness	2021-04-09	2021-04-09	1
Fortinet Vulnerabilities	Situational	2021-04-09	2021-04-	1

	Awareness		09	
Out of Band Microsoft Exch Patches Update 3	Situational Awareness	2021-04-16	2021-04-16	1
Microsoft Exchange Remote Control Execution (RCE) Vulnerabilities	Situational Awareness	2021-04-16	2021-04-16	1
Fortinet Vulnerabilities (Update)	Situational Awareness	2021-04-20	2021-04-20	1
SonicWall VPN Zero Day, Pulse Secure VPN	Situational Awareness	2021-04-23	2021-04-23	1
Avaddon Ransomware	Situational Awareness	2021-05-10	2021-05-10	1
Zerologon	Situational Awareness	2021-06-14	2021-06-14	1
Distributed Denial of Service Extortion	Situational Awareness	2021-06-18	2021-06-18	1
Kaseya Supply Chain Attack	Situational Awareness	2021-07-06	2021-07-06	1
Gootloader	Situational Awareness	2021-07-08	2021-07-08	1
APT Actor Brute Force Campaign	Situational Awareness	2021-07-09	2021-07-09	1
SonicWall End-of-life Devices	Situational Awareness	2021-07-20	2021-07-21	2
Accenture Ransomware	Situational Awareness	2021-08-12	2021-08-12	1
ProxyLogon Vulnerabilities	Situational Awareness	2021-08-26	2021-08-26	1
Azure Cosmos DB Vulnerabilities	Situational Awareness	2021-09-02	2021-09-02	1
REvil Ransomware	Situational Awareness	2021-09-24	2021-09-24	1
54BB47h Ransomware	Situational Awareness	2021-10-22	2021-10-22	1
ProxyLogon Vulnerabilities	Situational Awareness	2021-11-05	2021-11-05	1
CISA Known Exploited Vulnerabilities Catalogue	Situational Awareness	2021-11-10	2021-11-10	1



Conti Ransomware Update	Situational Awareness	2021-11-23	2021-11-23	1
Threats from Russian State Sponsored Actors	Monitoring	2022-01-02	2022-01-02	1
Threats from Russian State Sponsored Actors (update)	Monitoring	2022-02-02	2022-02-02	1
Lockbit Ransomware	Monitoring	2022-02-09	2022-02-09	1
Advisory – Ransomware	Monitoring	2022-02-16	2022-02-16	1
Threats from Russian State Sponsored Actors	Monitoring	2022-02-25	2022-02-25	1
Ragnar Locker Ransomware	Monitoring	2022-03-11	2022-03-11	1
Russian-Ukrainian Conflict, Increased Risk of Distributed Denial of Service Activity	Monitoring	2022-03-11	2022-03-11	1
AvosLocker Ransomware	Monitoring	2022-03-18	2022-03-18	1