



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – PROVINCIAL TRENCH RESCUE TEAM

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: C. MAINPRIZE, FIRE CHIEF/DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES, EXT. 3256

SUBMITTED BY: C. MAINPRIZE, FIRE CHIEF/DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: D. MCALPINE, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the Province of Ontario for Barrie Fire and Emergency Service (BFES) to be designated as a Provincial Technical Rescue (Trench Rescue) Team to aid and support the Province’s Mutual Aid Plan on the following general terms and conditions:
 - a) BFES would participate in an Advisory Committee comprised of members of all of the participating members of the Provincial Trench Rescue Teams and Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM);
 - b) BFES would provide training and equipment necessary to provide the level of service associated with trench rescues and interoperability with other Provincial Technical Rescue Teams as determined by the Advisory Committee;
 - c) BFES would have a Team of up to sixteen (16) emergency responders, with the knowledge and capacity to respond to complex natural, or human-caused trench rescue incidents at a Technician level;
 - d) The OFM would reimburse costs associated with transportation, accommodations, or meals incurred associated with exercises or training it schedules;
 - e) BFES would submit an annual application outlining the training, specialized equipment or exercises it requires to maintain the BFES trench rescue team for provincial deployment for potential reimbursement with an annual maximum of \$100,000, subject to the discretion of the OFM;
 - f) BFES would make best efforts to deploy a Rapid Assessment Team of a minimum of two qualified personnel, no greater than two hours from the notification of deployment by the OFM;
 - g) The OFM would be responsible for acting as a liaison and providing coordination between the Team and the municipality where the incident has occurred; and
 - h) BFES would also be reimbursed for costs associated with the Fire Marshal’s decision to activate the team.

2. That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute similar Memorandums of Understanding with the Province of Ontario for Barrie Fire and Emergency Service to aid and support the Province's Mutual Aid Plan, should the Province wish to extend to other technical rescue disciplines, subject to the terms and conditions being to the satisfaction of the Fire Chief/Director of Emergency Services and Director of Legal Services or designates.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Purpose

3. The purpose of this staff report is to seek authorization to execute a Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the Province of Ontario (operating through the Office of the Fire Marshal) for the activation of Barrie Fire and Emergency Service as a Provincial Technical Rescue Team for trench rescues, to address a gap in specialized fire protection services in areas outside of Barrie.

Background

4. The Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM) is responsible for administering the following provincial legislation that promotes fire protection, fire prevention and public safety in Ontario:
 - The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (FPPA).
 - The Fire Code is a regulation made under the act that governs fire safety standards for equipment, systems, buildings, structures, land, and premises in Ontario.
 - Other regulations made under the act that govern fire safety matters such as, firefighter certification, community risk assessments, mandatory inspections and fire drills in vulnerable occupancies.
5. The OFM is also responsible for facilitating the province-wide activation of highly specialized Technical Rescue Teams. The Fire Marshal has the delegated authority to issue directives to all fire services within the province. A province-wide activation may be required when the nature of an emergency is beyond the scope of an individual responding department or where the Fire and Emergency Services department in the location does not have sufficiently trained personnel for the specific technical nature of the emergency.
6. Municipal fire departments deliver local fire protection and prevention services as established by Council that include fire safety education and fire prevention programs, fire suppression services such as firefighting and conducting inspections to enforce the Fire Code. Municipal fire departments may provide other services that are necessary depending on the specific requirements of the community that they serve.
7. As a career department (versus volunteer-based department) in a mid-sized urban city, Barrie Fire and Emergency Service (BFES) has higher levels of expertise in a number of technical disciplines than exists in many communities. This requires not only having sufficient interested members of the department to develop the level of expertise, but also a significant investment in training and equipment to support the response level.
8. There are three levels of requirements for each specialized technical response discipline including Awareness, Operations, and Technician levels. The amount of training and associated equipment required increases from Awareness to the highest, Technician level. The training and equipment required for higher levels for each level increases and may exceed the capacity or identified requirements of a particular municipality.

9. BFES provides specialized technical rescue services including but not limited to hazardous materials response, rope rescue, high angle, confined space, and trench rescue services for the City of Barrie as well as 16 other municipalities through technical rescue agreements. These agreements share the costs associated with the investment in the higher level of response with other benefiting communities on a fee for service basis.

ANALYSIS

10. The OFM identified that many municipalities do not provide emergency response services to trench rescue incidents due to the cost of performing this type of rescue as well as the cost of training and equipment. In addition, a number of municipalities have not made arrangements to have such services provided by another department/service provider.
11. The BFES trench rescue team is capable of delivering response to a Technician level, the most advanced level.
12. In late 2023, the OFM approached BFES about the opportunity for several departments with the existing advanced level of qualifications to address this gap in trench rescue response in the province. The OFM indicated it would be seeking trained teams to be available to respond to complex natural or human-caused incidents anywhere in Ontario, in support of the Provincial Mutual Aid Plan as Rapid Assessment Teams.
13. A draft Memorandum of Understanding regarding the potential Team was provided by the OFM in January 2024. It has been reviewed by both BFES and the City's legal department.
14. Should BFES be authorized to participate in a Memorandum of Understanding, the Fire Marshal could request the activation of all or part of a BFES trench rescue team and deploy the team within a specified area of the Province. BFES would be required to have a Team of up to sixteen (16) emergency responders, with the knowledge and capacity to respond to complex natural, or human-caused trench rescue incidents in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1670 (2014): Operations and Training for Technical Rescue Incidents (Chapter 11 Trench Search and Rescue) at a Technician level.
15. BFES would be required to make best efforts to deploy a Rapid Assessment Team of a minimum of two qualified personnel, no greater than two hours from the notification of deployment by the OFM. The OFM would be responsible for acting as a liaison and providing coordination between the Team and the municipality where the incident has occurred.
16. Under the terms of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, BFES would be required to provide training to its members of the Trench Rescue Team, when deemed necessary by OFM, including an annual training exercise. At least four members of the BFES team would be required to participate in all training offered by OFM.
17. The OFM would reimburse costs associated with transportation, accommodations, or meals incurred associated with exercises or training it schedules.
18. BFES would be required to ensure that it has the equipment necessary to provide the level of service associated with trench rescues. BFES already budgets for trench rescue training and equipment of its members, due to the community need primarily generated by construction projects. However, to ensure interoperability with other departments in the province who may form part of a Rapid Response Team, additional or different training or equipment may be required. The training and equipment requirements would be established through an Advisory Committee comprised of members of all of the participating teams and OFM.

19. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, BFES would be required to submit an annual application outlining the training, specialized equipment or exercises it requires to maintain the BFES trench rescue team for provincial deployment as well as invoices with the associated costs. BFES would be eligible for reimbursement of the training, specialized equipment and related administrative services with an annual maximum of \$100,000, subject to the discretion of the OFM.
20. BFES would also be reimbursed for costs associated with the Fire Marshal's decision to activate the team. Such reimbursement would not occur if BFES is attending at a municipality where it already has an existing agreement to provide specialized technical rescue services with the municipality on a fee for service basis.
21. The OFM has indicated that it may be interested in expanding province-wide teams to other specialized technical rescue disciplines. As such, staff have included a paragraph that would provide authority for the Mayor and City Clerk to execute similar types of agreements where the terms and conditions are satisfactory to the Fire Chief/Director of Emergency Services and Director of Legal Services, or their designates.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

22. There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

23. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee could receive this report for information purposes only and take no further action.

Although this alternative is available, it is not recommended. Executing a Memorandum of Understanding with the OFM allows the opportunity for BFES to provide its technical expertise to other municipalities facing complex trench rescue incidents. It also shares costs related to the training and equipment associated with this advanced level of response with the OFM.

Alternative #2

General Committee could recommend that the Trench Rescue Memorandum of Understanding be authorized but not authorize the execution of any future similar agreements.

This alternative is available. This would require any future opportunities to be presented to General Committee and Council.

FINANCIAL

24. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding would allow for BFES to be reimbursed for costs associated with trench rescue training, specialized equipment and related administrative services with an annual maximum of \$100,000. This agreement would result in a sharing of the financial impact to City of Barrie taxpayers for providing this level of expertise beyond Barrie's boundaries.
25. BFES would also be reimbursed for costs associated with the Fire Marshal's decision to activate the trench rescue Rapid Response Team. Reimbursement would not occur if BFES is attending at a municipality where it already has an existing agreement to provide specialized technical rescue services with the municipality on a fee for service basis.

LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

26. The recommendations included in this Staff Report are not directly related to the goals contained in 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.