

Emergency Support

ISSUE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on a request for service that has been received by the Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD), from the Province of Saskatchewan, regarding providing support to the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre (the Correctional Centre) related to an outbreak of SARS CoV-2 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Other requests from the province, or other municipalities, could come forward in the future. This report outlines SFD's intended approach to providing ongoing support in our community.

BACKGROUND

The SFD has been supporting our community through operational response and incident management since the beginning of COVID-19 in early March 2020. With increasing demands on emergency service, medical service, and care home assistance, the SFD's Tactical Operation Center (TOC) has undertaken preplanning to prepare for the anticipated request for service from Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

CURRENT STATUS

Key working relationships with service agencies are maintained for an aligned focus on public safety.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Fire services across the province have an all-hazard response model. Recently, the Regina Fire and Protective Services assisted with Parkside Extendicare due to a request from the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).

A request for service has been made to the SFD from Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) services to support on-site medical staff at the Correctional Centre located at 910 60th Street East, due to the reduction of Registered Nurses, currently in self-isolation, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

SFD Firefighter/Primary Care Paramedic (FF/PCP) staff would assist on-site medical staff at the Correctional Centre with regular inmate medical wellness checks including vital signs and in certain cases, when requested, conduct nasal swabs for COVID-19 testing.

This request has been discussed with SHA's Executive Director of Primary Health Care – Saskatoon and the information has been reviewed by the SHA's TOC. It was determined this situation will not involve the SHA and would be a direct agreement between the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and the SFD.

Emergency Support

The SFD has a history of supporting communities across the province. This support has been provided in many ways; understanding that the SFD has a diverse skill set for operational response and incident management. Some examples include supporting:

- Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency
 - o Guernsey Train Derailment,
 - o Southern Saskatchewan Floods, and
 - o La Ronge Forest Fires
- City of Humboldt (Humboldt Broncos Tragedy)
 - o SFD/ Saskatoon Emergency Management Organization (EMO) Support, and
 - o Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Response for First Responders
- Meadow Lake - Provincial CISM Response
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) - Ongoing Dive Recovery
- SHA - Training of First Responders

Prior to this request, 32 SFD FF/PCPs had completed training for COVID-19 swab testing at the request of the SHA. Ongoing training is occurring for additional requests for service to support care homes (should an outbreak be declared), community swab testing, and immunization.

Requests would go through the EMO; following a formal Incident Command process. An assessment form (TOC 401) will identify the current situation, outstanding challenges, and serve as an official request for service. This process establishes a proper decision-making framework that will be applied to determine impacts to the SFD, and the corporation, such as capacity for staffing models.

Protecting the health and safety of SFD staff is an essential part of every action taken. Operating in a COVID-19 environment, an assessment is completed daily to determine the best way to provide service to the citizens of Saskatoon. The nature of our work is that close contact with each other or with citizens in need cannot be avoided, as it is core to our work.

As such, protection of staff is achieved through operational practices and a high level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required in the workplace. This includes:

- Medical Grade Exam Mask (when higher level of PPE is not required)
- Gowns or Tyvek Suits
- Full Face Shield (or Goggles) with Medical Grade Exam Mask
- Medical Grade Gloves

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The SFD attempts to keep consistent core cohorts intact as much as possible in the workplace to further reduce the risk of virus spread. However, this is not always achievable as staff must be re-deployed at times to ensure service is consistent throughout all fire stations. The SFD has evaluated different alternatives to supporting the latest request from the province and has resolved that the most appropriate approach is to have staff, on days off, perform the service.

The SFD has determined that staff working at the Correctional Centre will be no more at risk than staff operating in fire stations in a normal environment and could in fact be at a lower risk due to the controlled nature of the expected environment at the Correctional Centre. In contrast, if staff were taken off shift and dedicated to the Correctional Centre, this would increase movement of staff between stations, as staff would be required to backfill the shifts of the staff who have volunteered to fulfill this request.

All reasonable precautions are taken, mirroring those used by health professionals in the SHA, resulting in SFD staff being in the safest position possible considering the nature of work. Because of the added task, supporting the province, or any other agency in need, does bring a level of additional risk to staff and the SFD. However, all things considered, including the high level of training and capacity of SFD staff, Administration believes the SFD is as well positioned as any entity to offer professional assistance to the province for this type of work.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any such requests listed above would be approached on a full cost-recovery basis.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

NEXT STEPS

A follow-up report, upon completion of the requested service, will be provided to Council.

Written and Approved by: Morgan Hackl, Fire Chief

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