

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Chair and Members of Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

FROM: Bruce Morrison, Deputy Fire Chief

DATE: April 6, 2018

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-FIRE-2018-0009

RE: Alert Ready Public Alerting System Enhancements

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise the Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee of the most recent enhancement to the National Alert Ready public alerting system.

BACKGROUND:

Alert Ready is a national service designed to deliver critical and potentially life-saving emergency alerts to Canadians. In Ontario this program allows the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) to broadcast immediate alerts to the public. These alerts provide information on what action members of the public would need to take to keep themselves and other affected persons safe. Until recently, alerts were deliverable to affected areas via television/ radio broadcasts, Twitter, Facebook and through existing email and text subscriptions.

COMMENTS:

Commencing April 6, 2018 the Alert Ready emergency alerting system is expanding its ability to notify Canadians of potentially life threatening situations through Canada's cellular phone networks. Wireless "geo-targeted", immediate alerts to the public will compel all compatible phones on Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks in the targeted area to emit an alarm and display a bilingual text warning of the situation. Instructions on the appropriate course of action to take will also be part of this alert.

An Alert must meet the following criteria:

- (1) A confirmed incident (through municipal, ministry or other officials);
- (2) there is an immediate or imminent threat to life, or a serious threat to public health, safety and security, or substantial damage to property; and

- (3) An immediate broadcast with a call to action may help reduce the potential threat to life, public safety, security or damage to property.

Types of scenarios that may cause an alert to be initiated are localized 9-1-1 outages, fires (large structure or wild-land fires), natural events (earthquake, tornado), terrorist threat and Amber Alerts. A comprehensive list of the types of situations that could trigger an emergency notification can be found at the alertready.ca website.

The Alert Ready notification will not turn "On" a compatible phone that is turned "Off" nor can it force a "muted" phone to play the audible alarm. The Canadian Radio and Telephone Commission (CRTC) has stated that these messages are too important to be optional and for this reason wireless network providers cannot allow a subscriber to "opt-out" of this service. To ensure you have a compatible device, it is recommended to check with your carrier network.

CONCLUSION:

The enhancement of the Alert Ready program to provide for wireless public alerting in geo-targeted areas ensures timely notifications are relevant to those members of the public who may be affected. In addition, it also provides the necessary information in order to take steps necessary to protect themselves.

Reviewed and Approved by,

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John deHooze, Chief & Commissioner of Fire Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brent" being more prominent.

Brent Marshall, CAO