Thunder Bay Flood Disaster 2012

Presenters:

Mayor Keith Hobbs
Fire Chief John Hay
Darrell Matson, General Manager of Infrastructure & Operations
Tim Commisso, City Manager
Mayor Keith Hobbs

Welcome and Introductions

Personal Reflection of the Flooding Event
The Weather Event
Flood Disaster of May 28, 2012

- More rain fell in Thunder Bay and area in two hours than normally falls on the City the entire month of May.
- Approximately 77 mm of rain fell in sheets over the Neebing River Watershed.
- An unprecedented amount of rainfall in a short timeframe caused life-altering destruction for many homeowners and businesses.
- Storm contributed to flash flooding and reached the 100-year return.
Declaration of Emergency - May 28, 2012

- Emergency Operations Control (EOC) Group convenes at 7 a.m.
- A Declaration of Emergency is declared for the City of Thunder Bay at 8:15 a.m.
• 7th declared emergency in 7 years in Thunder Bay
• Largest in scope, scale and duration
• Impacted the most citizens
• 4,000 to 5,000 estimated impacted homes
• Impacted the most infrastructure
• Most expensive
• Minor impact on day-to-day City service delivery (some increases)
Emergency Response

• Right people at the right place at the right time
• EOC deployment swift and continuous for 6 weeks
• Incident Management System (IMS) utilized
• Incident Command Structure (with org chart) put in place
• Departmental Emergency Plans activated
• Area Command and Sectoring tools used
Emergency Response

- Disaster Relief Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and community groups worked closely with EOC
- Immediate life threats and needs dealt with, including temporary accommodation (e.g. Lakehead University)
- Established the “Safe Homes” program
- Weather cooperated, threat was static
- Scope and scale of disaster continued to be assembled
- Dedicated 24/7 police patrols to address disorder issues
• IMS provides the structure to effectively guide and support large-scale multi-agency responses
• Provides the required discipline and reporting mechanisms for asset management and resource allocation and coordination
• Modular and expandable
• Discourages “freelancing”
Emergency Management

- EOC ran by IMS - task board, great tool (50 major tasks identified and completed)
- Well trained and experienced City staff
- EOC members stayed within their roles
- Freelancing minimized
- Political influence minimized
- Outstanding efforts on internal and external communications (21 media briefings in 4 weeks)
Lessons Learned

- EOC structure and process worked very well
- Freelancing creates risk and adds confusion
- Social media is a reality and needs to be managed and integrated as part of emergency planning
- Communications is critical and media engagement is key
- EOC needs a capital investment
Infrastructure Response

• City crews dispatched immediately to undertake repairs to return to pre-flood conditions
• Assessment of damage to City infrastructure including roads, bridges, sewers and trails
• Water restrictions imposed across the City
• “Drop everything” priority for many City staff
• Immediate response and recovery to repair substantial damages to the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP)
• Subsequent daily assessments of the WPCP plant condition and systems
• Daily updates to EOC and community on City infrastructure conditions
Disaster Mitigation Measures

- Safe Homes Program (approx. 500 homes assisted)
- Special Garbage Collection
- Fees for Repairs – Building Permits, TSA charges
- Water Charges Rebates
- Extended Landfill Hours (fees waived)
- Disaster Relief Committee
Independent Engineering Assessment of the WPCP underway to analyze the flooding of the plant for the purposes of repair and recovery work and for future action to prevent future Plant flooding.

Neighbourhood Master Stormwater Drainage Study to be conducted in those areas that were most directly impacted by the flooding event including McKellar and Northwood Wards.

Residential Drainage Assistance Program Options to outline a number of potential options for Council’s consideration that are directed at providing assistance to homeowners with respect to storm drainage related matters.
Community Response

Key Communication Channels:
• Dedicated flood webpage
• 98-FLOOD information line
• City Facebook Page
• Disaster Relief Agencies and community groups (e.g. Red Cross, Salvation Army)
• Outcome: Clear regular communication and consistent channels
Community Response

Media Relations:
• 40 media releases
• 21 media briefings
• Minister’s announcement
• Outcome: Strong and consistent media relations with excellent use of virtually all messages and daily sidebars on service info
Community Response

Direct Communication to Residents:
• Two public meetings by end of first week in response to public need for face-to-face communication
• Mayor’s guest editorial in Chronicle-Journal within three days (included messages that were repeated in newspaper editorials and citizen commentary)
• MyTBay Citizen Newsletter / Facebook
• “Blue Shirts” at St. Peter’s Church
• Two follow-up public meetings when Disaster Relief Forms available
• Outcome: Adaptive and responsive to public needs
Questions & Answers