

YORK REGION LONG-TERM CARE

Emergency Preparedness and Response Communication Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide an overview of how communications will be managed during an emergency (as listed on page 3) to ensure effective, timely, consistent and reliable information is shared with stakeholders.

This plan includes a process to ensure frequent and ongoing communication on the emergency in the home (including at the beginning of the emergency); when there is a significant status change throughout the course of the emergency; and when the emergency is over. The plan also includes a Communication Action Plan that can be used to communicate quickly and effectively during an emergency to residents, substitute decision-makers, staff, volunteers, students, caregivers, contracted service providers, York Region Council, the Residents' Council and Family Council, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

This communication plan is an appendix to York Region's Long-Term Care Homes Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.

GOALS

- To ensure the quick and accurate dissemination of information for the safety and well-being of staff, residents and other key stakeholders
- To ensure that staff, resident and stakeholders affected by the emergency are updated until the emergency is resolved

AUDIENCES

Primary

- Staff, students and volunteers at Maple Health Centre and Newmark Health Centre
- Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre residents and their family members, substitute decision-makers, and designated caregivers

Secondary

- York Regional Council
- Local elected officials, including Ward Councillors
- Internal staff and contractors
- Staff from other York Region departments and branches who support Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre (i.e., Public Health, SEEM, Access York, etc.)

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- External stakeholders
- Local municipalities
- Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care
- Other provincial health agencies
- Provincial ministries with overlapping jurisdiction
- Health care providers (e.g., local hospitals, emergency departments, primary care physicians)
- First responders (e.g., York Paramedics York Regional Police, Fire Services)
- Media

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Long-Term Care has adopted an Incident Management System (IMS) to help plan for and respond to major emergencies. IMS provides a standard set of roles and responsibilities for each function that makes up the incident management team. The Long-Term Care IMS is outlined in York Region’s Long-Term Care Homes Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.

ACTIVATING THE EMERGENCY PLAN

The emergency plan may be activated by the Administrator (or designate) of each Long-Term Care Home in situations outlined in the Long-Term Care Emergency Plan. If the Emergency Plan is activated, this Emergency Preparedness and Response Communication Plan may be consulted to guide required communications.

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

To prepare for and to respond to common emergencies, Long-Term Care has implemented an emergency code system. Each emergency code addresses a common or serious risk to residents and staff. Activation of each emergency code is designated to a specific role.

EM-04: Emergency Plans

Outbreak Plan
Epidemic and Pandemic Plan
Fire Safety Plan (Code Red)
External Disasters (Code Orange)
Violent Outbursts (Code White)
Bomb Threats (Code Black)
Medical Emergencies (Code Blue)
Chemical Spills (Code Brown)
Missing Resident (Code Yellow)
Essential Service (Code Grey)
Gas Leaks (Code Grey)
Boil Water Advisories (Code Grey)
Floods (Code Grey)

REGIONAL EMERGENCIES AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

In the event of a Regional Emergency where the corporate IMS structure has been activated, **Corporate Communications** will assume the role of Public Information Officer. Specific roles and responsibilities in these cases are available in the [York Region's Emergency Plan](#).

If the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) has been activated, all crisis communication/issues-related response will be managed through the Public Information Officer who is part of the Command Team in the REOC. Communication staff will be alerted along with other communications and emergency management teams.

If the emergency **does not** require corporate crisis communication support, the Paramedic and Seniors Services Communications Team will use the long-term care emergency preparedness and response communication plan as guidance.

COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN

The Communication Action Plan includes:

- Communication objectives of the emergency
- Specific actions based on the information known for communication with employees, residents, substitute decision makers and other identified stakeholders
- Guidelines for preparing key messages based on the information known

COMMUNICATION METHODS

Internal Staff Notifications

During an emergency, it is important for Long-Term Care to be able to contact staff in the event that additional support is needed to provide resident care. The Scheduling unit will conduct a call out using the scheduling call out procedure.

Communication for internal LTC Home individuals

During an emergency, there must be frequent and ongoing communication to residents, substitute decision-makers, staff, volunteers, students, caregivers, the Residents' Council and the Family Council, as appropriate, during the following:

- at the beginning of the emergency
- when there is any significant change during the emergency
- when the emergency is over

During an emergency it is important that Long-Term Care communicates with residents, substitute decision makers and residents' families, as appropriate, to inform them of the following:

- Any disruption that could affect resident care
- An evacuation of the Homes
- The status of their family member

Communication Equipment

Long-Term Care homes are required to have access to reliable communications equipment for obtaining emergency assistance, including in the event of a power outage. This could include a charged portable phone that is centrally located, that all staff know about. However, should there be a telecommunications interruption, the portable phone may not work and access to other forms of communication should be available, such as a landline, walkie talkie, page system on desk phones and runners who are designated to transfer messages physically should the need arise. All staff must be aware of these communication methods.

Contact information should be available on communication devices to be shared with emergency service providers.

Internal Communication Methods

Keeping employees, volunteers and other internal stakeholders informed about the emergency event is an important part of the overall communications plan. Maintaining internal communications can help to address staff concerns and plan for potential disruptions to service. There are many formal and informal channels where information is exchanged.

These may include:

- Email (i.e., memos, newsletters)
- MyPortal (York Beat)
- Telephone/text
- Bulletin Boards
- Face-to-Face
- Public Address (PA) System
- Enterprise Notification System (CHS)
- York Region Staff Emergency Hotline

External Communication Methods

The Plan outlines guidelines for communicating with York Region residents and other external stakeholders.

Some communication methods include:

- Access York
- York Region's corporate website (york.ca)
- Social media (@YorkRegionGovt and @YorkParamedics)
- Media
- Signage
- Public Service Announcement
- Email communication

COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All communications will go through the standard Long-Term Care approval process where the following roles will be required to review and approve all communication materials:

- PSS, Supervisor, Communications and Community Relations

- PSS, Manager, Policy, Planning and Communication
- Administrators, Maple and Newmarket Health Centres (as appropriate)
- Director, Seniors Services
- GM, Paramedic and Seniors Services (as appropriate)

Should the emergency require media relations and/or crisis, issues and risk communication support, the Strategic Engagement and Emergency Management (SEEM) team is available during regular business hours and after hours. During regular business hours, the Program Manager, Departmental Communications is available for support.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE OUTBREAKS

In the event of a communicable disease outbreak such as COVID-19, York Region's Long-Term Care homes will follow the existing communication process as outlined in the Seniors Services Process for COVID Incident Related Communications which includes guidance from York Region Public Health.

TESTING AND EVALUATING THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The Long-Term Care Emergency Preparedness and Response Communication Plan and various tools for disseminating information will be tested and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure functionality. Testing and evaluation of communications will be part of the emergency planning evaluation and quality improvement plan that will undergo an annual review. All Long-Term Care staff should be made aware of the communication plan and the roles and responsibilities they may have. This plan will be reviewed annually, led by the Supervisor, Communications and Community Relations, and updated to ensure all information, such as messages and contacts, is accurate.

CONTACTS

Please contact the Paramedic and Seniors Services Communication Team for questions regarding this Long-Term Care Emergency Preparedness and Response Communication Plan.