



2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Sarnia Fire Rescue Services

The City of Sarnia manages its Fire Rescue Services under the permission and requirements of the Province of Ontario. The most important legislation, as it pertains to fire protection services, is the 1997 Ontario Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA).

The main objectives of the Sarnia Fire Rescue Services are to prevent fires, to educate the public with regards to fire related risks, and to fight and suppress fires whenever they may occur. Fire prevention, public education, and fire suppression are provided to the City's 71,500¹ residents, its business community, as well as adjoining communities through various agreements.

The service employs 119 individuals within four divisions: administration, prevention, training, and fire suppression. The City's firefighters are organized in four platoons working from five stations located throughout the City's 168 square kilometer area.

2.2 Mission Statement

The services' Mission Statement reads as follows:

"The Sarnia Fire Rescue Services is committed to protecting the people and property within our community. We will be responsive to the needs of our citizens by providing rapid, professional, humanitarian services essential to the health, safety and well being of the community.

We will accomplish our mission through prevention, education, fire suppression, rescue, emergency medical services and other related activities. We will actively participate in our community, serve as role models and strive to effectively and efficiently utilize all of the necessary resources at our command to provide a product deemed excellent by our citizens." (*Sarnia Fire Rescue Services – January 10, 1998*)

2.3 Context

The City's Fire Rescue Services operates its mandate within a unique region which includes: residential areas; a large industrial base; and important transportation corridors such as the CN Rail underwater tunnel, the Bluewater Bridge border crossing, and Highway 402.

Geographically, the City of Sarnia stretches east along the southern shore of Lake Huron and south along the banks of the St. Clair River. It is known internationally as a significant industrial centre and as Canada's largest cluster of chemical, allied manufacturing and research and development facilities. It also serves as a regional retail and commercial centre and is home to a thriving and growing tourism industry.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2006 census data



2.4 Stakeholders

There are a variety of stakeholders within the regional landscape that have a long history of cooperation especially in regards to mutual aid and emergency preparedness. A few noteworthy examples include; the Chemical Valley Emergency Coordinating Organization (CVECO) and the Community Awareness Emergency Response (CAER) organization. In addition, fire service agreements are in place between the City of Sarnia Fire Rescue Services and the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, as well as the Municipality of Lambton Shores.

2.4.1 Brief History of CVECO and CAER

The Chemical Valley Emergency Coordinating Organization (CVECO) was formed in 1951 following a fire explosion at a local petrochemical plant. Its main role, as the name suggests, is to coordinate public and private resources in response to emergencies within Chemical Valley.

In 1985, the Lambton Industrial Society developed a community awareness program in Lambton County. The newly organized Community Awareness Committee (CAC) subsequently became the "CA" part of Community Awareness Emergency Response (CAER), and CVECO became the "ER" part of the organization. In fact, Sarnia was one of the first three municipalities in Canada to be recognized by industry for its CAER integrated emergency preparedness approach.

The CAER Community Awareness Committee (CAC) is comprised of volunteers from industrial and municipal organizations who participate in mutual aid. The purpose of the CAC is to educate the residents of Lambton County and St. Clair County (Michigan) through direct communication and participation in programs or events that increase community knowledge about:

- Hazards associated with certain chemicals;
- Recommended responses to emergency situations including industrial incidents or severe weather conditions; and
- Emergency response preparedness of municipal and industrial stakeholders.

Over the years CVECO has grown to include more than fifty government, industry, utility and business groups in both Ontario and Michigan. Emergency medical services and community health services have long been active on a number of CVECO and CAER committees. Current community members include the City of Sarnia, Lambton County, the Township of St. Clair, the Village of Point Edward, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and St. Clair County, USA. For further information see **Appendix A – CVECO Members**.

2.4.2 Fire Service Agreements

Fire protection agreements are contracts between municipalities that outline the terms and conditions of the service agreement. They define responsibilities, resources and associated costs, if applicable. An automatic aid agreement generally specifies a fee for service and is meant to augment one department's resources on an as-required basis. In terms of level of service, the responding fire department is an extension of the municipality purchasing the service.



The Aamjiwnaang First Nation is a community of about 850 Chippewa (Ojibwe) peoples, located on the shores of the St. Clair River and located in proximity to many industrial installations. Sarnia Fire Rescue provides fire protection services to the Aamjiwnaang First Nation along with Froomfield, a non-First Nation residential area south of the reserve land.

This agreement is provided as approved under City of Sarnia Bylaw 9694 which was passed August 2, 1988. Sarnia Fire Rescue Services provide Fire Prevention and Public Education services, as requested and are responsible for fire and hazardous material response. Given the department's heavy workload, the fee received for these services may not be sufficient to justify detracting staff resources from their primary responsibilities to the City of Sarnia.

Fire service agreements are in place to provide fire prevention and inspection services for the community of Lambton Shores. The same argument about staff resources applies to this agreement and is discussed further in **Section 4**.

Reciprocal aid agreements exist between the City of Port Huron (Michigan) and the City of Sarnia, for a variety of areas such as fire protection, social services, operations, emergency medical services, transit services, as well as customs and immigration. The Village of Point Edward is a member of CVECO and also a member of the Lambton County Mutual Aid system. Sarnia Fire Rescue Services provide suppression services into Point Edward if requested to do so, but this is not reciprocal.

2.4.3 Sarnia Emergency Management

Emergency Planning is directed by the "Sarnia Emergency Management Program Committee" which is responsible for maintaining the City's emergency response plan. The committee is comprised of the Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC), the Sarnia Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) Emergency Coordinator, the Director of Community Services, the Sarnia Police Chief (and/or designate) and the Sarnia Fire Chief (and/or designate). Sarnia Emergency Management operates out of the Emergency Operations Centre located in the Police Station at 555 Christina Street.

In the event of an emergency attempts would be made to contact and/or assemble members of the primary control group (**Table 2.1**). The general public would be informed in any number of ways including door to door notification, mobile loud speaker announcements, media programming interruptions, as well as municipal alert sirens, which are located in the south part of the City and tested every Monday at 12:30pm.



Table 2.1 Primary Control Group

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| Head of Council |
| Chairman of The Emergency Operation Centre (Police Chief) |
| City Manager |
| Chief of Police Service (Chief Designate) |
| Chief of Fire Services |
| Medical Officer of Health |
| Assistant Medical Coordinator |
| Media Coordinator |
| Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) |
| City Clerk |
| Director of Community Services |
| Chief of the Aamjiwnaang of Sarnia |
| Industrial Advisor (when requested from CVECO) |
| City Engineer |

2.5 Documentation and References

Recent studies and reports which relate to the fire department and its functions include:

- Sarnia Fire Rescue Services Annual Report (2003);
- Core Services Review Sarnia Fire Rescue Services (2005);
- Training Manual: Brief from the Sarnia Fire Rescue Services Training Division for the development of the strategic plan;
- Station Location Review (1997);
- Fire Master Plan (1990);
- Development Charges Study - BMA Financial report (2005);
- Municipal Study - BMA (2005 and 2006); and
- City Emergency Management Response Plan (2004).

These reports were used as resources for this Fire Master Plan study.