



# Staff Report

## Administration – Chief Administrative Officer

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**Report To:** COW- Admin, Corp and Finance, SI, Comm. Services  
**Meeting Date:** August 25, 2025  
**Report Number:** ADM.25.048  
**Title:** Freezing Rain Event Debrief  
**Prepared by:** Adam Smith, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report ADM.25.048 entitled “Freezing Rain Event Debrief” for information.

### B. Overview

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The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the freezing rain event, identify safety and service disruptions, assess the Town’s response and outline recommendations for future emergencies that may occur.

This report provides summary information about the freezing rain event that occurred on March 29 and 30, 2025 and the week following. A debrief was completed to evaluate the response, document key findings and recommendations from the event.

### C. Background

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On March 29 and 30, 2025, the Town received a freezing rain event that impacted the southwestern part of municipality. The storm caused significant damage including flooding, downed trees and hydro lines, hazardous road conditions, and power outages. Areas most affected included roads around Scenic Caves Road, 21<sup>st</sup> Sideroad, 4<sup>th</sup> line, sections of Grey Road 119 and Swiss Meadows.

This event brought heavy freezing rain across central and eastern Ontario. Ice accumulation was reported as 3-4 inches causing broken trees, hydro poles and lines and widespread hydro outages. Later in the week as temperatures warmed up there was excessive rainfall with up to 70 mm of precipitation occurring in one day.

The Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) met daily with meetings beginning on March 30, 2025, through to April 8, 2025. A debrief meeting was held on April 9, 2025.

The Communications team sent out the first Maintenance and Service disruption on March 30, 2025, at 8:27 am, followed by another media release at 4:30 pm. Updates and notices were released until April 4, 2025.

The Town did not state a declaration of an emergency as the MCEG concluded that the event did not meet all the requirements for declaration.

## **D. Analysis**

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### Town Infrastructure

There was no significant damage to Town infrastructure. Water and Wastewater staff reported power outages and high flows but no significant issues. Roads staff reported several road closures because of down trees, powerlines and flooding. Fire Department staff reported the communications tower for the Fire Department Station #2 area radio signal was inoperable.

### Safety Concerns

Immediate safety concerns were with the downed trees and other debris, flooding of roads and live power lines down. Grey Road 119 had significant damage and there was no emergency access to Swiss Meadows. Other concerns were damage to homes because of flooding or trees down. Flood notices were received by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority and Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority due to the intensity and amount of rain received.

The public was asked to avoid unnecessary travel and not to travel on closed roads until staff could assess conditions, report power lines down and remove debris. Other safety messaging was sent to residents through the daily updates and notices.

### Service Disruptions

There were several service disruptions and hazards that occurred. Wastewater service disruption was issued for residents on low-pressure force main sewer systems and residents were advised that the pumps will not function during a power outage. These residents were asked to limit water usage and avoid flushing toilets. Wastewater staff reported treatment plants and pumping stations were experiencing high flows, power outages and those not operational required hauling out of sewage. Generators were used for backup power and staff needed to ensure that fuel was topped up. A wastewater overflow bypass occurred on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Mill Street Sewage Pumping Station and the Craigeith Wastewater Treatment Plant.

There were widespread power outages in the affected area and for most of southern Ontario. The time limit for restoration was initially 1-2 days but the time increased up to 2 weeks as Hydro One crews assessed the damage. Hydro was not restored until April 6, 2025, for most of the residents.

Garbage pick-up for residents along Grey Road 119, Scenic Caves and Swiss Meadows was not completed the week of March 31, 2025. Garbage trucks were unable to gain access to these areas as Hydro One had closed the road and access to these areas.

To remedy these service disruptions and safety concerns the Town did the following:

- Fire Department staff worked with Hydro One and OPP making sure access to Swiss Meadows was a priority and by the morning of March 31, 2025, the area was cleared for emergency services.
- The communications tower for Fire Department Station #2 had power restored and radio communication as soon as possible once crews were able to access the generator.
- Water services had potable water available at the Town's Water Operations Centre and non-potable water at any of the Town facilities. Wastewater followed its protocols due to the overflow and bypass events notifying the public, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation Parks and Grey Bruce Public Health.
- Town facilities opened to residents who needed to shower, charge their devices, and get water etc; Beaver Valley Community Centre, Fire Department Station #1, L.E. Shore Public Library and Town Hall.
- Solid waste department assisting with removal of debris from homes that had experienced flooding by removing the bag tag requirements the week of March 31, 2025, and April 7, 2025. Residents who did not get their garbage collected due to road closures were able to put out 6 bags the week of April 7, 2025. The landfill site was also open at regular business hours for residents.
- Safety messaging was sent out with ice storm updates with additional precautions and reminders to residents without power.
- With the prolonged power outages, the OPP and Fire Department completed wellness checks. The results being that approximately 80% had generators and residents were grateful for the checks. However, there were multiple residents where no one was home when the checks occurred.

### Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) Response

During the week of March 31<sup>st</sup>, the MECG met daily with a focus on receiving updates from various departments and agencies involved in the emergency response and assessing conditions to determine resource needs. For this particular event, the MECG included attendance from the CAO's Office, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Communications, Operations, Fire Services, Community Services and the OPP. The MECG continually monitored the pressures imposed by the event on services and discussed whether a Declaration of Emergency by the municipality would support recovery. These discussions were informed by the Town's Emergency Response Plan, the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and the *Considerations for a Declaration of Emergency* document provided by Emergency Management Ontario (Attachment #1).

Ultimately, the MECG was confident in its ability to manage the impacts of the storm with existing resources and recognized, given the scale of damage across the Province, that a declaration would not in itself mobilize additional personnel and material from elsewhere. This was reinforced in a review of the *Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance* grant program offered by the Province. The Town did not meet the necessary financial threshold for assistance being at least equal to three per cent of a municipality's own purpose taxation levy – meaning costs of over \$600K for disaster recovery.

## Community Response

There were approximately 60 telephone calls and 4 webform requests that were received over the event and included service requests for flooding, culvert maintenance, ditch maintenance, road conditions, roadside debris, and trees down. Other concerns from residents including garbage not being picked up, icy conditions, road access, power outages, and no wellness checks being conducted for those without hydro. There was also 1 request for assistance from a resident who required a propane truck delivery. 1 request was received from a resident asking for the Town to assist them for lost revenue due to the freezing rain event.

The Fire Department responded to 18 calls that were received over the event and included power lines down, other public service and hazards, and human perceived emergency.

## Recommendations

Lessons learned and recommendations for any future emergencies include:

- When wellness checks are required providing written information that can be left at residences would improve communication. Utilize by-law and Fire Department Paid Per Call staff to assist OPP if available.
- Look at other ways to communicate besides website updates and emails. Have prepared messaging and plan to be used as a starting point for future emergencies.
- Consider a command post for the affected areas offering information, water and safety messaging.
- Widen participation in the MCEG at least in the initial response phase with the inclusion of other Town departments, Grey County, external agencies and other community partners (Blue Mountain Resort, Blue Mountain Village Association, Short Term Accommodation providers etc.) to maximize efficiencies and broaden the availability of supports.
- Reassure residents that drinking water was not affected by the event and that it was safe to drink.
- Work with GIS staff to map out those who have generator power within the Municipality for future emergencies.

## E. Strategic Priorities

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### 1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

### 2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

### 3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

## **F. Environmental Impacts**

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N/A

## **G. Financial Impacts**

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The financial impact from the freezing rain event was calculated at \$64,574.59. This amount included operating costs, employee costs and equipment costs. There is a Municipal Ice Storm Assistance (MISA) grant available for cost recovery— see report CFS.25.041.

## **H. In Consultation With**

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Diana Livingston, CEMC

## **I. Public Engagement**

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The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Adam Smith, Interim Chief Administrative Officer [cao@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:cao@thebluemountains.ca).

## **J. Attached**

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1. Emergency Management Ontario - Considerations for a Declaration of Emergency

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Smith  
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:  
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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	ADM.25.048 Freezing Rain Event Debrief.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-Considerations-for-a-Declaration-of-Emergency.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Aug 15, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Adam Smith - Aug 15, 2025 - 12:05 PM**