

# A7



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 8, 2006  
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager/Fire Chief, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services  
General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Establishment of a new Emergency Planning Coordinator for Engineering Services and other Departments and a Transfer of an Existing Position for an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Manager Position Reporting to Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services (VF&RS)

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the transfer of an existing position in Engineering Services to VF&RS to establish a full-time Manager, Urban Search and Rescue, and create a new position in Engineering Services for Engineering Emergency Planning, subject to review by the General Manager of Human Resources, at an annual cost of \$91,000 including benefits (\$10,000 one-time cost); funding to be provided within existing operating budgets in Engineering and VF&RS.

#### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

## GENERAL MANAGERS' COMMENTS

The General Manager of Fire and Rescue Service and the General Manager of Engineering Services support the recommendation.

## COUNCIL POLICY

In 1990 Council identified Emergency Preparedness as one of the City's corporate priorities and supported the continuation of an expanded work program in this area. It is Council policy that changes in service levels, either expansions or reductions, are approved by Council. This includes the creation and deletion of regular positions and the allocation of funding from general revenues or taxation.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to transfer an existing position in Engineering Services to VF&RS to establish a full-time Manager, USAR, and to create an Emergency Coordinator position in Engineering Services, so that the mandate and work plan of each area can be fulfilled.

## BACKGROUND

The Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team was formed in 1995 as a corporate initiative for emergency preparedness as identified in a 1990 report to Council. Since then, the team has grown from 25 members to approximately 85 regular members and has trained over 160 additional team members. In part, these members are drawn from Vancouver Fire & Rescue, Police, Engineering Services, Parks & Recreation and the B.C. Ambulance Service. The primary function of the team is the location, extrication and medical stabilization of persons trapped in a structural collapse resulting from natural disaster, industrial accident or terrorist activity. The team has become, and remains, the only United Nations certified internationally deployable heavy urban search and rescue team in Canada. The team is now being used as a model by the federal government for the development of four other teams across Canada. The value of the team was demonstrated twice in 2005 at the North Vancouver mud slides and the response to Louisiana following hurricane Katrina where it rescued 119 people and provided medical aid to an additional 178.

On March 23, 1999, Council approved an Engineering Emergency Coordinator position that was to function half time as the manager of Emergency Preparedness in Engineering Services and half time as the manager of Vancouver's USAR team.

Since 1999, the role of the Manager has expanded requiring additional resources for Emergency Planning for Engineering Services and other City Departments.

## DISCUSSION

### Urban Search & Rescue

Over the last seven years the Coordinator position has evolved such that the management of the USAR Team requires a much greater time commitment and consequently virtually no time is available for this position to manage Emergency Preparedness in Engineering Services.

The current role of this position encompasses all facets of the development, maintenance and expansion of the USAR team to meet the team's requisite present and future operational demands. The team is currently comprised of approximately 85 regular members representing 10 departments and agencies. Over the past eight years the team has averaged over 6500 hours of training per year and has generated approximately \$140,000 in revenue by training team members from the military and other cities nationally and internationally. Training and subject matters include: structural collapse, technical and canine search, confined space medical considerations, trench rescue, mass casualty decontamination and disaster logistics.

The team has developed to a point where it is able to respond as a whole anytime, anywhere within a very short time. As it is a stand-alone, self sufficient team with a broad spectrum of training and experience, its rapid response ability within the City, Port of Vancouver or Province of British Columbia translates into a level of protection unparalleled anywhere else in Canada. The manager of the team must ensure this level of response is maintained through recruitment, maintenance training, regulation compliance and securing of federal funds for requisite equipment and training needs. To meet the present level of response, the equipment (valued at approximately \$3 million) must reflect the needs of the team and be maintained to a state of readiness.

The Vancouver USAR team model has provided a method to integrate personnel from multiple agencies and work cohesively together, which has had a noticeable positive effect on both emergency services and non emergency services personnel in day to day operations where more than one agency is involved. This has been achieved by creating a professional level of understanding of each agencies role through working together which would not normally occur. The leadership and working relationships the team has established within the federal development of other Canadian teams will translate into a seamless interoperability of operations if the City of Vancouver ever requires assistance from other provinces or nations. Of the 46 United Nations recognized teams globally, almost all have regular full time positions managing and assisting the management of their teams. In nearby jurisdictions, the existing teams in Seattle have five full time staff managing approximately 220 members, Calgary has no team, but has two staff, while Manitoba has one full time and two part time staff managing about 100 team members.

### Engineering Services and Departmental Emergency Response

#### *Engineering Requirements:*

Engineering Services will have a substantial role in disaster response. As such, emergency planning is paramount to the success of the Engineering Services Emergency Response. Engineering Services' role will include but not be limited to the management of the transportation network, bridge closures, distribution of potable water, staffing at the EOC

and the restoration of critical infrastructure such as roadways/bridges and utilities (water/sewer/sanitation/electrical).

Over the past seven years the existing position focused primarily on USAR activities and virtually no time was available for Engineering Emergency preparedness planning. Engineering has placed an emphasis on our emergency preparedness and has had success but with reduced scope as this was facilitated by the temporary assignment of staff when this has been possible.

To date the emergency planning work has included developing individual branch emergency plans, working with other departments to develop an operating plan for overall emergency response and developing training programs for people who will have a role at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

In the longer term, more work will be required to improve Engineering Services' readiness, keep emergency response plans up to date, assess and maintain staff readiness for EOC duty and to carry out training and increase personal emergency preparedness within the department. New initiatives to strengthen Engineering's readiness and disaster response capability, such as emergency aid agreements, enhanced emergency communications and the creation of the Departmental Emergency Operations Center at the National Works Yards can be completed. Most importantly, for Engineering Services is the need to plan and carry out semi-annual emergency training exercises both in the office and in the field, internal to Engineering or jointly held with external agencies. We have found in the past that these exercises are essential in order to put theory into practice and to ensure that plans are effective and up to date, and to ensure that all staff will know what their roles are during an emergency.

Through proper emergency planning, Engineering Services can substantially increase its readiness and ability to respond during/after a disaster. Engineering's emergency response will be key in restoring the City's transportation network, structures and utilities.

#### Departmental Requirements:

There has been an identified need for emergency preparedness for Engineering Services given the diversion of efforts of the Manager to the USAR function. This need is of an immediate nature and full time effort of an emergency planner is required in the short term. However, once Engineering Services' planning efforts stabilize, the emergency preparedness role for Engineering Services can be dropped to half time. This provides the opportunity to expand the emergency planning function to other departments that do not have dedicated resources or expertise in these matters, such as the Fire Department, Police Department and Park Board. Expanding the role beyond Engineering Services will ensure that all departments have the built in capacity to respond in an Emergency situation.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The salary of the existing position to be transferred from Engineering Services to VF&RS is \$114,527, including benefits, while the Engineering Planning Coordinator position is expected to be classified at a lower pay grade for an incremental increase of \$91,000, including benefits, plus \$10,000 one-time for outfitting the position with a computer and workstation. Funding will be provided from the existing position's salary budget, with the balance from operating budgets within VF&RS and Engineering Services and therefore at no net cost to the City.

The Federal Ministry of Public Security and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) are in the process of formulating an on-going operating and maintenance budget for the five developing teams in Canada. PSEPC have identified the requirement for cities to have up to three full time equivalent positions to manage each of these teams and may be in a position to partially fund this position at some time in the future. However, the Manager, USAR position is required to maintain the continued operational ability of the team. If additional funds from senior government become available for this position, these funds would be applied to the USAR Manager's position, and the operating budget would be reduced at that time.

## PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This report seeks the position transfer and establishment of an USAR Manager reporting within VF&RS and the creation of an Emergency Coordinator in Engineering Services. The USAR Manager position is based on Pay Band 11. The Engineering Emergency Coordinator position is proposed as Pay Band 9, subject to review by the General Manager of Human Resources.

## CONCLUSION

Recent world events have shown that emergency preparedness and urban search and rescue are extremely important. Both today's political climate and the region's vulnerability to natural disasters contribute to this need. The Vancouver team has developed to a point where it requires a dedicated manager.

Engineering Services will play a key role in disaster response, as such a dedicated emergency coordinator will strengthen Engineering's ability to respond to an emergency/disaster, and enhance the level of service we are able to provide Vancouver and the surrounding regions.

Therefore, it is recommended that Council approve the transfer of an existing position with Engineering Services to establish an USAR Manager position reporting within VF&RS and the creation of a Emergency Coordinator in Engineering Services, at no net cost to the City.

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