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1.0 INTRODUCTION

An Emergency Detour Route (EDR) is a pre-determined route to help traffic bypass an emergency road closure on a provincial highway. If a provincial highway needs to be closed due to an emergency or unplanned closure, an Emergency Detour Route allows traffic (particularly drivers who are not familiar with the area) to leave the highway, follow the specially marked signs to go around the affected route and find their way safely back to the highway. It minimizes impacts to local traffic by using carefully selected routes.

An Emergency Detour Route for a municipality is developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Transportation regional staff, Municipal Staff, OPP, Local Police Services, Fire and Emergency Medical Services. They are based on several factors including the route’s ability to efficiently and effectively accommodate the increased traffic volumes and all vehicle types.

This document contains guidance and information on:
- Planning for an EDR
- EDR Activation
- Responsibilities and Functions
- Communications Protocol

1.1 Purpose

To assist in the identification and management of alternate traffic routes and provide guidance, co-ordination, and accurate information to the affected jurisdictions regarding the implementation of Emergency Detour Routes.

1.2 Scope

These guidelines will apply to all affected agencies in situations where the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) must make an emergency full closure on a provincial highway. When there is an unplanned closure of a provincial highway, the adjacent Emergency Detour Route through the affected municipality is considered to be active. These guidelines will address the selection and use of alternate routes, traffic control requirements, responsibilities and transportation limitations within the routes of travel.

The Emergency Detour Routes Guidelines and Best Practices is considered to be a "living document" that should be reviewed and updated as required.

The Emergency Detour Routes Guidelines and Best Practices does not include specific details regarding a highway closure as a result of a major evacuation or for prolonged capital construction projects with identified detour routes.
Funding for the upgrade, maintenance or improvement of an Emergency Detour Route is not part of this Guideline.

1.3 Definitions

Closures, Short-Term: Anticipated to be between one half to one (0.5 – 1.0) hour in duration.

Closures, Medium-Term: A closure anticipated to last longer than a Short-Term Closure (see above) yet under five hours.

Closures, Long-Term: Anticipated to last longer than 5 hours.

Detour Route(s): Categorized to conform to a medium or long-term closure. Utilizes provincial highways, primary regional roads and city streets. There may be a need for multiple detour routes through some jurisdictions.

EDR: Emergency Detour Route – a route defined by the road authority through their jurisdiction that will be signed for use by detoured traffic.

Local Police Services: Relates to the geographical boundary under which Police Services serve the underlying jurisdictions. Specifically related to a Regional Police Service, Municipal Police Service and in cases where these entities do not exist, refers to the Ontario Provincial Police.

MTO: Ministry of Transportation

Municipalities: Incorporated Cities, Towns, or urban areas within a Regional Municipality, County or District.

Municipal Road Authority: The various categories of municipalities has been reduced to three under the new Municipal Act; upper-tier municipalities within a two-tier system, lower-tier municipalities within a two-tier system and single-tier municipalities – those that are not part of a two-tier system.

OPP: Ontario Provincial Police

2.0 PLANNING

Recommendations for the planning of Emergency Detour Routes have been developed to be flexible so that the same principles and guidelines can be applied to road closures for reasons other than those presented in this document.

Emergency Detour Routes should be selected with the purpose of assisting drivers that are not familiar with the local road network adjacent to a provincial highway, to
temporarily divert their trip from the closed highway, to the next location to re-enter the provincial highway. In addition, the Emergency Detour Routes should be selected to minimize the impact of increased traffic, in particular, the increased volume of commercial vehicles, on the local road network.

As part of each Emergency Detour Route plan, contacts shall be identified for:

- Municipality (24 hour contact)
- OPP
- Local police service (if one exists)
- MTO Traffic Operations Centre
- Emergency Medical Services

A sample plan is included in Appendix 1.

2.1 Route Selection Team

When establishing an Emergency Detour Route, municipal road authorities located adjacent to a provincial highway should work together with OPP, local police services if one exists, other affected municipal road authorities and the MTO.

The final product of the planning process undertaken by the route selection team shall be a detailed plan indicating single or various routes that have municipal council acceptance to be used to accommodate diverted traffic, including commercial vehicles, off of a provincial highway, around the closure, and back onto the provincial highway. The plan shall also include a 24 hour contact for the OPP to use to advise the municipal road authority of a highway road closure.

Once the Emergency Detour Route plan has been finalized, a copy of the planned routes shall be provided to all parties.

Any changes to the approved Emergency Detour Route plans must be forwarded to all parties by the party responsible for the change. For example, if the municipal 24 hour emergency contact has changed then it is the responsibility of the municipal road authority to send out the new contact name and number to ALL parties. EDR plans shall be reviewed and updated at the MTO/Municipality Liaison meetings.

2.2 Route Selection

In general, Emergency Detour Routes should be identified that provide the shortest path between two adjacent interchanges on the provincial highway that might experience an unplanned closure. The identified detour routes may be longer than the shortest available route or start/finish beyond the closest interchange to the closure subject to the following considerations:
• The identified routes should be those that have the best ability to accommodate the traffic diverted from the provincial highway (avoiding as much as possible, bottleneck locations and minor local roads). Existing truck routes should be considered as part of route evaluation.

• The identified routes should avoid, if possible, railway crossing locations.

• The identified routes should be able to accommodate commercial traffic with:
  • Appropriate geometry (lane widths, turning radii, etc.)
  • Absence of load restrictions that would prohibit the route from being used by heavy commercial vehicles (not including long combination vehicles).
  • Absence of height restrictions that would make the route impassable to commercial vehicles and busses.

When documenting the planned Emergency Detour Routes, the following should be identified:

• Signal timing priority plans if applicable.

• Potential critical locations where additional traffic control is required and/or desired to assist diverted traffic (subject to the availability of resources from the municipal road authority and local police service) should be identified.

• Identify routes/locations for placement of ministry EDR signs including trailblazing in advance of all decision points. The ministry will provide the EDR signs to the municipality for installation on roads under their jurisdiction. These signs shall be in place prior to the placement of EDR signs on provincial right-of-way by MTO.

• A municipal 24 hour Emergency Contact to be used by the Ontario Provincial Police Communications Centre (as well as Local Police Communications Centre) shall be identified for each detour route. This can be a phone number, email address (only suitable for initial notification if email account is monitored 24 hours per day, seven days per week) or other contact method (a phone number is preferred as it provides instant confirmation that a contact person has been reached). The contact information should be a role or position within the municipality rather than a person’s name in order to avoid attempts to contact an individual that has since changed positions. Although there are other methods of notification of closures on provincial highways (including 511, social media) the identified contact is intended to be the first point of notification from the OPP to the municipal road authority that there is a closure on a provincial highway and that an Emergency Detour Route is about to be become active.

• Various municipal contacts to be used within the municipality should also be identified, including: Traffic Signals Technician, Area Roads Superintendent, By-Law Officer, local fire department and other affected, adjacent municipal road authorities.
• MTO will provide contact numbers/emails for MTO, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and maintenance contractors.

2.2.1 EDR Inventory

Annually each MTO Regional Office shall provide an updated inventory of the Emergency Detour Routes within their region to the Provincial Traffic Office. The submitted inventory shall include mapping of the route in digital format suitable for use with ArcGIS. The updated mapping shall be submitted by January 1 of each year.

2.3 Additional Issues to Consider

A prolonged closure of the highway and the detouring of traffic onto alternate routes may cause impacts on the detour route and adjoining roadways. The designated detour routes may become severely congested or impassable due to the detoured traffic.

Due to congestion on the detour route, drivers may choose to follow their in vehicle GPS instead of following the EDR. Additional permissive truck route signing may be appropriate to encourage commercial vehicle drivers to stay on the Emergency Detour Route rather than filter through the municipality on smaller local roads that might not be able to accommodate the vehicle size and weight or suitable for vehicles carrying hazardous materials.

Implementation of the detour routes may have an adverse impact on accessibility to healthcare, hospital, transportation, and educational facilities in and around the detour routes. In addition, economic, lodging and traffic related issues may also need to be monitored and addressed by the municipality depending on the severity and status of the closure.

In areas with larger populations that encompass an EDR and provincial highway, closures may have a greater impact.

The extent of delays during a road closure depend on several factors such as time of occurrence, severity of the incident, weather conditions, location of the incident, construction activities, and the possibility of secondary incidents resulting in additional closures.

A set procedure for emergency reporting and communicating is essential to maximize the sharing of vital information by all levels of emergency services and support agencies and between jurisdictions. A co-ordinated communications process is also essential to ensure that consistent actions and accurate information is being provided to all agencies and to the public. In some cases, there may be duplication of contacts which is acceptable as a contingency measure provided the information is consistent.

Regular and constant communication by the same individuals during a closure is important to ensure information relayed to the media/public is consistent. As well, repeated/regular notification is often required for drivers to fully understand all the
information. MTO will make use of the Ontario 511 services and intelligent transportation systems, where available, to inform the general public of updates and closure information as appropriate.

The implementation of the EDR may affect multiple jurisdictions and agencies within each of those jurisdictions. There is a critical need for co-ordination of communication and resources between jurisdictions.

3.0 EDR ACTIVITIES

The legal authority to close a provincial highway rests with the OPP. The decision to close a provincial highway (resulting in the an EDR becoming active) shall be at the sole discretion of the Ontario Provincial Police. If necessary, the decision to close the highway may involve consultations with other emergency service agencies (i.e. Fire, MTO, etc.) responding to the highway incident.

When closing the provincial highway (resulting in the EDR becoming active), OPP Communications Centre shall ensure that the municipal road authorities have been notified (using the EDR’s assigned contact method) prior to OPP Officers directing traffic off the highway and onto the detour routes. When immediate closure of the highway is required (on arrival of the responding officer), the municipal road authorities shall be notified immediately afterwards.

An EDR is considered to be active when:

- An incident or severe weather conditions results in the full closure of lanes in either one or both directions of the highway; and

The above conditions may result when one or more of the following occur:

- A traffic incident causing personal injury and/or a fatality. For this condition, the highway is generally closed for an extended period.

- A traffic incident requiring the closure of all available lanes to ensure the safety of emergency services personnel, clean-up crews or injured parties.

- A traffic incident requiring the closure of lanes to allow for the investigation of the incident and evidence protection.

- A traffic incident resulting in debris over the roadway or a spill of materials.

- An incident occurring on the highway requiring police crime investigation.

- Emergency repair of the highway facility or structures.
3.1 Factors to Consider When an EDR Is Active

Depending on the nature of the closure and the highway being closed, it may not be necessary to implement all traffic elements of the EDR. At the initial stages of the incident, an assessment is required by the OPP to determine the severity of the incident and traffic elements to be implemented. The anticipated duration of the highway closure should be regularly reviewed (in consultation with MTO and other EDR stakeholders) and may result in different traffic elements being implemented throughout the duration of the closure.

Key factors to consider when a road closure results in the activation of an EDR may include:

- OPP to close the highway at an appropriate interchange/intersection prior to the incident. If the nearest major interchange/intersection is not acceptable due to a secondary incident, poor diversion routing, construction, or other unforeseen circumstances, the closure point should be moved back to an appropriate interchange/intersection (in consultation with MTO and other EDR stakeholders).

- OPP resources should establish a communications link with local police service agencies, if one exists, to ensure a co-ordination with municipal road authorities.

- OPP resources should divert and direct traffic from the highway to the agreed EDR detour routes (this is not always possible when the EDR occurs in the jurisdiction of a small OPP detachment where resources are limited or for major incidents where all responding OPP officers are managing the incident scene itself). In these cases, MTO resources will assist in the diverting of traffic from the closed highway.

- OPP resources should restrict access to the closed highway at the first interchange/intersection immediately upstream of the incident. Additional access restrictions at further preceding interchanges/intersections or locations may be required to reduce queues on the closed highway. OPP should coordinate (along with MTO resources) closing on-ramp gates, where available, to prevent drivers from entering the closed highway. The gate eliminates the need for an officer to be present to block the entrance to the highway.

- Municipal staff, MTO and OPP resources should provide regular updates to each other regarding the condition or status of an EDR during an on-going highway closure. These updates should provide information regarding construction or maintenance activities, restrictions, or special events which may impact the use of the EDR.

- During the incident, local police services (or local OPP if a local police service does not exist) should relay traffic conditions on the EDR to the OPP and contact the municipal road authority to implement signal timing plans if available. The design of
the signal timing plans should take place in the consultation or preliminary stage when the EDR routes are being identified and updated (if needed) prior to the review of the Emergency Detour Route plan at the MTO/Municipality liaison meeting.

- OPP, local police services, if one exists, and the MTO Traffic Operations Centre should provide ongoing public notification on the location of the closure, the anticipated duration and a recommendation to follow the identified EDR.

- Local police services (or local OPP if a local police service does not exist) should provide traffic control assistance at critical intersections on the diversion routes where appropriate. For example, at intersections where signal timing plans cannot be implemented or are not able to accommodate traffic flows and at major stop sign controlled intersections or railway crossings on the EDR. Note: It is not recommended to have a detour route that crosses rail tracks if possible.

- Monitoring of traffic conditions (including road and weather) on the detour routes and communication between municipal agencies will increase the efficiency of the detour. Agencies should attempt to monitor the use of the detour to identify possible improvements during the incident or for discussion during the debriefing meetings.

- Local police services (or local OPP if a local police service does not exist) should provide assistance (if needed) in facilitating the movement of emergency vehicles through the community.

- Municipal road authorities should strictly enforce existing NO PARKING restrictions on and adjacent to the detour routes to alleviate congestion.

- Additional site specific considerations include:
  - Location of closure
  - Direction of closure
  - Anticipated duration of closure
  - Construction/maintenance activities in area
  - Time of day
  - Day of week
  - Weather conditions
  - Evacuation requirements

### 3.2 EDR Termination

The EDR is terminated by the OPP when:

- The need for the highway closure is no longer present. This may consist of a partial opening; and
• Traffic flows on the diversion routes have returned to relatively normal levels.

Once the OPP officers on scene have determined that a partial or full opening of traffic lanes on the highway is acceptable and that the traffic flows on the diversion routes have returned to relatively normal levels, they will contact the OPP Communications Centre who will contact the appropriate stakeholders.

3.3 Implementing an Emergency Detour Route

The legal authority to close a provincial highway rests with the OPP. The decision to close a provincial highway shall be at the sole discretion of the Ontario Provincial Police. If necessary, the decision to close the highway may involve consultations with other emergency service agencies (i.e. Fire, MTO, etc.) responding to the highway incident.

The appropriate Local Police Service (or municipality if no Local Police Service exists) shall be advised by the OPP when a decision is made to close the highway thus putting the EDR into use. The OPP is responsible for co-ordinating communication between existing police service agencies during emergency closures.

Oversize/overweight loads travelling under permit have a route defined in their permit application. Therefore, they are not permitted on any other route, including an EDR (unless the driver is able to change their permit to allow that vehicle to drive on the EDR). The Road User Safety Division of MTO may be contacted by MTO’s Traffic Operations Centre to provide assistance with enforcement.

While the detouring of traffic from the highway onto the EDR shall be the responsibility of the OPP, once drivers have exited the highway, the drivers can go whichever direction they choose. The OPP does not have the resources to ensure that all drivers stay on the EDR. Discussions in the preparation of the EDR (in coordination with other EDR stakeholders) shall include a review of the resources available to assist the OPP (i.e. Municipal staff, MTO staff, Maintenance Contractors, etc.).

Additional detour routes should be utilized to:

• Provide alternatives for long-term closures as identified in the planning stages.

• Act as a back-up route when initial routes are not available or congested.

Affected agencies should conduct emergency operations in accordance with their established procedures. The use of an EDR should form part of these procedures and should not impact those pre-determined mandates.
All EDR signs should be installed in accordance to the Ministry of Transportation EDR sign policy, to increase consistency and aid in province-wide motorist recognition of EDR signs.

The municipal road authority is responsible for determining the need to temporarily change their traffic signal timings and signs along the EDR or within their road network. This need shall be determined/discussed when an EDR is being selected.

3.4 Debriefing

A debriefing meeting, arranged by the municipal road authority(s) where the EDR is located, should be conducted within 30 days of any EDR activation resulting from a major incident (long term closure of the provincial highway). The meeting shall be attended by representatives of all parties that were involved in the planning/identification of the EDR (see section 2.1) and all parties that responded to the incident.

The debriefing meeting is an opportunity to discuss issues experienced during the EDR activation/road closure and find opportunities for improvements. Potential topics to be discussed include:

- Opportunities to improve timeliness of communications
- Opportunities to reduce time to transfer control of the scene between incident responders
- Potential improvements to messaging to road users
- Potential changes to emergency route(s)
- Opportunities for improved traffic control
- Improvements to availability/response time of roles
- The municipal road authority shall arrange for the identification, follow-up and notification of implementation of resulting action items

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

When/if activated, a jurisdiction’s Emergency Plan will supersede the responsibilities and functions noted in this document.

This section of the plan outlines the responsibilities and functions of the agencies for a full closure of a provincial highway due to an unscheduled traffic incident.

It should be noted that the agency responsibilities and functions listed in this section of the EDR are not "all inclusive" as they primarily focus on transportation related duties.

4.1 Ontario Provincial Police

- OPP officer on scene evaluates the conditions and estimates the incident duration and whether the provincial highway should be closed.
• OPP officer on scene notifies the OPP Communications Centre regarding the need to close and reopen a highway and provides direction and control on and off the highway facility.

• OPP Communications Centre notifies the local road authority to confirm the readiness of the EDR, local police services (if available) and MTO contacts of the need to close a highway, and follows in house OPP protocol for closure.

• OPP officers on scene co-ordinate the management of all ramp/intersection/interchange closures.

• OPP Communications Centre acts as Incident Command and initiates communication for the detour operation with the following:
  • Local Police Services (if one exists)
  • Emergency services
  • Municipal Road Authority (if no Local Police Services exist)
  • Ministry of Transportation
  • Media
  • Towing Companies
  • Ministry of the Environment

• OPP officers on scene (in consultation with MTO and other EDR stakeholders) determine when to reopen the highway.

• OPP officers on scene, with the assistance of EDR parties, provide closure information from the incident scene and along the detour route to the OPP Communications Centre for distribution. Information provided and distributed by all EDR parties must be consistent.

4.2 Local Police Services

The following only applies to those municipalities that have a local police service. If no local police service exists, then the following applies to the local OPP detachment.

• Local Police Services contact municipal road authority and informs them of the activation and location of the EDR along with the expected duration.
• Relay traffic conditions on detour routes to the OPP officer on scene and contact municipal road authority and request that signal priority plans be implemented where required.

• Provide traffic control assistance at critical intersections as outlined on the agreed upon routes including assisting in maximizing the use of the detour route and assisting in enforcing load restrictions

• Provide assistance, if requested, in facilitating the movement of emergency vehicles through the community.

• Request area municipalities, where applicable, to provide by-law enforcement on NO PARKING restrictions on and adjacent to the detour routes to alleviate congestion in the area.

• Provides enforcement along the detour routes as necessary.

4.3 Municipal Road Authority

The municipality road authority is responsible for selecting Emergency Detour Routes, signing the routes (with signs provided by the Ministry of Transportation), maintaining the routes and providing adjusted traffic control during closures on the adjacent provincial highway. The responsibilities include:

• Liaise with MTO, OPP, Local Police Services in EDR route selection - identifying and evaluating factors that may affect the route such as:
  • Safety – able to safely accommodate increased traffic volumes
  • Turning Radii – ability to accommodate large vehicles
  • Signal Operations – timings may need to be changed to accommodate EDR
  • Structures – max loads/width restrictions
  • Major Crossings – waterways/environmentally sensitive areas/rail/transit
  • Traffic/Noise Sensitive Areas – neighbourhoods/hospital areas/school zones/etc.
  • Geometrics – steep hills/narrow streets/etc.
  • Local Load Restrictions – during spring thaws
  • Dust / Maintenance – gravel or soft surfaced roads/shoulders
  • Length of Routes – longer may discourage use
  • Other Alternatives – advising of delays/alternate routes
  • Surrounding Road Network (other jurisdictions) – compatibility/coordination

• Maintains all EDR signs within their jurisdiction.

• Responsible for the operations and maintenance of the infrastructure under their jurisdiction.
• Ensure that detour routes are modified when construction takes place along the predefined route.

• Provide input to local police, fire and emergency medical services, on current/planned construction activities that may impact traffic flow on detour routes.

• Provide assistance in contacting private/public utilities when required.

• Responsible for the maintenance and operation of all traffic control signals under their jurisdiction and identifying/implementing signal timing priority plans.

• Consult with local police services if one exists, when signal timing priority plans should be terminated following the opening of a highway closure.

• Maintain contact with Local Police Services if one exists, and adjacent municipal road authorities identifying/communicating:
  • Readiness of the EDR to accept detoured traffic at activation
  • Potential traffic impacts on adjacent routes,
  • Recommending mitigating measures/diversion routes
  • Maintenance, construction or other activities that may be occurring on the EDR.

• Act as a liaison between adjacent municipal road authorities and local police services if one exists.

• Assist with the co-ordination, support, logistics and planning associated with the EDR plan.

• Maintain and implement internal call-out procedure following confirmation from OPP/Local Police Services of the activation of an EDR route.

4.4 Ministry Of Transportation

The Ministry of Transportation is responsible to:

• Maintain all EDR signs (year round) placed on provincial right-of-way.

• Operate and maintain the provincial infrastructure system.

• Provide assistance to OPP as requested. For example, assist with on/off ramp closures.
• Provide input to OPP regarding current construction activities on MTO facilities that may impact traffic flows approaching the closure or along any provincial portion of the detour route.

• Provide assistance in contacting private or public utilities if required in the operation of the EDR.

• Review EDR plans submitted by the municipal road authority to obtain EDR signs to maintain provincial consistency.

• Provide ongoing road closure information to the public including messages on variable message signs, updating information via 511, and providing information to local and provincial media

5.0 Call Out Procedures

The following call out procedure is to be followed after an incident has occurred that will result in activation of the EDR. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the contacts/call outs to be followed. The call out procedure should be customized and included in each individual Emergency Detour Route Plan for the particular municipality.

OPP officer on the scene determines if highway is to be closed and contacts the OPP Communications Centre.

The OPP Communications Centre contacts the following agencies:

• Municipal road authority (using the unique, predefined contact method assigned to each individual EDR)
• Emergency Services
• Ministry of Transportation
• Media
• Towing Companies
• Ministry of Environment (if required)

Municipality/Municipal Road Authority contacts the following:

• Local police service (if one exists)
• Maintain communications with the OPP
• Adjacent municipal road authorities
• Municipal Area Roads Supervisor
• Municipal Traffic Signals Engineer/Analyst
• Municipal By-Law Officer
• School boards and student transportation services
• Public/private utilities
Ministry of Transportation contacts the following:
- Maintenance Contractors
- Maintenance Coordinators/Superintendents
- Traffic Operations Centre
- Public/private utilities
- Maintain communications with the OPP
Appendix 1 - Sample EDR Plan

EDR Description

Southbound:
- Exit 400 at E-W Rd. 1, turn right (northbound)
- Turn left onto N-S Rd.
- Turn left onto E-W Rd. 2
- Turn right onto ramp to return to SE 400

Northbound:
- Exit 400 at E-W Rd. 2, turn left (northbound)
- Turn right onto N-S Rd.
- Turn right onto E-W Rd. 1
- Turn right onto ramp to return to NE 400

Contacts (email or phone number):
- Municipality - email@address.com
- MTO TOC – email@address.com
- OPP – email@address.com
- Municipal Police – email@address.com
- EMS – email@address.com