



Report To:	Program Planning Committee
From:	Donna Stewart, Director of Integrated Social Services and Rob Smith, Chief of Paramedic Services
Date:	September 26, 2018
Re:	Vulnerable Persons Registry – Issue Report

## **Purpose**

The voluntary registry aims to improve both disaster planning and response capacity by providing key information to authorized agencies during emergency events.

Investment in emergency preparedness can be the difference between life and death when disaster strikes. Anyone can attempt to develop response capacity by putting together the necessary tools, but first they need to understand their own situation and then learn what to do to ensure their preparedness.

Emergency events do take place, they have happened, resulting in loss of electrical power, telephone communication or even water and then think about the key items you need to remain safe. The development and implementation of a Vulnerable Persons Registry is an essential piece to emergency preparedness efforts.

## **History**

Vulnerable persons are of particular risk during any emergency event. This group is defined by a number of factors, but socioeconomic status, age and health indices are of particular note. In 2005, during Hurricane Katrina the vast majority of deaths involved vulnerable persons. In 2017, following weather events, power outages in Texas resulted in significant loss of life for elderly and infirmed persons in care facilities. As recently as this past summer, heat emergencies across Ontario and Quebec resulted in more than 30 deaths. The victims were elderly, young and infirmed, all vulnerable people.

In 2018, during municipal response to the forest fire event titled Parry Sound 033, there was significant work done by municipal and DSB staff to identify vulnerable persons in the mandatory evacuation zones, and in the preparatory evacuation zones. The efforts to identify this population were impacted as a number of agencies, ranging from Municipal, to Provincial, were responsible for different parts of the population. Each of those

agencies then had to confirm their own clients and determine which response agency they would share names with. In total, there were nearly 60 identified vulnerable persons who were clients of Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB or ODSP. This process took several days, and was not inclusive of vulnerable elderly persons who were not agency clients.

In 2010, Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB presented a report ([CAO Report](#)) to member municipalities for the movement of emergency planning and preparedness to the DSB level. At that time, the municipalities decided that they did not want the DSB to take responsibility for the four programs under its mandate and all emergency preparedness would be the responsibility of the individual municipalities within the DSB catchment area.

The Vulnerable Persons Registry grew out of a tragedy some years ago that involved a Sault Sainte Marie resident living in southern Ontario. This young man was severely injured in a workplace accident that left him wheelchair bound and unable to maintain an adequate body temperature without the assistance of air conditioning. In August, 2003, the electrical outage that impacted much of Eastern Canada resulted in a power outage for this gentleman for 22 hours. This young man lost his air conditioning and telephone, and ultimately he died.

Following this incident, several organizations in Sault Ste-Marie vowed to prevent similar tragedies. Thus, was born the comprehensive, multi-user, GIS-based Vulnerable Persons Registry to protect at need residents in Sault Ste-Marie, during emergency events. The Community Geomatics Centre (CGC) was tasked to lead design, implementation and maintenance of the VPR.

Start-up funding came from Accessibility Sault Ste-Marie, the Community Endowment fund and the DSSAB. As the project evolved, the public utilities company, the Sault Police Services and SSM Fire Services, Emergency Management, the District Social Services Administration Board and a host of community organizations were engaged. Partner expertise was leveraged along the way in order to develop a public service that met the needs of both the partners and the community.

## **Benefits**

The Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR) is a free service to those who register. It is a voluntary and confidential service designed to improve the safety of Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB residents who are vulnerable to greater risk during emergencies.

VPR information is incorporated directly into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems of emergency personnel and as such can allow access to key information about people who would likely need assistance during either an emergency incident and/or an extended, or widespread community event such as electrical outage, flooding or forest fires.

The Registry will give the local utility company and first responders access to key information in three separate situations, impact from power outages, residential evacuation needs and community evacuation. The query is set out below:

### **A - Power Outages**

*Do you rely on electricity for life-sustaining equipment, such as oxygen?*

Those relying on electricity are informed of planned power outages by PUC and are contacted by Canadian Red Cross during major power outages lasting 6 hours or more

### **B - Home Emergencies (9-1-1)**

*Would you be able to get out of the house or apartment quickly if there was a fire?*

*Would you act more aggressively towards police because of mental health?*

When 9-1-1 is called to your address, key information is immediately available to the dispatcher such as 'mobility', 'obese', 'bedridden', 'oxygen', 'deaf', 'mental health' etc., which helps first responders become more aware before arriving on scene.

### **C - Large-Scale Emergencies**

*If an evacuation was needed, would you need help getting to a shelter?*

Emergency response teams will know the locations of those who may need unique assistance during an evacuation.

### **VPR Inclusion**

Any resident within the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB without 24-hour support, who experiences severe difficulty with any of the following:

- Mobility, vision or hearing challenges, including the elderly
- Developmental/Intellectual, cognitive or mental health challenges

Any resident living at home who requires:

- Electricity for life-sustaining equipment such as life support, oxygen, dialysis, etc.

### **A few things to note:**

- 24-hour support refers to 24-hour care from a caregiver or homecare aide (exceptions may apply)
- Anyone resident of a long-term care or supportive housing facility is not eligible to register
- Anyone receiving parent/guardian support is not able to register except children with intensive needs (i.e. requires electricity)

## **Maintenance of VPR**

Registrants/Legal guardians are contacted every six months in their method of choice to update/confirm information. Registrants/legal guardians are expected to contact the VPR Coordinator if changes occur before the scheduled update.

## **Sault Ste-Marie Vulnerable Persons Registry Pilot**

The Sault Ste. Marie Vulnerable Persons Registry, hosted by the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC), is an award-winning and first-of-its-kind program that launched in October 2011 and brought together over 25 local partners.

The concept, initiated by Accessibility Sault Ste. Marie and SSMIC, began in 2003 with municipal approval granted in 2007. Start-up funding from the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administrative Board was granted in 2009.

After the pilot, 95 total registrations were received but the program has since increased to 400 total registrations as of September 2018.

## **Proposal**

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB has been approached by the Sault Sainte Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) to determine if DSB was interested in participating in a VPR study being piloted in east Algoma, specifically Sables-Spanish River. The pilot area would span from the east boundary of Sault Ste. Marie to the east boundary of the Algoma District.

The costs associated with such project include marketing, promotion, engagement presentations and movement to build relationships with emergency responders. Additionally, costs would allow for data maintenance and data extracts to the emergency responders every thirty days. The costs are ongoing and depend on the population and size of the area.

Considering the large geography of the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB, and given the SSMIC capacity to implement the program into Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB, the SSMIC is proposing to phase this project over 3 years in the following manner:

- 2018 LaCloche - Baldwin, Espanola, Nairn and Hyman, Sable – Spanish Rivers, part of Sudbury Unorganized (Whitefish Falls)
- 2019 Sudbury North - Chapleau, Sudbury Unorganized (Cartier, Gogama, Foleyet)
- 2019 Sudbury East – Markstay-Warren, St. Charles, French River, Killarney, Sudbury Unorganized (Estaire)
- 2020 Manitoulin Island

The total annualized cost for the entire DSB area is estimated at \$20,000. But the cost would only reach that amount after all areas are implemented. We would be adding this cost to the program support 2019 budget.

### **Recommendation**

There is a growing number of vulnerable citizens who, through the deinstitutionalization model for health care in Ontario, are able to continue living in their homes with support such as personal support workers, meals-on-wheels and family or friends. The VPR system is another link of support and in Sault Ste Marie has proven to be very successful and the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB would like to initiate this same pilot in the DSB jurisdiction, phased in over a 3 year period.

Staff are requesting that the Board consider implementation of the Vulnerable Persons Registry in 2019. Staff are requesting that the Board approve the inclusion of \$10,000 in the 2019 budget in order to start the process of developing a Vulnerable Persons Registry. Staff are requesting that the Board direct the Finance Committee to consider implementation of the Vulnerable Persons Registry as part the 2019 budget deliberation. The remaining \$10,000 will be considered as part of the 2020 budget deliberations.