

## Major Disaster Exercise Strengthens Kingston's Emergency Readiness

KINGSTON, ON, Oct. 12 /CNW/ - Local medical and emergency organizations and the provincial Emergency Medical Assistance Team (EMAT- operated by Ornge) conducted a major simulated disaster exercise today in Kingston.

The exercise was developed in partnership with Kingston General Hospital and the City of Kingston, and involved participation from Kingston Fire & Rescue, Kingston Police and Frontenac Paramedic Services. Because of space limitations at KGH, the exercise was held at Providence Continuing Care Centre's Mental Health Services site.

"This exercise gave us an opportunity to work with our provincial and community partners in testing our emergency plans in a realistic environment. Although we hope to never experience such a disaster, our plans will be refined to ensure our response is as effective as possible," said Joe de Mora, KGH President and CEO.

The exercise simulated the effects of a massive traffic collision involving several vehicles and a chemical leak. The mock exercise resulted in a sudden surge of casualties requiring decontamination and specialized medical treatment. Participants were challenged to provide a coordinated medical response to the simulated disaster, while working in a high-risk environment.

"Today's exercise demonstrates the importance of a rapid and coordinated response in a disaster situation. We look forward to working with all of the organizations involved to debrief and review our collective performance, and make improvements for the future" said EMAT Medical Director Dr. Bruce Sawadsky.

Over 250 medical and emergency personnel took part in the exercise along with volunteer "victims" from the community. In addition to the exercise at the site, the City convened its Municipal Control Group and conducted a major tabletop emergency exercise.

"Hazardous products are transported within Kingston and other communities on a daily basis. It is vital that our community be prepared to quickly and decisively deploy all available health and emergency resources in the event of any major emergency," said Harvey Rosen, Mayor of the City of Kingston.

Simulated disasters help test the EMAT's ability to respond to local

health emergencies. These exercises also test the local health care system's ability to respond to mass casualties resulting from a health emergency.

"The EMAT provides emergency medical support to Ontario communities facing major health emergencies," said Dr. Sawadsky. "The team trains regularly together with hospitals and emergency services across Ontario to practice the special skills required to respond effectively to a disaster situation."

The EMAT is a self-contained mobile unit that includes 56 acute and intermediate care beds and decontamination abilities. It is operated by Ornge, an organization that is a globally recognized pioneer in transport medicine and is funded by the Emergency Management Unit of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

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