



Ontario

Ontario Farm Products
Marketing Commission

Newsletter

February 2004 – Issue #107

Practical Advice on Emergency Management Planning

How do you prepare an emergency management plan? How do you test your preparations? What does being in a crisis teach you that theory can't? OFPMC's 10th annual Industry Seminar addressed these questions when four speakers shared their experiences with an audience of marketing boards and food processors.

When Roy Maxwell started building an emergency management plan for Chicken Farmers of Ontario in 1999, he recalled that there wasn't a lot of interest among producer groups. The Ice Storm of 1998 was, by then, a memory for many and the task of writing an emergency plan required a lot of time.

Maxwell thinks it was a good idea to have staff involved in writing the plan rather than contracting the project out to consultants. This ensured the plan was more than a manual on a bookshelf.

Before the ink had dried on CFO's emergency plan, a distress call from a processing plant threw the plan and the team into action. After the incident was dealt with, Maxwell said a



“ Media calls were coming so fast that for each one I'd make, four more would pile up on my desk. ”

Mike McMorris, GM,
Ontario Cattlemen's Association

In This Issue

Practical Advice on Emergency Management Planning	1
Governance Workshop	1
Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions	4

The CFO plan is modelled after the OMAF emergency plan and as such, it was Maxwell's responsibility to identify staff who would take on specific responsibilities within a "Situation Response Team." That included a decision that, in the case of an emergency, normal reporting lines would not apply. Maxwell co-ordinates CFO's Situation Response Team together with Chris Vanderkooy and John Neil. Each member has a specific role and understands how that dovetails with the others. All three fully understand the plan, but each brings his own unique skills and expertise to the team.

post-mortem of the event let them further refine the plan.

continued on page 2

Governance Workshop

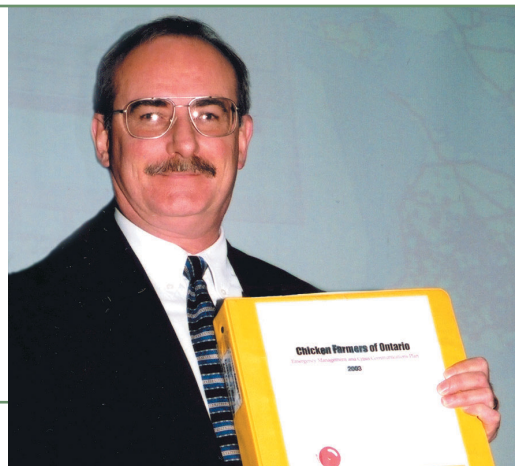
On **Tuesday, April 27, 2004**, marketing board directors and staff are invited to participate in a **Governance Best Practices Workshop**. Further details of the workshop will be sent to marketing boards and associations in mid-February.

Practical Advice on Emergency Management Planning

continued from page 1



Mike McMorris discussing his presentation with OSMA director, Mo Delves, and OFPMC's Glen Lutz



Roy Maxwell holding CFO's Emergency Management Plan

Ron Judge, Maple Leaf Consumer Foods' Director of Quality Assurance and Food Safety believes that, "testing your emergency plan is the next level of managing risk." Like Roy Maxwell, he stressed that "your food safety programs are only as good as your next phone call," and you have to review each test of your system to see what further improvements you can make that can help reduce future risks.

Judge described how Maple Leaf tests its system to confirm that the process for quality assurance and risk control is effective. Each Maple Leaf Consumer Foods' plant is tested four times per year by an unannounced, simulated recall. To get a passing grade, a Maple Leaf plant has to be able to recall 99.5 percent of its product within two hours. If a plant fails to achieve this standard, they are tested every 10 days until they meet the standard. Good performance is rewarded and poor performance is followed up on immediately.

At Maple Leaf, Ron Judge uses a risk mitigation process he calls the "3 P's." *Prevention* is the first part. That involves Maple Leaf's policies and procedures. *Preparedness* is the second consideration. Judge feels that all stakeholders involved in food production today have to operate at a heightened state of awareness to be effective in the event of an emergency. The third component is *Proof*. That's obtained by testing your preparedness and it is essential to being transparent in the event of a product recall.

When asked about the most important aspects of a product recall program, Judge summarized with a list of four points.

1. Be sure you have a good definition of roles and responsibilities and keep your contact lists up to date.
2. Ensure that the organization understands the plan.
3. Your "plant" includes your suppliers and customers.
4. You must be proactive, transparent and collaborative.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association was able to describe what it was like being in the middle of a crisis. Their General Manager, Mike McMorris, said, "May 20th changed everything for every beef farmer across Canada. It was the cow that was heard around the world."

When he looked back at the year's events to prepare his presentation, McMorris said it reminded him that, "when you are dealing with a major crisis, you tend to lose all sense of time. For example, some days the media calls were coming so fast that for each one I'd make, four more would pile up on my desk. In hindsight, I think we did have an impact through answering every single media call. If we had lost consumer confidence, it would have been far, far worse. Beef producers have maintained consumer confidence in beef which is something that no other jurisdiction with BSE had managed to do."

Communicating with producers was more challenging. McMorris said, "there was some frustration among members because they were hearing information from various sources and feeling that they should have

“ The Spanish Flu took 2 years to go around the world. It killed 20 million people. ”

Dr. Jim Young explaining pandemics.



Maple Leaf's Ron Judge speaking with DFO's Wes Lane following his presentation



Dr. Jim Young

been hearing it from OCA first. Meanwhile, things were changing so fast, if not by the minute, than by the hour, that much as we tried to communicate on a daily basis, the challenge was daunting. (We also have to realize) the grapevine is well developed and news travels fast although the accuracy leaves a bit to be desired sometimes. So, as an organization, you are battling this at a time when people really want accurate information.”

Reflecting on being prepared, McMorris said he asked himself what difference would it have made to have had an emergency management plan. “My immediate response was: Not a darn bit! I say that because so much of what we’ve handled in this crisis couldn’t have been anticipated and planned for, but I’m not sure I’m right. There were two things that having a plan could have done. One would be to clarify roles of organizations. That has been a big frustration in this. What is OCA’s role? What is the role of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? What is the role of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association? What is

OMAF’s role? You start to get some tensions between these groups because they are working under different assumptions of who is doing what. It would have been helpful to have this division of responsibility on paper, up front.”

“The other thing a plan would have done is more clearly define communications. Who is going to do it? How do you develop key messages? Who do you get to do the talking? At the beginning we used a pretty broad range of producers and staff across the province. As the crisis grew and things got more technical, we deliberately brought that back in the office because the messages had a lot more risk associated with them versus when we first went into the crisis.”

Reflecting on what others can learn from OCA’s experience, McMorris also stressed the need to address the human side of the crisis and be ready to counsel producers who need support during the crisis. “Make sure you look after people’s emotional needs in any crisis,” said McMorris.

“Maybe I am far enough through this to say that there is a whole psychology associated with living through one of these things. I am not a psychologist, so I don’t know what to call it but I’ve seen it. It involves the stress your members are going through. I just know, having lived through it, that it would have been helpful to be prepared for this. In an emergency plan, I would suggest that you consider that as a role that you are going to play as a commodity organization. Make sure you’ve got some staff who know how to do that. Fortunately we had a couple of people who were natural at listening to people and helping them where they could.”

McMorris also thinks the BSE crisis may show the agricultural sector the value of pro-active measures like a GIS database that could integrate numerous livestock-related commodities. “If you think of a foreign animal disease, what would you want if you were CFIA? You’re going to want to be able to go to one database and get a map showing

continued on page 4

Practical Advice on Emergency Management Planning *continued from page 3*

all the beef, dairy, sheep, pork and veal farms. That's what they need. If they don't have that, they're going to run from commodity group to commodity group. Some may have nothing. Some, like dairy, will have just about everything you'd need and some will be in between. Probably the formats will be inconsistent. The result is the loss of valuable time while the disease starts to spread. As an insurance policy, we simply have to change that. The way it would work would involve layered data with preferential access. We'd have access to all the beef farmers. DFO would have access to dairy. An individual chicken farmer would have access to his or her own farm data. CFIA would have access, in the event of foreign animal disease, to the entire thing. Then CFIA could set their parameters to control the disease. That is the proposal. I hope we can move forward on it. If we don't, some commodity groups will be in good shape; some will continue to do nothing and we won't have positioned ourselves for the time when a foreign animal disease hits Ontario."

Dr. Jim Young is Ontario's Commissioner of Public Safety and Security as well as the province's Chief Coroner. SARS, 9-11 and the power blackout were subjects he based his address on. According to Dr. Young,

"(Emergency planning) changed significantly after Sept 11 because, all of a sudden, we had terrorism on our shores. Looking back, we had begun to experience some emergency planning following the Ice Storm but, as time passed, it became less of a priority. I think what happened with 9-11 is that we became a lot more serious about emergency planning again and that's a good thing because all the work we do related to terrorism will pay dividends no matter what the emergency is."

From his experience with Emergency Measures Ontario, Dr. Young suggested that the best thing any sector can do is: "plan, plan, plan, train, and exercise. Will we face more emergencies here? The answer is emphatically, YES, indeed we will. Many of them will have international aspects to them. One of the reasons I think we'll have more emergencies is because we are so interconnected. The power blackout illustrates that."

Dr. Young's approach to disaster management includes four phases: planning; response; recovery; and mitigation. The need to conduct a post-mortem on how a crisis was handled is very important to the whole risk management side of emergency planning because the crisis will reveal risks that, if attended to, can reduce the likelihood

of repeating a crisis or its degree of severity in the future. Dr. Young illustrated his advice with a recent example. "After the blackout, it became clear it was one of our less-bright moments when we located Emergency Measures Ontario on the 19th floor of a downtown high-rise. In retrospect, it wasn't a good site for an operations centre, either during a terrorist event or a power blackout. But one thinks of these things very well after and not necessarily at the time."

"In many post-emergency reports, you'll read that communications didn't work well and I accept that. Bear in mind that emergencies are not for the faint-of-heart. The very fact that it is an emergency means it is not normal and it is not orderly. In the blackout for example, how do you communicate when you have no TV stations? Well, you use radio and in the case of the Ice Storm, you have the OPP delivering instructions in written form. With SARS we learned we didn't have a way to communicate with many of the doctors' offices so you have to build your network early and you have to do it often. You learn from experience."

In his closing remarks, Dr. Young stressed, "everyone in this room has a need to plan...if we do that, we'll be far better off." ■

Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions 2004

Date	Organization	Location	Telephone
Feb 25	Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission - Annual Meeting	Guelph	(519) 837-0005
March 3	Seed Corn Growers of Ontario - Annual Meeting	Chatham	(519) 352-6710
March 4	Ontario Fresh Grape Growers' Marketing Board - Annual Meeting	St. Catharines	(905) 688-0990

This information is provided strictly for our readers' convenience. Please note that organizations may restrict attendance to some or all of their agenda items. Please contact each organization for more information on programs, agenda items open to non-members, and location. While the Commission endeavours to ensure this information is correct, readers are responsible for confirming its accuracy with individual organizations before making any plans to attend.

Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission

1 Stone Rd. W., 5th Floor, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 4Y2

For more information about this newsletter please email us at graham.howe@omaf.gov.on.ca

This newsletter is available on our website <www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/farmproducts/index.html>

