



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Services Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit – January 1 to December 31, 2020

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Services Board

Report Date: 21-03-29

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Services Board receives this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Service is in compliance with By-Law 273-2005 as it relates to the Underwater Search and Recovery Unit (USRU).
- The Chief is required to make a written annual report to the Board with respect to the USRU.
- This report will set out the particulars with respect to the procedures required, compliance with the procedures, confirmation of the development and maintenance of the reference file on all diving hazards, and confirmation of training.
- This report will provide a summary of the circumstances in which the USRU has been deployed.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 273-2005, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board each year in respect to the Underwater Search and Recovery Unit and that report must include the following:

- a) a summary of the procedures required for the Underwater Search and Recovery Unit;
- b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures;
- c) confirmation of the development and maintenance of the reference file on all diving hazards;
- d) confirmation of training in accordance with section 5.3; and
- e) a summary of the circumstances in which the Underwater Search and Recovery Unit has been deployed.

This Board report will outline each of the above and confirm our compliance with the By-Law.

a) a summary of the procedures required by this By-Law;

The Niagara Regional Police Service is required to provide 24/7 USRU services to support police operations within the jurisdiction of the Niagara Regional Police Service and their contracted partners (St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation and Waterloo Regional Police Service).

Deployment and response is designed to ensure that a fully trained and equipped police diving service is available in a timely manner and in compliance with Provincial Adequacy Standard ER-009 Underwater Search and Recovery Units. The written procedures for deployment are clearly set out in General Order – 088.07 Underwater Search and Recovery Unit. These written procedures include the circumstances in which the USRU will be deployed, including the process for obtaining the services and reporting relationships.

b) The status of Service compliance with the said procedures;

The Niagara Regional Police Service is in full compliance with this By-Law. The Police Service has a total of eight trained and competent officers who serve as police divers. The procedures for deployment, selection and training are clearly set out in General Order – 088.07 and Provincial Adequacy Standard ER-009. One diver is a qualified Police Explosives Technicians (PET). The Service's USRU has provided search and recovery services to the Waterloo Regional Police Service on a contract basis since 1998.

c) Confirmation of the development and maintenance of the reference file on all diving hazards.

A reference file identifying diving hazards throughout the Region has been developed in cooperation with USRU partners, including the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation and Ontario Power Generation. The file is maintained on an ongoing basis and is available to members of the Dive Unit by accessing the USRU network drive on the Service's computer system or by paper copies located in USRU vehicles.

On a yearly basis members of the USRU take part in a tour of the canal and lock systems of the Welland Canal to identify any changes/updates to hazard files.

d) Confirmation of training in accordance with section 5.3.

The Niagara Regional Police Service ensures that In-Service Training of NRPS Police Operations Divers meets or exceeds competency requirements determined by:

- i. General Order 088.07 Underwater Search and Recovery Unit.
- ii. Provincial Adequacy Standard ER-009 Underwater Search and Recovery Units.
- iii. Canadian Standards Association (CSA) - a Competency Standard for Diving Operations CAN/CSA Z275.4.
- iv. Occupational Health and Safety Act and Diving Regulation 629/94 (including Section 21 Police Health and Safety Committee).

Proof of competency of Service diving supervisors and divers is dependent upon successful completion of a Diver Certification Board of Canada (DCBC) audit and competency evaluation. Qualified members must present a DCBC certification card upon the request of a Ministry of Labour Diving Inspector as proof of qualifications in Restricted/Unrestricted SCUBA and Restricted Surface-Supplied Air categories while engaged in Service training or operational dives.

The members conducted 96 training dives in 2020 with 50 using SCUBA apparatus and 46 using Surface Supplied Air apparatus, an average of 12 training dives per member.

e) A summary of the circumstances in which the Underwater Search and Recovery Unit has been deployed.

The USRU was operationally deployed 38 times in 2020. This includes one incident which required multiple days of searches being conducted by members. Also, one incident to assist Waterloo Regional Police Service with a search for a missing person.

The following is a summary of the 38 circumstances in which the USRU was deployed from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Underwater Search and Recovery Unit Deployments	2020
Search for Missing Persons	1
Body Recoveries	21
Investigations Involving Vehicle/Vessel Investigations	7
Evidence and Property Recovery	3
Assisting Other Police Services	1
Public Relations Events	5

The following is a 3 year comparison of USRU deployments. The identified increase of USRU deployment is in part the result of recognizing officer safety concerns, and the need for proactive rescue options, when body recoveries are necessary in the Niagara River.

	2020	2019	2018
USRU Deployments	38	23	22

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

Not applicable.

Relevant Policy Considerations

General Order 088.07 – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit

Other Pertinent Reports

116.2020 – Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit – January 1 to December 31, 2019

This report was prepared by Jon Pilkington, Sergeant, Marine Unit, reviewed by Joe Garvey, Inspector, Emergency Services Unit and by Brian Ash, Superintendent, Emergency & Investigative Services and recommended by Brett Flynn, Deputy Chief of Police, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.