



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Services Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit
January 1 to December 31, 2023

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Services Board

Report Date: 2024-03-01

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Services Board (Board) receive this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (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

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 273-2005, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of the services of Underwater Search and Recovery. The report shall include:

- a) a summary of the procedures as required as required by this By-Law;
- 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 services have 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 as required by this By-Law...”*

The Service is required to provide 24/7 USRU services to support police operations within the jurisdiction of the Service and pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding providing police diving services to the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS).

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 (GO) 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 Service is in full compliance with this By-Law. The Service has a total of 8 fully trained officers who serve as police divers. The procedures for deployment, selection, and training are clearly set out in GO 088.07 and Provincial Adequacy Standard ER-009. One diver is a qualified Police Explosives Technician. The Service's USRU has provided search and recovery services to the WRPS 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 Niagara Region Public Works, 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.

Members of USRU routinely 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 Service ensures that In-Service Training of police divers meets or exceeds competency requirements detailed in:

- i. GO 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; and
- 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 mandated training and evaluation by a recognized agency. Qualified members must present proof of competency upon the request of a Ministry of Labour Diving Inspector in Occupational SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) and Restricted Surface-Supplied Air categories while engaged in Service training or operational dives.

The members conducted 153 training dives in 2023 with 91 using SCUBA apparatus and 62 using surface supplied air apparatus, an average of 19 training dives per member.

e) *“...a summary of the circumstances in which the Underwater Search and Recovery services have been deployed...”*

The USRU was operationally deployed 28 times in 2023. This includes 2 investigations that involved multiple days of underwater searching. The 1 incident involved the USRU conducting 3 days of dive operations outside the Region of Niagara searching for evidence relating to a Niagara investigation. The second investigation had the USRU conducting 6 days of dive operations in the Region of Niagara searching for evidence relating to a York Regional Police Service homicide.

The following is a summary of the circumstances in which the USRU was deployed from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023:

USRU Deployments	2023
Search for Missing Persons	2
Body Recoveries	17
Investigations Involving Vehicle/Vessel Investigations	1
Evidence and Property Recovery	5
Public Relations Events	2
Expert Consultation	1

The following is a three-year comparison of USRU deployments:

	2023	2022	2021
USRU Deployments	28	17	33

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Police Services Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with the Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulations.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Board By-Law 273 – 2005 Underwater Search and Recovery Units
GO 088.07 – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit

Other Pertinent Reports

8.14.2023.03.23 Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit – January 1 to December 31, 2022

This report was prepared by Joe Shatkosky, Constable/Coordinator, Underwater Search and Recovery Unit, in consultation with Jon Pilkington, Sergeant, Marine Unit/Underwater Search and Recovery Unit, reviewed by Jamie Munro, Staff Sergeant Emergency Services, Paul Webb, Acting Inspector, Emergency Services, and Steve Magistrale, Acting Superintendent, Emergency and Investigative Services. Recommended by Todd Waselovich, Deputy Chief, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.