



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Units
January 1 to December 31, 2024

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

Report Date: 2025-02-27

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Service 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 505-2024, as it relates to the Underwater Search and Recovery Units (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 505-2024, 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 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 Policing Standards Manual (2000) 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 officers who serve as police divers. The procedures for deployment, selection, and training are clearly set out in GO 088.07 and Policing Standards Manual (2000) 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 Niagara Region has been developed in cooperation with USRU partners, including the Niagara Region Public Works, St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, and Ontario Power Generation (OPG). The file is maintained on an ongoing basis and is available to members of the USRU 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. The members also conducted tours of the power and water control structures operated by OPG to identify hazards and neutralization requirements.

- 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. Policing Standards Manual (2000) ER-009 Underwater Search and Recovery Units;
- iii. Canadian Standards Association - 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 162 training dives in 2024 with 116 using SCUBA apparatus and 46 using surface supplied air apparatus, an average of 20.25 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 32 times in 2024.

The following is a summary of the circumstances in which the USRU was deployed from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024:

USRU Deployments	2024
Search for Missing Persons	1
Body Recoveries	20
Investigations Involving Vehicle/Vessel Investigations	4
Evidence and Property Recovery	1
Public Relations Events	3
Unfounded or Cancelled Calls for Service	3

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

	2024	2023	2022
USRU Deployments	32	28	17

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with Adequate and Effective Policing requirements.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Board By-Law 505-2024 – Underwater Search and Recovery Units
GO 088.07 – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit

Other Pertinent Reports

8.17 – 2024.03.28 Annual Report – Underwater Search and Recovery Unit – January 1 to December 31, 2023.

This report was prepared Jon Pilkington, Sergeant, Marine Unit, reviewed by Matt Whiteley, Staff Sergeant, Emergency/Tactical Services, Matt Hodges, Inspector, Emergency/Tactical Services and Darrin Forbes, Superintendent, Emergency Services. Recommended by Todd Waselovich, Deputy Chief, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.