

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Date	November 30, 2023
Meeting Date	December 06, 2023
Service Area	Public Safety Services

Chairperson Hickey and Members of the Public Safety Committee

SUBJECT: American Iron & Metal (AIM) Fire: Sept 14-15, 2023 Update

OPEN OR CLOSED SESSION

This matter is to be discussed in Public Safety Committee Open Session.

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/ Dept. Head	CAO	Chairperson
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RECOMMENDATION

The Public Safety Committee recommends that Common Council receive for information the following report from the AIM Industrial Fire on September 14th and 15th, 2023 highlighting the lessons learned from the after-action review and bringing to committee’s attention that an invoice has been submitted to American Iron & Metal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 14th at 01:38 am the Saint John Public Safety Communication Centre received a call of an outside fire at the site of the American Iron & Metal operation at 145 Gateway Street. Over the next forty hours Saint John Fire and numerous other stakeholder agencies would collaborate to extinguish the fire that spread through the huge piles of automobile materials. Much has already been provided on the collaborative response and impact of the fire incident across the 40- hour time-period. The purpose of this report is to provide the findings of the after-action review including the next steps and provide committee an overview of how the invoice recently submitted to AIM was shaped.

REPORT

AFTER ACTION REVIEW – OBSERVATIONS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Observation 1 – Water Supply Inadequate

The available water supply on site was not large enough to properly support fire operations for the fuel load that was on site.

Follow-up Action - This observation should be addressed as part of any consideration on renewing the license to operate. To be expressed to Department Environment and Local Government.

Observation 2 – Emergency Alerting

The Provincial Alert Ready notification system can be a companion tool to the municipal Emergency Alert notification system.

Follow-up Action- Early integration with NBEMO on utilization of Alert Ready notification system in conjunction with City Communications / Emergency Alert

Observation 3 – Agency Interoperability

Interoperability between the various stakeholder equipment items created some challenges. Pipes and adapters between the Atlantic Towing and Municipal and Industrial firefighter water streams were not aligned at times and adjustments were devised, however they made for an imperfect fit. These items have already been corrected at Irving Oil.

Follow-up Action - Saint John Fire to attain appropriate adaptors such that the water flow connection between Atlantic Towing's manifold and SJFD water supply lines achieves maximum benefit of the joint stakeholder water supply operation.

Observations 4 – Respiratory Protection

During the early hours of the incident the smoke plume ascended directly up to the atmosphere. As a safety precaution all operational personnel were provided direction to wear their Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) if indeed they found themselves downwind of any plume coming from the fire.

As the incident extended through the day the plume shifted and personnel were required to wear their SCBA equipment. Given the challenge of wearing the extra forty pounds of gear through extended hours of operations, crew members made an inquiry on the possibility to wear half facepiece respirators, a device that could provide breathing protection from the toxins at a fraction of the

weight of our traditional SCBA. As a result of the crew inquiry our logistics team within our ICS structure were able to secure respirators and cartridges for all personnel on site.

Although the Saint John Fire Department's hazardous material response team have often identified the option to utilize reuseable respirators, the decision to maintain an inventory as an option to SCBA had never been adopted because safety could be maintained using the existing SCBA equipment.

Follow-up Action - As a result of the prolonged hours of the AIM incident, reuseable respirators and cartridges are now part of the inventory of SJFD standard equipment options.

Observation 5 – Accountability & Scene Safety

An Operational Safety Officer for the emergency scene and an Accountability Safety Officer for those on site and those moving to and from site should have been implemented. Site safety was managed by the Site Commander as well as an Operational Incident Commander who in addition to safety were responsible for numerous additional tasks. With respect to best practice there should have been two additional safety officers, one to be dedicated to the operational tactics including the interface of people and equipment within the incident scene and another safety officer tracking accountability of those on scene as well as the movement of personnel to and from the emergency scene. The incident did happen at a time when municipal resources were stretched.

Follow-Up Action – SJEMO / SJFD commitment to sustain personnel roster and to engage the Manager of Health, Wellness, and Safety more quickly. (Although in this instance they may have already been engaged elsewhere)

Observation 6 – Involve Regional Medical Officer of Health

Direct communications with the Regional Medical Officer of Health should be established. Prior to this incident SJEMO was of the understanding that information shared with the Department of Environment and Local Government and Atlantic Health Sciences flowed naturally to the Regional Medical Officer of Health. Although information can flow through the various parties it is a best practice for SJEMO to include the Regional Medical Officer of Health directly on any communication related to a safety threat to our community.

Follow-Up Action The Regional Medical Officer of Health contact information has been added to our Municipal Emergency Response Plan as presented at today's Public Safety Committee meeting.

Observation 7 – Air Quality Reporting

Improved reporting on air quality monitoring and potential citizen impact from any plume.

Information from existing monitors as well as what the information means to citizens needs to be conveyed in an urgent manner. The possible impact to citizens helps form the response plan on whether there is a need to shelter in place or evacuate.

Follow-Up Action Prior to a license to operate ever being considered for renewal a monitoring and reporting plan on future fire incidents at the AIM operation needs to be identified and communicated to the appropriate regulators (i.e. Department Environment).

Observation 8 – Frequency of Communication with Community

The “protect in place” direction was originally announced for a specific downwind direction of the municipality and subsequently increased to include the whole Saint John Community, by the acting regional medical officer of health. This “protect in place direction” of our whole community was in place from early afternoon on September 14th until early-morning on September 15th. The absence of additional communication to our community through the approximately 18-hour period was identified as an opportunity for improvement in future events.

Follow-Up Action Our communication strategy during large scale emergency incidents needs to find pace with the type of incident. Dynamic rapidly changing incidents (fire, explosions, hazardous material incidents) need a communication plan that follows the pace of the incident. For example, a dynamic incident should provide an update along a timeframe of every 3 – 5 hours depending upon the severity of the event and the impact to the community.

A methodical steady-state slow paced incident (pending storm, a stabilized burning pile of debris, annual flood) is less likely to change over a short period of time and as such our community should expect communication updates on intervals of every 6 to 10 hours or until such time as a pending change occurs, expressed in advance. In both the dynamic and methodical steady state emergency instances it is ok to provide as an update – “that there is nothing new to report.”

Observation 9 – Certain aspects of Industrial Fire Operations can be beyond the capacity of Municipal Fire Resources to properly mitigate / manage.

Follow-Up Action- Most important aspect to addressing this observation is recognizing where and when this situation exists. Identifying where this

situation exists and creating action plans and stakeholder networks for addressing emergency response resource gaps in advance is critical for attaining the community's trust in their Municipal Emergency Response Plan team.

COST INCURRED RESPONDING TO AIM INCIDENT SEPTEMBER 14/15, 2023

COSTS	
Goods and Services (foam, water, incremental cost of equipment etc.)	\$122,771.25
Non-Recoverable HST on Goods and Services	\$858.11
Fire and Emergency Management Services	\$55,417.12
Saint John Water Services	\$11,255.21
HST	\$28,416.54
TOTAL COST AND INVOICE AMOUNT SUBMITTED TO AIM	\$218,718.24

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

N/A

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Finance Department has verified the accuracy of cost determination and invoice amount submitted to AIM.

ATTACHMENTS

- *POWERPOINT*