



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of March 25, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 10, 2021
From: Paul Bruce, Fire Chief
Subject: Technical High Angle Rope Rescue Program (THARRP) – Rescue Servicing for Tower Crane Installations – WorkSafeBC/British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approve the renewal of the Agreement for the provision of Technical High Angle Rope Rescue services, as a participant of the Provincial Technical High Angle Rope Rescue Program (THARRP) as an independent service provider within the City of Victoria and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the agreement,
2. Authorize City Clerk and Mayor to execute any inter-municipal agreements for those municipalities of the Capital Regional District, requesting the provision of Tower Crane rescue servicing, subject to the terms and conditions of the program as established through the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA) and, subject always to review and approval of the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Victoria and the Corporation of the District of Saanich have been partners in the provision of tower crane rescue service, within the Capital Regional District (CRD) since 2006. The regional partnership was established as a first in BC and, initial funding was provided through the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA). Once operational, the “joint” rescue services were delivered through a separate inter-municipal Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement establishing service agreements with the Township of View Royal, City of Colwood, Township of Sidney, District of Oak Bay and Township of Esquimalt with Saanich Fire Department identified as the “primary” service provider, with Victoria as an alternative service provider in the event Saanich was unable to do so. Essentially, Saanich Fire would determine the response to any request for service.

This existing Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement will expire at midnight on April 30, 2021. The funding made available through the BCCSA, for regional training expired on December 31, 2020. Notice has been provided, via email, to the participating regional municipalities that the regional service agreement will expire effective May 1, 2021 and, the regional funding provided specifically for interdepartmental training through the BCCSA has been discontinued.

The Victoria Fire Department has a firmly established technical rope rescue program, with capacity to continue to provide tower crane rescue services to the City of Victoria, with supporting capacity for service provision to other municipalities requiring this “specialty” rescue capacity within their jurisdictional boundaries. The BCCSA will continue to provide annual funding to the Victoria Fire Department as an “independent” tower crane service provider for the maintenance of rescue skills, cost recovery for inspections and the development of rescue plans, including the replacement of speciality equipment as provided through the operational agreement and guidelines.

The regional funding previously arranged through the program was specific to a continuation of “mutual” or “cooperative” training between the two servicing departments and, initially focused on the need for ensuring that trained staff were available between the departments to provide an effective and efficient rescue response when required. The service has progressed to the point where competent additional staffing is no longer a requirement for the “mutual” capacity of the service. The City of Victoria Fire Department has successfully established a competent service response independently of Saanich Fire. The requirement for “joint” training is no longer a relevant consideration for the program and/or, as an assurance of an effective response under the inter-municipal agreement.

Any new service agreements established under a new “inter-municipal” format will be recognized through the program and, established as an independent “fee for service” agreement for recovery of any costs not recovered under the program. The City would be seeking reimbursement of any costs associated with service provision and, supported through the Operational Guidelines established through the Provincial Program. Importantly, under the THARR program, each crane that is erected within the municipal boundaries has to be inspected and a rescue plan developed to ensure compliance with WorkSafeBC Regulations and, that effective rescue capacity is addressed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report to advise Council of the expiration of the current Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement, the funding associated with “joint” training received through BCCSA, and, the alternative service provision capacity available through restructured inter-municipal agreements, updating and identifying the City of Victoria as the primary “service provider” for those municipalities wishing to maintain the provision of THARR services within their municipalities.

BACKGROUND

The Technical High Angle Rope Rescue Program (THARRP) was developed in 2005 through a partnership with WorkSafeBC and the Construction Safety Association of BC, now the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance or BCCSA. The intent of this program was to provide a cost-effective rescue service to all applicable industry, as required through WorkSafeBC, through contribution to a collective fund and, utilizing local fire departments as service providers.

Victoria and Saanich Fire Departments received approximately \$25,000 per year each, independent of other stipends and identified funding to facilitate joint training between the respective departments. This initial funding, in addition to the established funding for the program, provided a key incentive for Victoria Fire Department to enter the THARR program, qualifying for funding to receive technical high angle rope rescue training and equipment and becoming an industry leader in the provision of technical and tower crane rescue.

The training further provided the Victoria Fire Department an increased opportunity to expand these skills and services locally to citizens, industry and corporately through recovery of initial staff training costs. The service contract model provides the training and equipment to enhance the core service delivery model for the department. This enhanced level of response and service has been implemented and maintained through external funding and has no impact on the departmental financial planning annually. It is essentially, a cost neutral program.

The “regional” component of the service provided under the Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement were delivered on a fee for service basis based on recovery of costs per call, as requested. The servicing municipality’s (Victoria and Saanich) were to be reimbursed for personnel and rescue apparatus costs for providing the services prescribed in the agreement. These costs are reimbursed directly from the serviced municipalities (Town of View Royal, City of Colwood, Town of Sidney, District of Oak Bay and Township of Esquimalt) where the services were performed. Under the terms of the agreement, Saanich was the “primary” service provider with Victoria providing the service in those instances where Saanich was unable to. Since the inception of the Regional Agreement, Victoria has not performed any service to any of the serviced municipalities.

Under the Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement, the servicing municipalities agree to provide the following services to the participating municipalities:

- Initial inspections of Tower Cranes and construction sites to establish tower crane rescue pre-plans.
- Tower Crane rescue services

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

This program was originally designed to ensure the safety and protection of tower crane operators and other industries which may require technical rope rescue services in the event an accident was to occur. Staff have expanded this valuable training to expand the level of service to our citizens, departmental staff, and visitors. This service is a requirement and benefits staff to ensure compliance and protection in situations where this rescue provision is required through WorkSafeBC regulations.

Although funding for regional training will no longer be available, the BCCSA has committed to continue to recognize the Victoria Fire Department as an independent Technical High Angle Rope Rescue and Tower Crane Rescue service provider and is supportive of the Victoria Fire Department providing these services regionally to those municipalities which are unable to participate independently with the THARR program.

With the pending expiration of the Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement, the Victoria Fire Department *may* enter into updated service agreements with other municipalities in Greater Victoria who may require tower crane rescue services.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

Continued involvement with the Technical High Angle Rope Rescue Program is in alignment with the 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan: specifically, Strategic Objective Three “Affordable Housing”.

To achieve the desired increase in rental apartment and housing vacancy, and to be progressive with development, Victoria’s continued participation on the THARR program supports the construction industry in providing the emergency planning and rescue services required in accordance with WorkSafeBC Regulations.

Impacts to Financial Plan

There are no negative financial implications with continuing as a tower crane rescue service provider for the City of Victoria. Established funding for equipment and training remains as a component of the existing arrangement with the BCCSA.

There remains an opportunity to enter separate “fee for service” agreement(s) with other municipalities to further support the region in the provision of this service with a mechanism for recovering any costs associated with providing that service.

Industrial operations, contributing members of the BCCSA programming, establishing business within the City of Victoria would be required to ensure contract “external” rescue capacity to meet the terms of compliance with WorkSafeBC regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Technical High Angle Rope Rescue Program, funded through the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance in partnership with WorkSafeBC, is an effective means of ensuring the equipment, training, and technical expertise required to provide rescue services to industrial operations in the City of Victoria and Capital Regional District is available when required.

There remains an option to partner directly with neighbouring municipalities for the provision of tower crane rescue services through utilization of a cost recovery agreement.

In view of these benefits, staff are seeking Council endorsement and reaffirmation of these arrangements and, authorize staff to investigate renewed independent agreements with other municipalities in Greater Victoria for the provision of tower crane rescue services.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Atkinson
Deputy Fire Chief - Operations

Paul Bruce
Fire Chief

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments

Appendix A - Regional Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement, 2016-2021

Appendix B - Draft Proposed Tower Crane Rescue Services Agreement 2021-XXXX

Appendix C - BCCSA Equipment Cost Reimbursement Procedures
Appendix D - BCCSA Stipend and Instructor Schedule
Appendix E - BCCSA Annual Statistics and Site Survey Submission