



Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) False Alert: CNSC Perspective



Information Presentation

June 17, 2020

CMD 20-M11



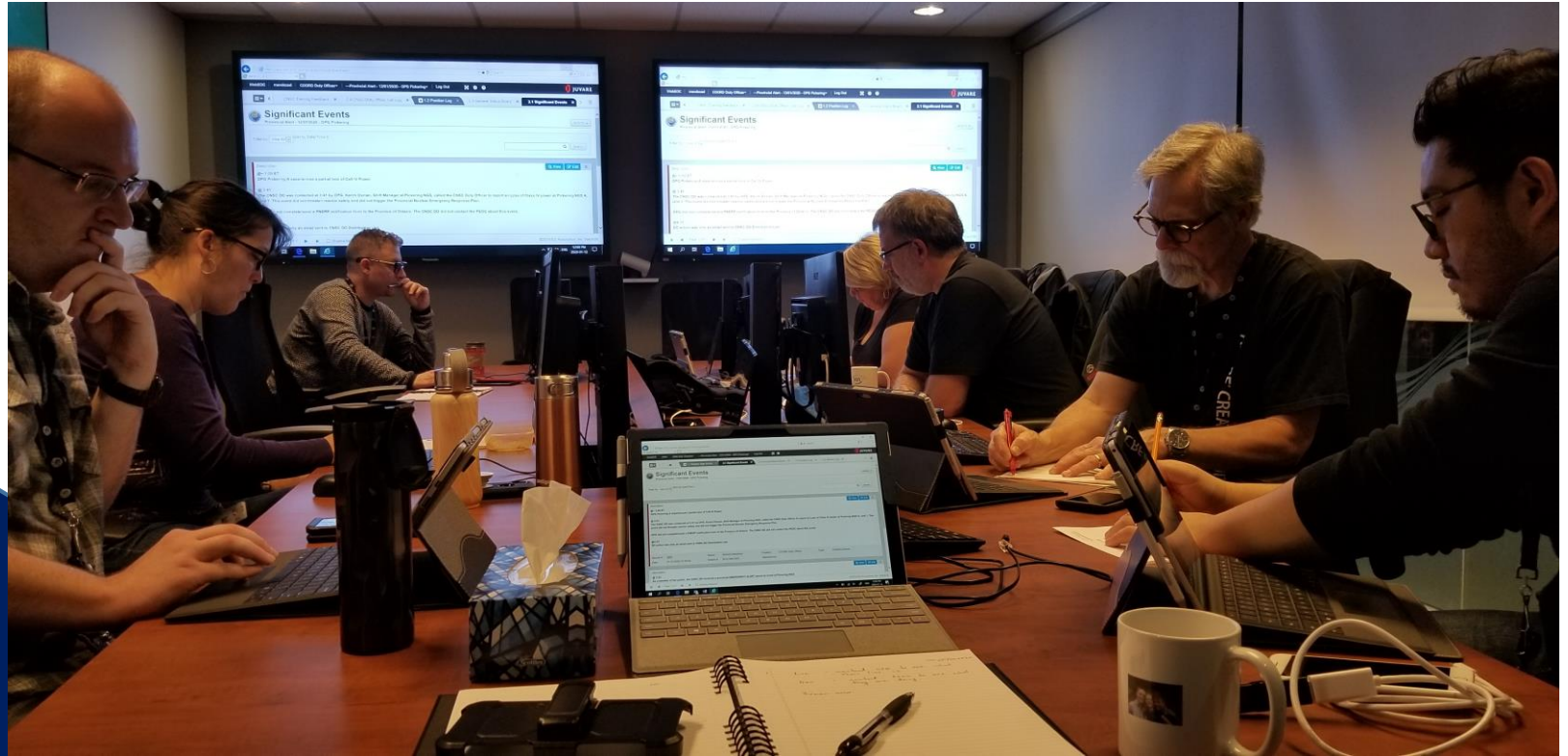
Content

- Introduction
- Event Timeline
- Lessons Learned
- Conclusions

! EMERGENCY ALERTS 32m ago

EMERGENCY ALERT / ALERTE D'URGENCE

This is a Province of Ontario emergency bulletin which applies to people within ten (10) kilometres of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. An incident was reported at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. There has been NO abnormal release of radioactivity from the station and emergency staff are responding to the situation. People near the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station DO NOT need to take any protective actions at this time. Remain tuned to local media for further information and instructions.



Introduction: January 12, 2020



Sunday January 12, 2020 (1/2)

- At 07:23, on the morning of Sunday January 12, CNSC staff were alerted, along with the majority of the province of Ontario and parts of western Quebec, to an ongoing event at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.
- Remote CNSC staff began acting immediately, independently of a coordinated response.
 - The CNSC Duty Officer worked rigorously to ascertain the nature of the event and disseminate this information internally.
 - The CNSC Communications Section reached out internally to confirm the validity of the event and develop the right approach.
 - The CNSC Government Relations Section interfaced with our federal government stakeholders to inform them of the nature of the alert.



Sunday January 12, 2020 (2/2)

- The false alert, a result of an error during a routine shift change, went uncorrected by the province until 09:11, 1 hour and 48 minutes later.
- The CNSC is a trusted regulator, and the public rushed to the CNSC external website for information on the morning of January 12. However, this surge in requests left the website unresponsive.
- The CNSC communicated bilingually through twitter at 8:46 regarding the nature of the event.
- To provide needed support and coordination to CNSC staff, the CNSC chose to partially activate its Emergency Operation Centre (EOC).
- This represents the first such CNSC EOC activation outside of an exercise since the Fukushima Daiichi Accident in 2011.



Nuclear Emergency Management Roles in Canada

Stakeholders in a nuclear emergency – an integrated approach

LICENSEE

- Prevent
- Regain control
- Mitigate
- Provide info to offsite authorities & the regulator

LOCAL & PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Protection of residents:

- **Alerting**
- KI pills
- Sheltering
- Evacuation

REGULATOR (CNSC)

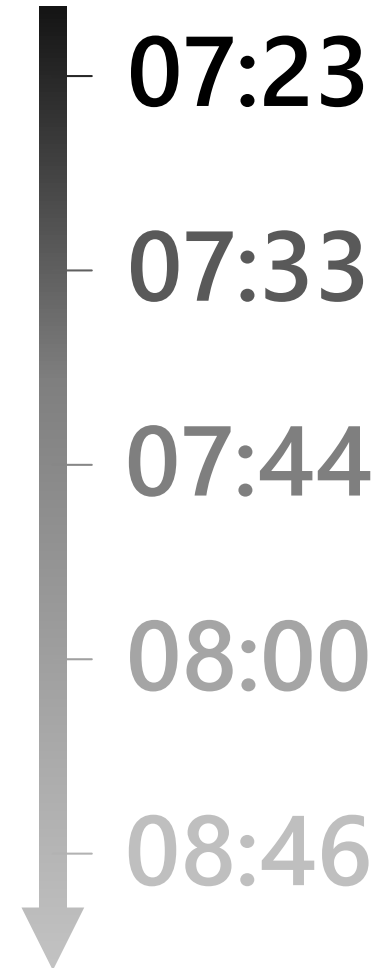
- Regulatory oversight of operator
- **Disseminate information**
- Support to Federal and International

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Support to province
- National coordination
- Cross border
- International matters

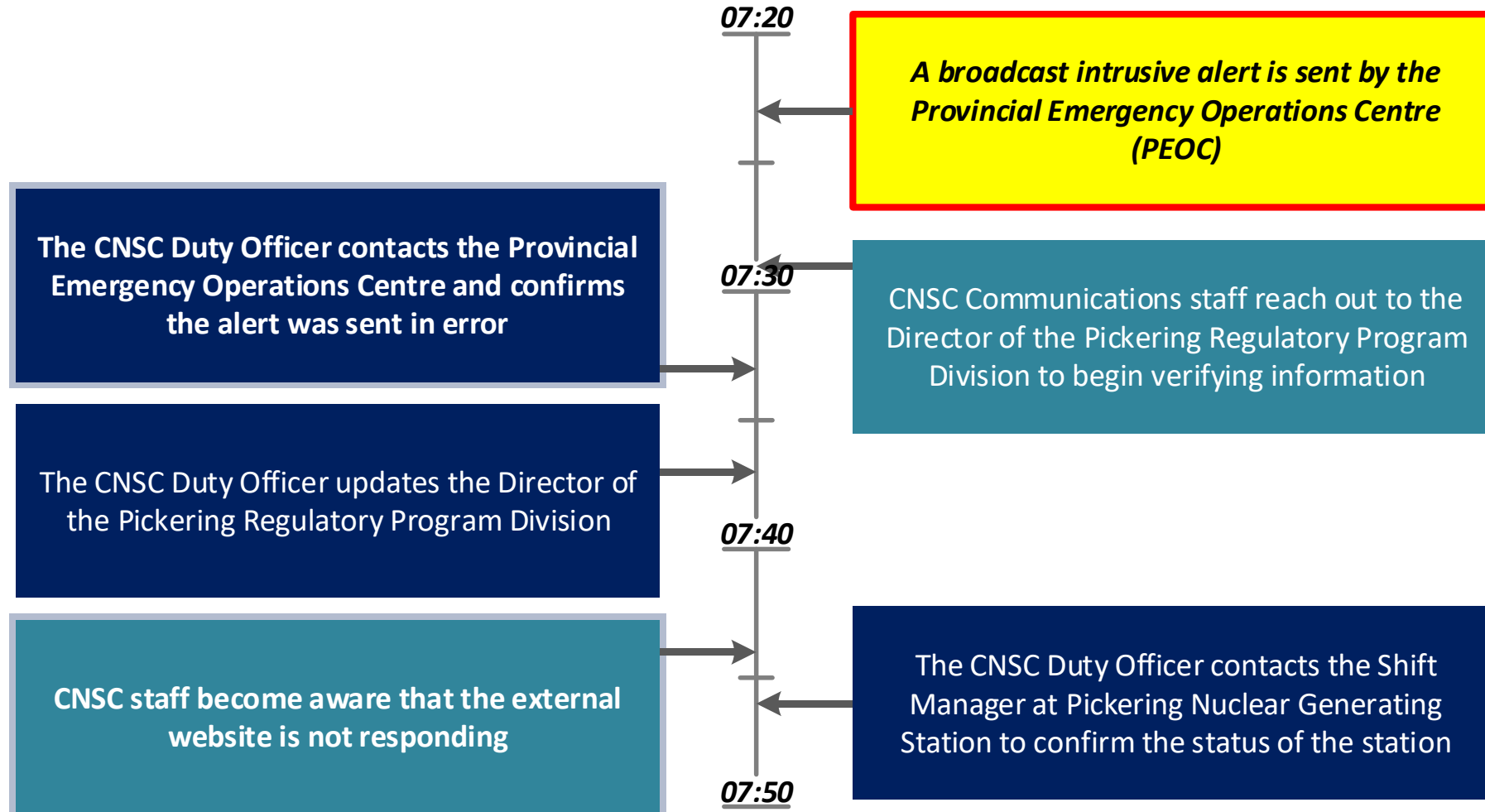


Event Timeline



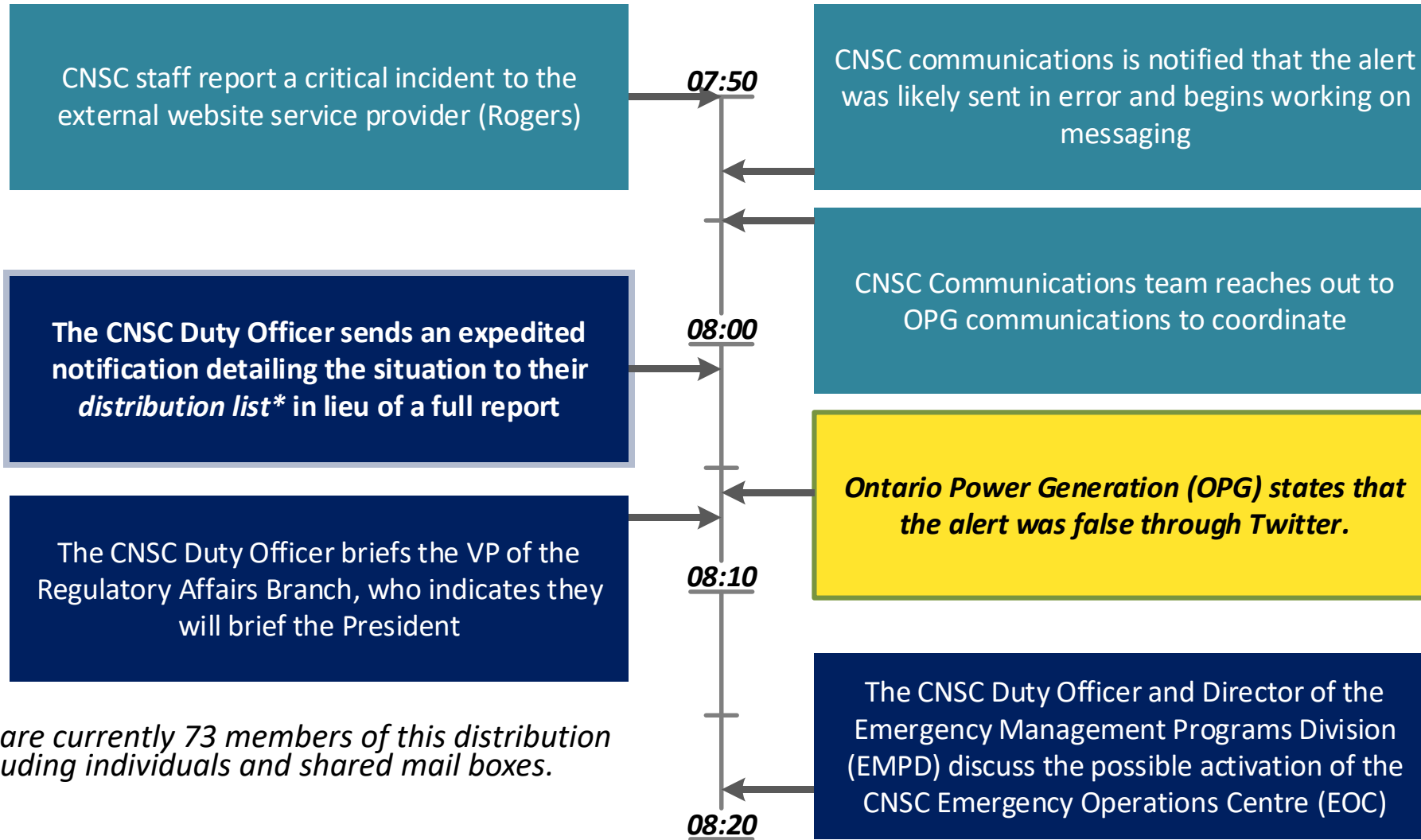


Timeline of Events





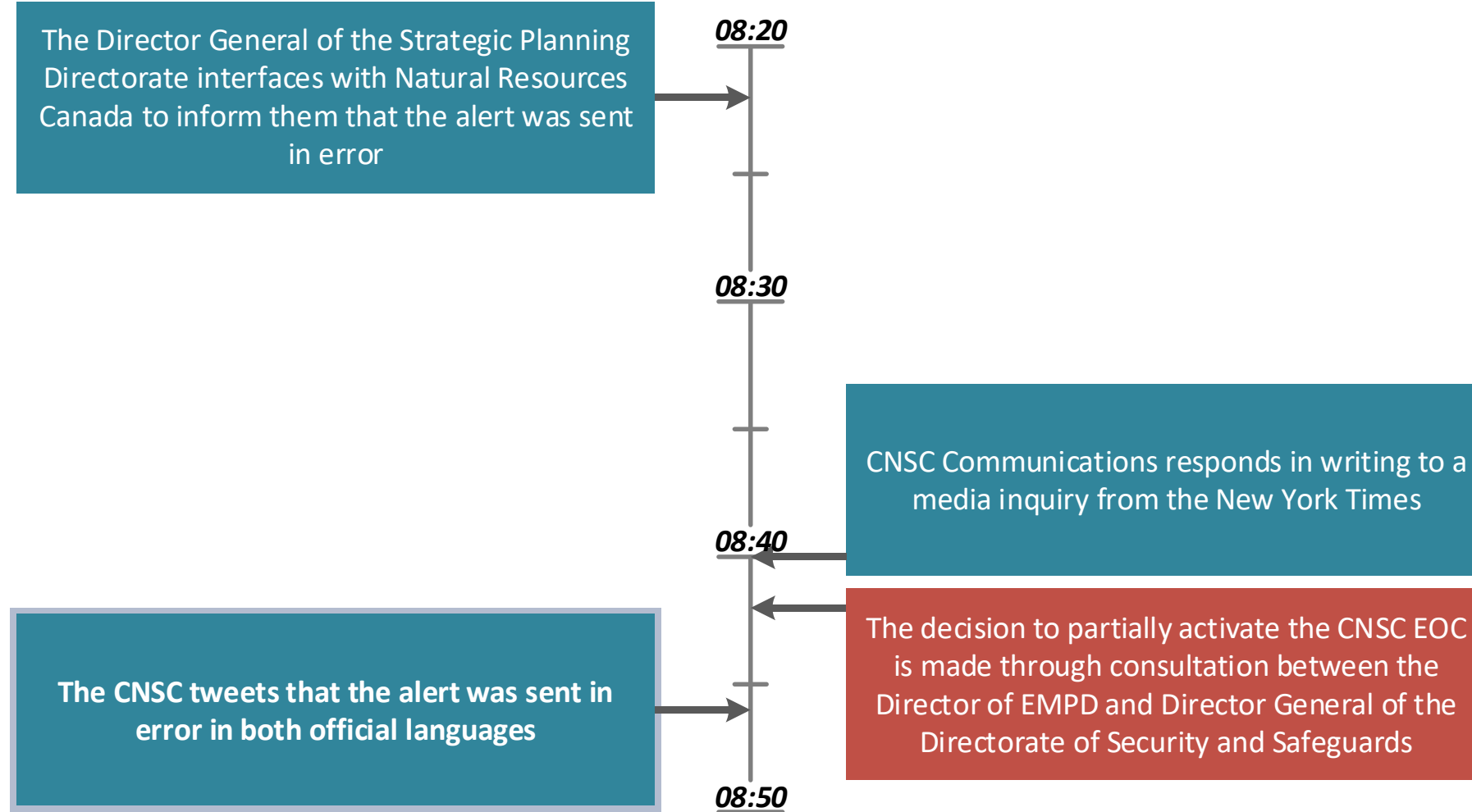
Timeline of Events



**There are currently 73 members of this distribution list, including individuals and shared mail boxes.*

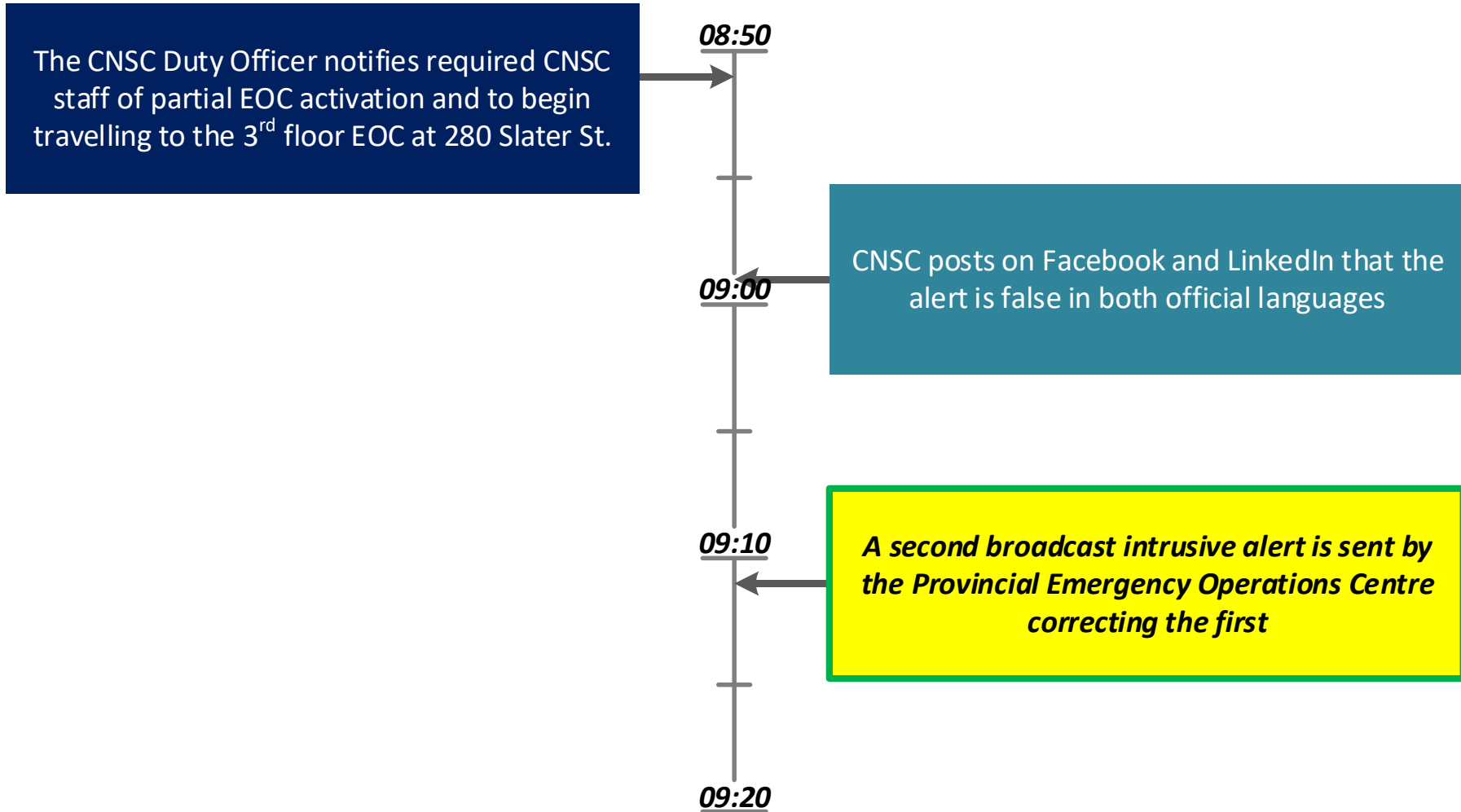


Timeline of Events





Timeline of Events





Lessons Learned

We will **never** compromise safety
Nous ne compromettrons **jamais** la sûreté



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What Worked Well

Despite the fact that the alert did not come in via regular channels, staff relied on their experience and training:

- The CNSC Duty Officer responded quickly, advising key CNSC staff of the false alert within 15 minutes.
- Communications staff self organized, verified information, and communicated the false alert in the absence of the Province's retraction.
- The CNSC EOC was partially activated and staffed despite the early hour and ice storm.
- All partner organizations were informed including: Health Canada, Public Safety, Natural Resources Canada, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the International Atomic Energy Agency.



Lessons Learned

- The high demand to the external website demonstrates the CNSC is a trusted source of information, but the surge capacity was insufficient.
- The public needs to be informed more rapidly, regardless of the responsible authority.
 - The early actions are focused on remote staff, who require earlier coordination (e.g., CNSC Duty Officer and Communications)
 - There is a need for a protocol in the event a responsible authority, such as the province, is slower than expected to respond to a communications event.
 - Staff would benefit from an expanded emergency management training and exercise program that considers a wider variety of possible events, including non-nuclear.
- There is value in a third party review to support continuous improvement.
- The CNSC, and federal government partners, need to better understand the fear and perceived risks of the public with respect to nuclear.



Communications and Trust

- We recognize that we have an important trust relationship with the public that must be upheld.
- In a crisis, an information vacuum serves no one. We are committed to rapidly sharing information to alleviate uncertainty and worry.
- We are prepared to step forward. On January 12, we communicated via our official channels that the alert was false before the Province or any other government channel.
- Our actions to improve our readiness are completed or underway.



Communications Actions to Date

- We learned some valuable lessons, confirmed by Global Public Affairs. Here is what we have already accomplished or have in progress:
 - Instituted an interim communications on-call roster that is linked to the duty officer notification responder list
 - Cross-trained staff on our social media system; expanded pre-scripted messages
 - Strengthened our ability to reach mainstream media in a crisis
 - Updating procedures and exercising non-nuclear communications scenarios
- We have successfully engaged the interim on-call roster to respond to two events: heavy water spill at Bruce (Mar 28); Blind River Refinery fire (Apr 24).



Key CNSC Actions

LESSON LEARNED	ACTIONS	STATUS
1. The public rushed to our external website, but the surge capacity was insufficient.	Immediately following January 12 event the website was improved to roughly 4X the capacity.	<i>COMPLETE</i>
2. The early actions are focused on remote staff such as the Duty Officer and communications. A coordinated response was needed earlier.	Communications has implemented an interim on-call roster and critical staff now have the ability to connect remotely.	<i>COMPLETE</i>
	The on-call process will be formalized and linked to the Duty Officer program.	<i>By Dec 2020</i>
3. There is a need for a protocol in the event a responsible authority (e.g. province) is slower than expected to respond to a communications event.	The CNSC will engage with provinces and operators to establish a protocol to ensure a rapid communications response.	<i>By Apr 2021</i>
4. The CNSC emergency management training and exercise program should be expanded to include more diverse scenarios.	The CNSC has revised the exercise plan and will leverage stakeholders to provide more variety of events; e.g., a cold-start exercise and activation drills*.	<i>June 2020</i>
5. There is value in a third party review to support continuous improvement.	The CNSC commissioned an independent review and has an action plan; all actions are complete or underway.	<i>By Apr 2021</i>
6. Further understand the fears and perceived risks related to nuclear through research.	The CNSC, in collaboration with other federal agencies, will develop a strategy that will allow us, collectively, to better address the fears and perceived risks of members of the public and Indigenous peoples with respect to nuclear.	<i>By Apr 2021</i>



Conclusions





Summary and Reflection

- CNSC staff demonstrated initiative and the ability to respond to a unique event.
- Although CNSC policies and procedures are designed for nuclear events, we relied on our training and adapted these procedures.
- The CNSC learned lessons, and improvements are planned or underway to better respond to non-nuclear emergencies.
- To preserve public trust, we are adding structure and capacity to our after-hours communications coverage so we are always ready to rapidly share information and alleviate uncertainty.
- The current pandemic has further improved our ability to quickly respond to an event.



Conclusions

- The CNSC is prepared and ready to respond if and when required.
- The CNSC will continue to work closely with our key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated government response for all potential scenarios.
- CNSC staff are committed to learning lessons and to continuously improve.
- As demonstrated by past and present events, such as Fukushima and the current Pandemic, the CNSC strives to remain agile and resilient.

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