

IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

Fatal Collision Review Committee Overview

DECEMBER 2023

This fact sheet is designed to help communities understand the role and benefits of a Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC). It provides some background on the City of Ottawa's establishment of an FCRC including the rationale prompting its creation. A overview of an FCRC and the general steps to establish and manage one can help communities to better understand fatal collisions and steps to prevent them in the future.

What is a Fatal Collision Review Committee?

The City of Ottawa established a multi-disciplinary Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC) in 2017 as a pilot program. It was formed with the intention of undertaking a timely review of fatal road crashes as they occurred in the municipality.

The committee is comprised of representatives from the Regional Supervising Coroner's Office of Eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Police Service (Collisions and Traffic Enforcement), Traffic Services (City of Ottawa), city planners and engineers, Safer Roads Ottawa and Ottawa Public Health.

The committee reviews all aspects of fatal crashes to identify contributing factors that played a role and how they might be addressed. They are responsible for making recommendations specific to the precise location of the crash which may potentially have implications for the larger transportation network.

FCRCs are more common at a municipal level, but for rural communities, a regional approach may be more efficient or manageable for smaller communities within the same geographic area. However, this approach will require more complex confidentiality protocols with respect to small numbers of incidents to protect the privacy of individuals.



Why was the FCRC formed?

The FCRC was formed to provide key decision-makers at the municipal level with a more complete understanding of fatal crashes as well as their contributing factors. Prior to the formation of the FCRC, the Ottawa Police Service collected information about fatal crashes and made recommendations for improvements based on their investigations which were then provided to the municipality. However, this process didn't include a systemic review with consideration of context to inform the development of education campaigns, guide engineering improvements, determine appropriate enforcement initiatives, or propose changes to the built environment and transportation network, as well as more wide-ranging road safety improvements (e.g., provincial or federal).

What is the objective of an FCRC?

The purpose of an FCRC is to provide communities of all sizes with a tool that gives them better understanding of, and insight into, fatal crashes in their jurisdictions and helps identify what factors play a role in them. The work of an FCRC shares a high-level overview of fatal crashes with key community stakeholders so that each agency represented by participating members can get a more complete picture of the factors contributing to crashes. This approach also facilitates discussion about priorities and concrete steps to address these factors as well as prevent future crashes by tapping into the expertise of various agencies represented on an FCRC. The foundation of this initiative is the four E's. In addition to education, enforcement, and engineering, there was an emphasis on helping communities focus more on the built environment.

It is essential communities have a more thorough and timely understanding of the contributing factors to fatal crashes in order for decision-makers to make data-driven decisions relating to education, enforcement, engineering and most importantly the built environment. It also creates a more current analysis of crashes for decision-makers to take action as problems occur and to identify opportunities for action to prevent future incidents.

What agencies are represented on an FCRC?

First piloted in the City of Ottawa in 2017, the FCRC concept brought together representatives from the Regional Supervising Coroner's Office of Eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Police Service (Collisions and Traffic Enforcement), Traffic Services (City of Ottawa) and city planners/engineers, Safer Roads Ottawa and over time Ottawa Public Health.

The key to a successful FCRC is to ensure the group stays small and agile and involves key decision-makers at the local level. At the same time, other agencies can potentially be engaged in an advisory or consulting role or to gather/share specific or technical expertise pertaining to trends or key factors as needed. However, the success of an FCRC remains contingent on it being a small, flexible and efficient committee.

Is there a role for community partners in an FCRC?

In order to maintain confidentiality of personal information, community partners are generally not formal members of an FCRC, however, they have an essential role around advocacy for the implementation of change in their respective municipalities. The information contained in each FCRC annual report should provide timely data to individuals and organizations who wish to advocate for change and improvement in the road safety culture in their municipality.

In addition, community partners may often be able to speak about issues relating to fatal crashes using more personalized and relevant messages. Conversely, staff from the coroner's office, police services, and municipal governments can communicate neutral messages supported by data.

How does an FCRC function?

The process itself involves a presentation of the characteristics and factors in each fatality within a specified number of days after it occurs. The presentation is followed by an open floor question and answer period in order to ensure all partners have an opportunity to ask questions. This is followed by a round table

discussion which allows members to engage with the goal of identifying contributing factors relating to the crash. This discussion also explores concrete solutions and interventions to prevent a future fatal crash at the specific location, as well as other, similar locations across the municipality.

On what basis are the member agencies of an FCRC able to share data about fatal collisions?

An FCRC functions under the direction of the Regional Supervising Coroner's Office and as such, they have the ability defined under legislation (the Coroners Act) to share information related to each of the fatal crashes. This includes information pertaining to a deceased person's medical history, toxicology and other relevant details.

Depending on authorizing legislation in each jurisdiction, it may be necessary to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding or data-sharing agreement. In this event, key elements of a data-sharing agreement should address, at a minimum, the following issues:

- > confidentiality
- > restricted use of the data
- > ownership of the data
- > destruction of the data
- > intellectual property rights/ownership

What kinds of data are presented to an FCRC and why is it important?

Several sources of data are presented during FCRC meetings. The most common sources are described below and include:

- > **Law enforcement data.** Police Collision Investigators who attend the scene of fatal crashes are permitted to share information related to the crash investigation, the driving history of the individuals involved and other related information (police assistance in Ontario coroner investigations is mandated in Section 9 of the Coroners Act). It is also important to have a good understanding of enforcement-related data and formal complaints from the public to provide context. This can include a history of dangerous behaviours at the location, previous formal complaints from residents and/or localized enforcement campaigns.
- > **Engineering data.** An FCRC also needs to consider the history of crashes at each location which can be provided by the local municipality and background information on what physical improvements/changes have been undertaken at each site. This can include engineering changes, the implementation of road safety technology such as red-light cameras and automated speed enforcement. Most jurisdictions can also provide a history of complaints from residents about the location (e.g., speeding, dangerous behaviours, faded paint markings).
- > **Education campaigns.** It is also important for an FCRC to understand if any public education campaigns have been undertaken in each of the jurisdictions. This is an important component when it comes to new infrastructure being implemented in municipalities, new laws and spikes in specific types of crashes.
- > **Environmental data.** Many jurisdictions are now taking a more upstream approach with the goal of building communities that are physically safer than what has been constructed in the past 50 years. It is important that information generated by FCRCs be shared openly so that planning staff and decision-makers can begin to influence subdivision design decisions at the concept stage as well as land use planning.

Are the findings of an FCRC published or shared with the community?

Yes. It is critical the work of each community's Fatal Collision Review Committee be published on an annual basis. This achieves a necessary level of accountability for the committee and the municipality to keep road safety a focus on the political agenda. It also provides various community stakeholders an opportunity to evaluate the progress of their cities becoming safe, and to provide to provide input into proposed initiatives. An example of an annual report is available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/ottawa-fatal-collision-review-committee-2020-annual-report>

Who in the community benefits from an FCRC?

The data and insight generated by an FCRC are crucial for community partners. These can include elected officials, public health professionals, a local MADD or Safety Council chapter, cycling and pedestrian organizations, private sector partners and media organizations amongst others. It is important to share the annual report broadly to help residents understand what is occurring on their roads in order to evaluate local efforts to make their communities safe.

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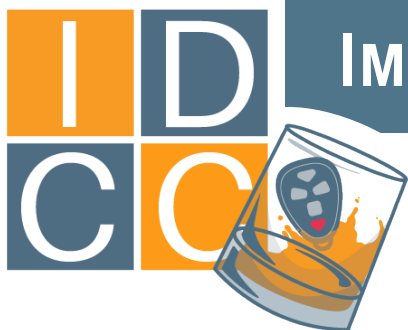
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TIRF & Diageo North America formed the IDCC to tackle impaired driving in Canada.

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