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YORK REGION EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RESPONSE TIME PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated November 26, 2009, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on York Region's improved EMS response times and advise Council of its obligation to establish and approve response time targets for York Region by January 1, 2011.

3. BACKGROUND

Reported response time is the maximum time it takes for an EMS vehicle to arrive in 9 out of 10 cases anywhere in the Region

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care requirements currently dictate that the response time that EMS must report is the 90th percentile response time obtained in the course of the preceding year. This represents the absolute maximum time that it takes for an EMS vehicle to arrive to an emergency call in 9 out of 10 cases anywhere across the Region. The 90th percentile is a high standard and different than the 'average' response time more commonly used in reporting by other public safety agencies. The average response time is calculated to represent the response time in a 'typical' case. For example, in 2008 the average response time to emergency calls in York Region was 8:11 (mm:ss); the 90th percentile was 13:08 (mm:ss).

Ambulance response times for emergency Code 4 calls (i.e. life-threatening emergencies) measures the elapsed time starting with the time York Region EMS receives the call from the provincial dispatch communications centre, and ending with the time the paramedics arrive at the scene of the emergency.

York Region EMS has no direct influence over key aspects of response times

As outlined in Table 1, EMS response times can be divided into three distinct time intervals, with each interval being controlled and/or influenced by three different bodies:

1. Provincial Dispatch
2. York Region EMS
3. Hospitals – off-load or patient transfer

EMS agencies in Ontario track and measure response times for the time interval between the beginning of Step C, and to end of Step D.

The time that it takes for York Region EMS to respond to an emergency is influenced by three distinct factors, which it has little control over, namely:

1. Dispatch proficiency
2. Ambulance availability
3. Hospital off-load delays

Table 1
Emergency Response Timelines

Interval	Controlling Body	Time	Steps	Action
1	Provincial Dispatch Control		A	9-1-1 Call Placed
			B	9-1-1 Call Transferred to Georgian Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC)
			C	CACC Notifies Closest Paramedics to Respond
2	York Region EMS Control	90 th percentile Provincial response time performance standard 11:34 (mm:ss)	D	Paramedics Respond
				Paramedics Arrive at Scene
			E	Provide Medical Care Paramedics Arrive at Hospital
3	Hospital Control		F	Transfer of Care
			G	Paramedics Depart Hospital
	Provincial Dispatch Control		H	Paramedics Geographically locate to Best Position for Readiness for Next Call

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

York Region continues to implement actions and strategies in an effort to improve response time performance.

York Region has undertaken many actions to date to improve response time performance, including:

- Increased EMS vehicle service hours increasing service capacity from 2000 to 2008.
- Opened new EMS stations responding to regional growth.
- Provided extra stretchers at regional hospitals to assist with capacity.
- Deployed Paramedic Response Units from station-based.
- Introduced an Automated Vehicle Location to the CACC, increasing dispatch efficiency.
- Extended the regional GIS resources through computerized mapping in EMS vehicles.
- Established a policy for ‘doubling patients up’ so that one paramedic crew can treat more than one patient during off-load delays.
- Evaluated the impact of an off-load delay and is currently participating in the initiative with Regional hospitals to place dedicated nurses in emergency departments.
- Participated in a pilot project to transport appropriate patients to an urgent care centre instead of hospital emergency departments.
- Implemented a Patient Priority System with regional hospitals to better coordinate patient distribution and resource allocation.
- Memorandum of Understanding with hospitals to attach capital funding to off-load targets.

In comparison to 2008, York Region’s 90th percentile and average response times have gone down during the time period of January 1, 2009 to August 31, 2009.

Table 2, on page 4, outlines the 90th percentile response times for all emergency responses for the Region by year.

Table 2
90th Percentile Response Time

Year	Percentage of Calls Responded to Meeting the Standard	Number of Calls Responded to Meeting the Standard	90th Percentile Response Time (mm:ss)	Average Response Time (mm:ss)
2001	88.3%	21,467	12:02	7:35
2002	89.0%	23,834	11:51	7:34
2003	86.2%	24,676	12:35	8:00
2004	88.6%	26,822	12:07	7:43
2005	87.7%	28,128	12:22	7:50
2006	86.5%	29,599	12:33	7:54
2007	85.4%	33,002	13:04	8:08
2008	85.4%	36,739	13:08	8:13
2009*	86.1%	19,171	12:30	7:56

*From January 1, 2009 to August 31, 2009

York Region is responsible for establishing response time targets for the municipality by January 1, 2011

The Province of Ontario has recently introduced significant changes to the Ambulance Response Time Standard which has a direct impact on every municipality. As of January 1, 2011, land ambulance services will be required to follow the response time targets set out in municipally established and publicly communicated Response Time Performance Plans, rather than meet the 90th percentile response times from 1996 and report back to the Ministry no later than March 31 in each year effective 2012. York Region therefore, will be responsible for setting its targets which will be effective January 1, 2011.

To date, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has conducted a series of workshops across the Province to provide additional information on the implementation of the new plan; however, more information is needed to fully develop the implementation framework. The Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario will likely be establishing a working group to identify common response time targets to achieve a consistent application province wide. The Department will submit a report to Committee and Council in September 2010.

Once land ambulance services are operating under the Response Time Performance Plans established by municipalities and delivery agents, those land ambulance services, who respond in accordance with municipally defined Response Time Performance Plan, would be deemed to meet the Ministry's land ambulance response time certification requirement.

The Ministry will continue to monitor and enforce land ambulance service compliance with, regulations and standards under the Ambulance Act as of January 1, 2011

The Ministry will:

- Ensure that upper tier municipalities and delivery agents responsible for land ambulance services and ambulance dispatch centres have Response Time Performance Plans in place for all emergency calls.
- Annually receive, assess and make available to the public the response time plans and the performance in meeting each plan's targets.
- Assist the land ambulance sector to promote response time best practices that are identified from other jurisdictions.

Staff will provide a subsequent report on the impact of the response time changes.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Response time improvements will result in better EMS resource availability, which will benefit residents in all local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

Several factors such as transfer of care, hospital off-load delays and dispatch inefficiencies impact York Region's ability to improve response times. Staff however, continue to work with stakeholders in developing strategies to improve York Region EMS response times. The Region will be responsible for establishing and approving York Region response time targets by January 1, 2011.

For more information on this report, please contact Norm Barrette, General Manager, Emergency Medical Services at Ext. 4709.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.