

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Monday, June 7, 2021
Subject	Paramedic Service Response Performance 2020 and Performance Plan 2022

Recommendation

1. That the Response Time Performance Plan for 2022 be set as recommended by staff.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide a report on the performance of the Paramedic Service against the 2020 Response Time Performance targets as set by Council, and to establish a Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP) for the Paramedic Service for 2022 as required by Provincial Legislation.

Key Findings

In 2020 Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service was able to meet the targets and compliance rates as set by Council, within an acceptable margin, despite the pressures of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the additional time-on-task required to keep paramedics safe.

Financial Implications

The response time performance is a key data set that supports budget investment and is a measurable goal of the Strategic Plan. The Paramedic Master Plan in connection with the actual response time results will be used to demonstrate the recommended timing of expanded paramedic services required to meet response time targets over this period.

Report

Response times to emergency calls are affected by the location of the nearest available ambulance to the site of an emergency. Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service uses a complex deployment model to move available ambulances to predetermined locations as other ambulances are assigned to calls. As fewer ambulances become available, the locations are wider spread and response times increase. Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service has used computer modeling to ensure that the most appropriate station and deployment locations are being utilized.

Council determines the desired response times for the service for the upcoming year by October 31, and the actual annual performance results are reported to the Provincial Ministry of Health by March 31 of the following year.

Response times to emergency calls are an important key indicator for Paramedic Services. Patient outcomes can be directly related to those times, and overall community satisfaction and perception on the service delivered can also be affected by wait times.

The purpose of setting response time targets is to provide the residents with a reasonable expectation of ambulance response times in their community, and to provide some accountability and transparency around the provision of the Paramedic Ambulance Service.

Performance targets are set in the form of a Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP), which establishes a target response time and compliance level to that target for each of five (5) categories of medical emergencies. The categories are based on the severity of the patient's illness or injury and defined based on the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS), which is a score shared by hospitals and other services across Canada.

The five levels of CTAS include:

- CTAS 1 – requires resuscitation (i.e. cardiac arrest)
- CTAS 2 – requires emergent care (i.e. major trauma)
- CTAS 3 – requires urgent care (i.e. mild shortness of breath)
- CTAS 4 – requires less urgent care (i.e. minor trauma)
- CTAS 5 – requires non-urgent care (i.e. sore throat)

There is a sixth response time that measures the time to deliver a cardiac defibrillator to the scene of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). Because this can include Public Access Defibrillators, Fire Departments or other allied agencies arriving first, actual response times, especially with public access defibrillators, are often difficult to capture consistently. This time is set by the Ministry of Health at six (6) minutes, but the expected compliance rates to that target is set by Council.

Performance in 2020

2020 was a challenging year for Paramedic Services. The number of responses, which have been increasing annually for many years, decreased during the pandemic as people chose not to go to the emergency department. Additional capacity related to lower call volumes was balanced by extra time-on-task required by Paramedics to don additional personal protective equipment (PPE) and take additional pandemic precautions.

The table below illustrates Council's approved RTPP for 2020, and Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service's compliance with its response time targets. The Paramedic Service was required to report these results to the Ontario Ministry of Health by March 31, 2021.

CTAS Category	Response Time Target	2020 Target Compliance as approved by Council (October 2019)	2020 Actual Compliance Rate
Level 1	8 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	68%
Level 2	10 minutes	75%	73%
Level 3	15 minutes	90%	90%
Level 4	15 minutes	90%	88%
Level 5	20 minutes	90%	93%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	52%

The RTPP is a good retrospective measurement of performance but is less useful as a planning tool. The Service needs to attempt to arrive at all calls as quickly as possible because the severity of the patient’s condition, or their CTAS level, cannot be verified before a Paramedic arrives.

Additional Services Provided

On the front-line level, the stressors on Paramedics responding to emergency calls increased significantly with the concerns of spreading the virus through the Service, their families, and the community. Despite these pressures, Guelph-Wellington Paramedics offered and agreed to undertake additional and non-traditional roles for Paramedics including COVID-19 screening, home monitoring of patients with mild symptoms, and administering COVID-19 vaccinations. The Service was able to utilize some flexibility in scheduling and capacity of part time staff to leverage the skills and expertise of Paramedics and assist in these vital tasks during the pandemic.

Participating in this work did not reduce the planned Paramedic staffing levels and did not affect Paramedic response times.

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service Master Plan

A 2016 consultant’s report assisted Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service in predicting the population growth and residential development in the area through 2026, and this has allowed the service to develop a master plan that involves incrementally adding additional resources to meet the demands while maintaining or improving response times.

The final five-year master plan for the Paramedic Service has previously been presented to Council. That plan outlines recommended incremental enhancements to the service and relocation of some Paramedic stations. Each change will be

brought forward to Council for approval in the budget process for the proposed year of introduction.

Recommendations for the 2021 Response Time Performance Plan

There is a great deal of uncertainty around what can be expected in what will hopefully be a post-pandemic period. Staff recommend maintaining the current RTPP targets and compliance rates for 2022:

Canadian Triage Acuity Scale Levels	Response Time Target	Compliance Rate Recommended to Council
CTAS Level 1	8 minutes (set by the Province)	65%
CTAS Level 2	10 minutes	75%
CTAS Level 3	15 minutes	90%
CTAS Level 4	15 minutes	90%
CTAS Level 5	20 minutes	90%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6 minutes (set by the Province)	65%

Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service will continue to strive to meet or exceed these targets and compliance rates using best practices in deployment strategies and procedures.

Financial Implications

The response time performance is a key data set that supports budget investment and is a measurable goal of the Strategic Plan. The Paramedic Master Plan in connection with the actual response time results will be used to demonstrate the recommended timing of expanded paramedic services required to meet response time targets over this period.

Consultations

The Response Time Performance Plan will be provided to the Ontario Ministry of Health, where it will subsequently be posted on their website. It will also be posted on the City's website: [Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services](#). The County of Wellington will be provided with a copy of this report, and staff will be present at the County's Social Services Committee meeting to explain the RTPP Standards.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The creation of a Response Time Performance Plan is part of building our future and ensuring that we continue to build strong, vibrant, safe and healthy communities that foster resilience in the people who live here.

Departmental Approval

None

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