

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Wednesday, July 5, 2023
Subject	Paramedic Service Response Performance 2022 and Performance Plan 2024

Recommendation

1. That the Response Time Performance Plan for 2024 is set as recommended by staff.
 2. That Council receives for information the report on the Response Time Performance of Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service in 2022.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide a report on the performance of the Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service against the 2022 Response Time Performance targets as set by Guelph City Council, and to advise of the proposed Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP) for the Paramedic Service for 2024.

Key Findings

In 2022 Guelph Wellington Paramedic Service (GWPS) was unable to fully meet the targets and compliance rates as set by City Council. Causes included pressures from increased call volumes and the impact of hospital offload delays.

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.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications from this report. The Paramedic Business 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 during the multi-year budget process.

Report

Response times to emergency calls are an important indicator for Paramedic Services and a Key Performance Indicator in the City's Annual Report. Patient outcomes can be directly related to those times, and overall community satisfaction

and perception of the service delivered can also be affected by the time it takes for an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an emergency.

Emergency response times are influenced by the proximity of the nearest available ambulance to the emergency site. GWPS employs a sophisticated deployment strategy that relocates accessible ambulances to pre-determined areas as others are dispatched to emergency calls. As the number of available ambulances decreases, the deployment locations become more dispersed, leading to longer response times.

Council determines the desired response times for the service for the upcoming year by October 31, and a proposed set of targets are included in this report. The actual annual performance results are reported to the Provincial Ministry of Health by March 31 of the following year.

The purpose of setting response time targets is to provide the residents of our area 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 are 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). 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 are set by Council.

Performance in 2022

The chart below reveals that GWPS fell short of meeting all but one of the response targets set by Council for 2022. One of the challenges that hindered service delivery was the frequent and lengthy hospital offload delays experienced at Guelph General Hospital. These delays occur when paramedics arrive at the Emergency Department, but hospital staff are unable to take over the patient's care within 30 minutes. As a result, paramedics are required to stay at the hospital for an extended period to care for the patient. In 2022, GWPS paramedics spent approximately 11,000 hours caring for patients who were in offload delay.

Response times in 2022 were also affected by other factors. one of which was an eight (8) percent increase in call volumes compared to 2021, causing the number of patient-related calls to exceed 30,000 for the first time. This trend of rising call

volumes is also being observed in most paramedic services in Ontario and in fact, worldwide.

The table below illustrates Council's approved RTPP for 2022, and GWPS'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, 2023.

CTAS Category	Response Time Target	2021 Target Compliance as approved by Council (October 2020)	2021 Actual Compliance Rate
Level 1	8 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	63%
Level 2	10 minutes	75%	71%
Level 3	15 minutes	90%	88%
Level 4	15 minutes	90%	83%
Level 5	20 minutes	90%	92%
Sudden Cardiac Arrest	6 minutes (set by MOH)	65%	48%

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.

The Provincial Ambulance Dispatch System is currently being upgraded with a new triage software that is expected to assist in identifying and focusing on higher priority calls for assistance. This software, referred to as the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS), is expected to be in place late 2024.

Response Time Improvement Strategies

Efforts to improve response times to emergency calls are ongoing alongside the dynamic deployment methodology for available ambulances outlined in this report. The Community Paramedicine Program is also in place to offer non-emergency services to high-risk individuals in the community, effectively reducing the occurrence of emergencies and ensuring appropriate care is given to avoid hospitalizations. There is evidence that this program is achieving its objectives and lessening the burden on the hospital system.

In addition, recent Provincial legislation has changed, allowing paramedics to transport certain patients to alternate destinations instead of the Emergency Department; staff have been utilizing this opportunity. This minor shift has resulted in a small but significant decrease in the number of patients presenting to the hospital, leading to better patient flow and fewer offload delays.

Council has assisted in maintaining response times by approving incremental enhancements to the paramedic service over several years to address the increasing call volumes. An additional 12 hours of paramedic ambulance service, seven days per week was approved and added in January of 2022.

During a recent Council Workshop, it was noted that the response times of the paramedic service in the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington could be enhanced by refining the efficiency, layout, and location of the paramedic stations. The initiative to improve this is currently ongoing.

Recommendations for the 2024 Response Time Performance Plan

Staff predict a continued increase in emergency call volumes in 2024 with the associated increase in pressures on response times. The effects of hospital offload delays are challenging to anticipate and mainly beyond the control of City staff. However, staff are optimistic about their partnership with Guelph General Hospital administration and their recent pledge to intensify their efforts and work together to minimize the frequency of these delays.

Despite the pressures and uncertainties, staff are not recommending a reduction in the response time targets and the associated reduced services to our residents. Staff will continue to strive to optimize response times and provide services as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The RTPP targets and compliance rates recommended for 2024:

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%

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 Business 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. Staff will be present at their Social Services Committee meeting to explain the RTPP Standards.

Attachments

None

Departmental Approval

None

Report Author

Stephen Dewar, Chief and General Manager, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services

This report was approved by:

Stephen Dewar

General Manager, Chief, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2805

stephen.dewar@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2588

colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca