

Town of Riverview
COUNCIL REPORT FORM



Presented to: Mayor and Council

Department: Riverview Fire and Rescue

Date: 16 May 2023

Subject: Dispatching to Medical Calls

BACKGROUND

In January of 2023 MCMC (the ambulance dispatch arm of Ambulance New Brunswick) stopped the routine dispatching of twelve fire departments in the province to medical calls. Riverview Fire and Rescue was one of the twelve departments impacted by this change. Medavie Health Services attributed this to a change in CAD systems used to dispatch ambulances.

As a result of this change, we now rely entirely upon the Codiac OCC/PSAP (Fire Control) to identify medical calls that we should respond to. 911 call takers have a maximum of 60 seconds to process a medical call before transferring it to MCMC. Previously we had used a list of “key words” to enable Fire Control to identify high acuity calls we should respond to. We relied on MCMC to dispatch us if we had not been dispatched initially by Fire Control when the 911 call came in. In short, MCMC functioned as a “safety net” by dispatching RFR to calls missed by Fire Control.

Riverview Fire and Rescue felt that the best course of action, in the interim, was to ask Fire Control to dispatch our department to all medical calls (not relying on a list of “key words”) to ensure we do not fail to respond to a resident in need of emergency medical service. A commitment was made to council to provide an update at the end of April.

RESULTS OF TRIAL PERIOD

The call volume for medical calls from January to April has increased approximately 22% between 2022 and 2023. Unsurprisingly, we have seen crews dispatched in some instances to low acuity calls that we would ideally not send resources to. Having said this, the impact thus far on operations is tolerable.

ISSUE RESOLUTION

Resolution of this issue would require one of two possible solutions:

- The Province of New Brunswick providing a formal mandate to Medavie Health Services to dispatch fire departments to medical calls, with the service provided by MCMC.
- The Province of New Brunswick reorganize 911 dispatching such that the regional 911 dispatch centres (such as the Codiac OCC/PSAP) have the tools, procedures and training to identify medical calls that should be responded to with a high degree of accuracy.

This is not an issue that can be resolved between our municipality and the fire dispatch service provider alone. The issue is structural within the NB 911 system, as the system was not designed to accommodate fire department response to medical calls.

ADDITIONAL ACTION

- The Fire Chief will continue to correspond with Medavie Health Services, the Department of Health and the Department of Justice and Public Safety to advocate for a solution to this issue. The Fire Chief will also attend the NBAFC annual convention to advocate for this issue within the NB fire service community.
- The Fire Chief will further monitor operational impacts on Riverview Fire and Rescue and Report to council in the fall of 2023.

Robin True

Chief, Riverview Fire and Rescue

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