

From: Community Engagement <Community.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca>
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To: Community Engagement
Subject: EMS Pressure and Mitigation Plan Memo

Message from

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EMS System Pressure and Mitigation

Good Afternoon Mayors, MLA's, Municipal Leaders, Chiefs, and First Nations Health Leads,

Today, Alberta Health (AH) and Alberta Health Services (AHS) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are announcing a comprehensive 10-point plan for addressing the extraordinary increase in EMS calls that we've experienced over the past months.

This plan, which focuses on immediate actions that will help create capacity within our system, will ensure that EMS continues to remain available and safe for all Albertans.

Specifically, immediate actions of this plan include:

- An 'hours of work' project to help ease staff fatigue:
 - AHS will continue its rollout of the fatigue management (Hours of Work) project, which launched in November 2021. EMS is adjusting working hours, shifts and scheduling to help to alleviate fatigue among staff. AHS will invest a total of \$24.2M in the first two phases of this work.
- Transferring low priority calls to other agencies in consultation with EMS physicians:
 - EMS will be transferring non-emergency or low priority calls to other agencies such as Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) (and are currently working to include Health Link 811), where appropriate, and in consultation with OnLine Medical Consultation (OLMC) physicians in dispatch.
- Stopping the automatic dispatch of ambulances to motor vehicle collisions that don't have injuries:
 - As of December 1, 2021 EMS is no longer automatically sending an ambulance to a motor vehicle collision where there are no injuries reported. Previously an ambulance would have been dispatched automatically and the crew would need to confirm there are no injuries. These calls are now responded to by police or fire as appropriate.
- Continued hiring of paramedics.
 - EMS is constantly hiring qualified paramedics to fill vacancies.

- Launching pilot projects to manage non-emergency inter-facility transfers
 - Two pilot projects (Calgary Zone and North Zone) are underway where patients who do not need urgent medical care are transported to care homes, and residences by means other than ambulances.

In addition to the above, several more actions are planned for later this year:

- Integrated Operations Centre:
 - AHS will be adding an integrated operations center (IOC) to Calgary. This will mirror Edmonton's IOC, which has successfully brought together paramedic leads and hospital staff for operational oversight on management of integration between EMS and the hospital system to improve patient flow.
- Emergency Communications Evaluation:
 - EMS will be implementing additional dispatching processes provincially, including evaluation by an emergency communications officer to determine if an ambulance from out of area, though it may be closest to a 911 call, is most appropriate to respond. An additional level of 911 call assessment will ensure resources continue to be prioritized for the most urgent calls, while low priority events may be delayed when safe and appropriate to do so, in conjunction with physician advice and oversight.
- Pre-emption of ambulances
 - EMS will have the ability to pre-empt and divert ambulances to higher priority calls, when appropriate. This changes the way ambulances are assigned primarily in Calgary and Edmonton, and will assist with keeping resources in Suburban and Rural communities.
- Red Deer IFT Pilot Project:
 - A pilot project is also being proposed for inter-facility transports in the Central Alberta corridor that will allow dedicated resources for transfers, while leaving ambulances for community coverage and higher priority events.
- Strategic Provincial Service Plan:
 - Creation of a new 5-10 year Provincial Service Plan, which will look at all EMS services, and will be completed in September 2022.

Finally, Alberta Health will also be leading an EMS Advisory group over the coming months, and we look forward to new ideas and connections coming from that work. The pressures facing EMS are not unique to EMS, nor to Alberta. Across the country, EMS and healthcare systems are struggling with demand. EMS calls in Alberta alone have increased by approximately 30 per cent over the last year, with demands on the service now at historic levels. Despite this increase in demand, EMS continues to respond to the vast majority of serious 911 calls quickly and appropriately, thanks to our dedicated EMS teams.

We understand that you are hearing about these concerns from your communities and constituents. We are here to ensure you have the information you need to address those concerns.

AHS remains committed to EMS staff and patients, and this plan allows us to take immediate action to uphold that commitment. Critical patients will continue to be prioritized, and existing system capacity will be maximized. Albertans need our care. We are here. This plan allows us to act immediately, to maintain the high quality care that we are proud to deliver.

We thank all EMS teams for their ongoing dedication; our AHS and Alberta Health colleagues for the continued collaboration; and you – leaders in our communities, for your voice and your support.

We are in this together.

Please continue to reach out to us with your questions directly, through your EMS Zone leadership contacts. We are always available to talk and provide more information. If you do not have a contact, you can email Community.Engagement@AHS.ca.

Please see the following link to the press release:

<https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=817698A0B3E38-CB1E-7434-A9265705634345ED>

Many thanks,

Community Engagement
Alberta Health Services



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.



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