

Subject: 9-1-1 Annual Report 2023

File Number: ACS2024-EPS-PSS-0003

**Report to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee on 17
October 2024**

and Council 30 October 2024

Submitted on October 1, 2024 by Beth Gooding, Director, Public Safety Service

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Ward: City-Wide

Objet : Rapport annuel 2023 sur les services d'appel au 9-1-1

Numéro de dossier : ACS2024-EPS-PSS-0003

**Rapport présenté au Comité des services de protection et de préparation
aux situations d'urgence le 17 October 2024**

et au conseil le 30 octobre 2024

**Présenté le 1 octobre 2024 par Beth Gooding, directrice, Service de la sécurité
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Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

RECOMMENDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des services de protection et de préparation aux situations d'urgence recommande au Conseil de prendre connaissance du présent rapport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Safety Service within the Emergency and Protective Services department manages the Service Level Agreement with the Ottawa Police Services Board for the City's 9-1-1 call answer function. This report provides information on Ottawa's 9-1-1 service for 2023, including key performance metrics and call volume statistics.

Since 2020, overall call volume has continued to increase year over year. In 2023; however, this was partly attributed to a North American-wide software glitch on cell phones and other devices that resulted in erroneous calls to 9-1-1. That issue is now resolved.

In 2023, two of the City's three key performance metrics for the 9-1-1 call answer service consistently achieved set standards. For the third year in a row though, call response times did not meet the set standard, which states that 97 per cent of all calls be answered within six seconds from the time a call is received. Despite that, there was a noticeable improvement in this performance metric since 2022, which is significant given the higher-than-average calls to 9-1-1 associated with the software issue in cell phones and other devices mentioned previously.

The Public Safety Service will continue to work with the Ottawa Police Services Board (as represented by the Ottawa Police Service) so that the City's 9-1-1 service meets resident needs, including for Next Generation 9-1-1, which represents a transition to a new end-to-end digital system that, when implemented, will enable new user functionality.

SYNTHÈSE ADMINISTRATIVE

Le Service de sécurité publique de la Direction générale des services de protection et d'urgence gère l'entente de prestation de services avec la Commission de service de police d'Ottawa pour la fonction de prise d'appels au 9-1-1 de la Ville. Le présent rapport contient de l'information sur le service 9-1-1 d'Ottawa en 2023, traitant notamment des

indicateurs de rendement clés et des statistiques sur le volume d'appels.

Depuis 2020, le volume général d'appels a continué de croître d'une année à l'autre. Toutefois, en 2023; cette hausse a été attribuée en partie à un bogue logiciel, qui a eu des répercussions sur des cellulaires et d'autres appareils à l'échelle de l'Amérique du Nord, et qui a entraîné des appels effectués involontairement au service 9-1-1. Ce problème est maintenant résolu.

En 2023, les normes établies relativement à deux des trois indicateurs de rendement clés de la Ville liés au service de prise d'appels passés au service 9-1-1 ont été atteintes invariablement. Cependant, pour la troisième année d'affilée, la norme établie relativement aux délais d'intervention, qui stipule que les agents doivent répondre à 97 % de tous les appels dans les six secondes suivant leur réception, n'a pas été atteinte. Malgré cela, on a remarqué une amélioration considérable de cet indicateur de rendement depuis 2022, ce qui est important étant donné le nombre élevé d'appels passés au 9-1-1 en raison du bogue logiciel mentionné ci-dessus.

Le Service de sécurité publique poursuivra sa collaboration avec la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa (représentée par le Service de police d'Ottawa) pour que le service 9-1-1 continue de répondre aux besoins des résidents, notamment en ce qui a trait à la transition vers les services 9-1-1 de prochaine génération, un nouveau système numérique de bout en bout qui inclura ultimement de nouvelles fonctionnalités destinées aux utilisateurs.

BACKGROUND

9-1-1 is an emergency call-for-service, telephone-based response system to access first responders including Police, Paramedic and Fire Services. The Public Safety Service within the Emergency and Protective Services Department has the responsibility to manage the 9-1-1 service for the City of Ottawa, which is contracted to the Ottawa Police Services Board, as represented by the Ottawa Police Service. The Public Safety Service manages the contract with the Ottawa Police Services Board and negotiates the provision of the 9-1-1 telecommunications service with Bell Canada. The Public Safety Service is required to report to Committee and Council annually on compliance with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement with the Ottawa Police Services Board.

The 9-1-1 system in Ottawa operates as follows: an individual calls 9-1-1 from a landline or cell phone; the telephone service provider (Bell Canada) then directs the call to the Primary Public Safety Answering Point (in Ottawa, this is the Ottawa Police Service at 474 Elgin Street). Calls received for the Ottawa Police Service are handled by the Ottawa

Police 9-1-1 Communications Centre. Calls for other types of assistance are transferred to the appropriate Secondary Public Safety Answering Point at one of the other emergency services (i.e., the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Gatineau 9-1-1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police or Canadian Forces Support Unit). Call takers at the Secondary Public Safety Answering Point assess the call and dispatch the appropriate response resources, as required.

DISCUSSION

The City's current Service Agreement with the Ottawa Police Services Board was carried forward based on previous arrangements that had been in place pre-amalgamation. The Service Agreement includes items related to performance management, reporting processes, testing of back-up equipment, staff training, staffing levels and contract management. Information related to the key components of the agreement are provided in further detail below.

Performance management

The following are the key contractual performance measures included in the Service Level Agreement between the City and the Ottawa Police Services Board:

1. That a minimum number of 9-1-1 call takers are on duty at all times.
2. That the number of call takers is adjusted according to call volume demand.
3. That 97 per cent of all calls be answered within six seconds from the time a call is received.

For 2023, the first two measures were consistently achieved. The third measure, the call intake service standard, saw an increase from 81 per cent in 2022 to 89 per cent in 2023. However, for the third consecutive year, the standard was not achieved (i.e., 97 per cent). It is important to note, however, that the national industry standards state that 90% of all 9-1-1 calls be answered within 15 seconds and 95% answered within 20 seconds. If the City was to adopt these standards for this performance indicator, the Ottawa Police Service would be meeting it with 100 per cent compliance.

A contributing factor in 2023 was that call volume was higher than normal partly due to technological and software application updates on cell phones and other devices that resulted in erroneous calls to 9-1-1, across North America. The erroneous calls directly contributed to operator workload because they required call-backs to be performed to confirm that the calls were indeed made in error. That issue will not be a factor for 2024 as

the technological glitch has been resolved.

The City will continue to work with the Ottawa Police Service so that 9-1-1 operates as efficiently as possible. This includes continued public information campaigns to help residents know when to call 9-1-1, when to call the Ottawa Police Service's non-emergency line to report non-urgent police matters, or when to call somewhere else such as 3-1-1.

The City and the Ottawa Police Service also implemented a new service for residents in late 2023. Through an agreement with an external service provider, the City of Ottawa is now able to transfer 9-1-1 calls from residents to any city in North America. This service is proving popular with residents, with many callers seeking help for family members and friends in other cities.

Table 1 shows the total call volume, as well as the call volume percentage change since 2018, based on data provided by the Ottawa Police Service.

Table 1: Call volume percentage change

Year	Number of calls	Percentage change
2018	280, 102	+9.3%**
2019	303, 328	+8.3%
2020	284, 259	-6.3%
2021	317, 766	+11.8%
2022	348, 567	+9.7%
2023	411,617	+18%

***Based on a total volume of 256,294 calls in 2017*

Call volume

Call volume for the purpose of this report refers to emergency calls answered by the Ottawa Police Service as the Primary Public Safety Answering Point. On occasion, 9-1-1 calls are made directly to the emergency services (i.e., the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire Services, and other Secondary Public Safety Answering Points). Accordingly, there is not a direct one-to-one relationship between calls answered by the 9-1-1 service and total calls received individually by the Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Fire

Services, and other Secondary Public Safety Answering Points at their respective dispatch centres.

It is also important to note that the nature of some calls to 9-1-1 necessitate that more than one emergency service respond to the scene. The City of Ottawa has a Tiered Response Activation Agreement in place that enables the lead responding agency to request support from another emergency service. For example, the Ottawa Police Service are the lead on motor vehicle collisions (except for the 400-series highways, which are an Ontario Provincial Police lead). If Police determine on scene that an extrication is required, they will request support from Ottawa Fire Services.

The data provided by Ottawa Police in Table 2 is the total number of emergency phone calls initially received by 9-1-1 but it does not correlate with overall response volumes, including those cases where another agency was “tiered” to a response.

Table 2: 2018-2023 summary of call volume

Type of Call Volume	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total calls	280,102	303,328	284, 259	317, 766	348, 567	411,617
Daily average	767	831	779	871	955	1127
Calls for service - Ottawa Police Service	53.8%	64%	64.1%	66%	63%	67%
Calls for service - Ottawa Paramedic Service	38.9%	30.4%	30.5%	29%	31%	29%
Calls for service - Ottawa Fire Services	3.6%	3%	3.1%	2.5%	2.8%	3%
Calls for service - Other services ¹	3.7%	3.1%	2.7%	2.5%	3.2%	1%

Table 3 outlines the call source data provided by Ottawa Police of 9-1-1 calls from 2018 to 2023.

Table 3: 2018 to 2023 call source data

Year	Cellular	Residential landlines	Other ²
2018	73%	10%	17%
2019	74%	10%	16%
2020	77%	9%	14%
2021	79%	7.5%	13.5%
2022	80%	6.7%	13.6%
2023	83%	4%	13%

¹ Other services include the Ontario Provincial Police, Quebec 9-1-1, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Forces Support Unit.

² Other sources include commercial single line and push button, public pay phone, Centrex, multi-party line (commercial and residential) and unknown.

Complaints reporting

Complaints are also assessed as part of the City’s Service Level Agreement with the Ottawa Police Service. Once a service complaint is received from the public to 9-1-1, the complainant is contacted by the Ottawa Police Service to review the circumstances surrounding the complaint including the information exchange that occurred with the call taker.

The 9-1-1 service received three public complaints for 2023. Two of the complaints were related to call response wait times. Of those two complaints, staff determined that in one case, there was an influx of calls at the same time related to a fire. Staff could not substantiate the second complaint as the data in the system did not match the complaint and the complainant was unresponsive to follow up.

The third complaint received was identified as a performance issue; the resident also submitted a formal complaint to Ontario’s Law Enforcement Complaints Agency.

Testing of backup equipment

Ottawa Police Service visually inspects and tests the 9-1-1 backup facility and equipment on a monthly basis.

Training requirements for staff and staffing levels

Ottawa Police Service is responsible for providing on-the-job and classroom training to all staff performing 9-1-1 duties to ensure that performance standards, standard operating procedures and accredited standards for Communicators/Dispatchers as provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario are met. The minimum staffing levels requirement, as outlined in the 9-1-1 Purchase of Service Agreement, were met in 2023.

Contract management

Staff from the Ottawa Police Service and the City meet regularly to review and discuss a range of issues related to the performance of Ottawa's 9-1-1 system.

There were no changes made to the terms and conditions of the Service Level Agreement in 2023 but a new agreement that will include significant updates will be required when the City transitions to Next Generation 9-1-1.

Also in 2023, staff began work on a service review of Ottawa's 9-1-1 call answer function as part of the City's Corporate Service Reviews initiative.

Next Generation 9-1-1

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) refers to an initiative aimed at updating the 9-1-1 service infrastructure in Canada to create an end-to-end digital system that will eventually allow for text messages, photos, and videos to flow seamlessly from the public to the 9-1-1 network.

The City continues to work closely with the Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Fire Services, and other partners to work towards a smooth transition to NG9-1-1.

In 2023, both the Ottawa Police Service and Ottawa Fire Services received dedicated funding from the province for NG9-1-1 implementation. The Ottawa Paramedic Service is transitioning to NG9-1-1 through the provincial Ministry of Health.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information in this report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

There are no comments from Ward Councillors as this report is city-wide in nature.

CONSULTATION

There were no consultations undertaken related to the recommendations of this report. The Public Safety Service is committed to consulting and collaborating with residents and community partners for the safety of all in Ottawa.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The 9-1-1 service provides emergency response to people with disabilities in line with the obligations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, 191/11.

In 2015, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission instituted a Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired hardware upgrade for the 9-1-1 service. This was implemented in Ottawa in 2016 and enables registered callers who are Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing, and/or have Speech Impairments to send text messages once a traditional call connection to 9-1-1 is made.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

As per the [Delegation of Authority By-law 2023-67](#), Schedule F – Emergency and Protective Services department, Section 2, Public Safety Service manages the contract with the Ottawa Police Services Board and negotiates the provision of the 9-1-1 telecommunications service with Bell Canada.

The Public Safety Service reports annually to Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee with the other service areas in Emergency and Protective Services. The last reporting was on March 21 via the Use of Delegated Authority in 2023 by Emergency and Protective Services ([ACS2024-EPS-GEN-0001](#)).

There are no new delegated authority requirements associated with this information report.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

The Public Safety Service is a key partner in the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy. Forecasting studies led by the City's Climate Resiliency group indicate that Ottawa is expected to become warmer and wetter over the next several decades. This warming due to climate change favors conditions conducive to extreme weather such as storms, tornadoes, and wildfires. The nexus to 9-1-1 is that, in the immediate aftermath of a significant weather event, there is always an increase in calls for service to 9-1-1.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Public Safety Service considers and manages risk within the service area. These risks have been articulated throughout the report as well as their mitigation strategies.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific rural implications associated with the recommendations of this report. However, the Public Safety Service does consider the varying needs of those living in different parts of the city when developing Emergency Plans.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The services described in this report align with the 2023-2026 Term of Council Priority 'A city that has affordable housing and is more livable for all'. Specifically:

- Strategic Priority 7: Improve emergency response times.

DISPOSITION

The Public Safety Service will implement any direction arising from receipt of this information report.