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County Paramedic Services implementing Medical Priority Dispatch System

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Changes are coming to 9-1-1 medical call dispatch in Dufferin County.

The County of Dufferin announced in a press release on Monday (Sept. 29) that starting in December, the provincial government would be implementing a dispatching system called the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS).

?Our government is rolling out the Medical Priority Dispatch System in Dufferin County to ensure the right emergency services are sent to the right place, at the right time. By investing in this world-class technology, we are protecting communities in Dufferin County and beyond with state-of-the-art emergency care,? said Sylvia Jones, MPP for Dufferin-Caledon.

Currently, most Central Ambulance Communications Centres (CACCs) in the province rely on a dispatching protocol known as Dispatch Priority Card Index (DPCI). It has been found that through the DPCI protocol, low-priority calls for ambulance service are often over-prioritized, resulting in depleting paramedic resources in communities.

The aim of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) is to help prioritize life-threatening situations, meaning those in urgent need will get help faster.

How MPDS will work is when a person in Dufferin County calls 9-1-1 and requires paramedic services, dispatchers will ask more detailed questions to better understand how serious the emergency is.

Dispatch calls that will be prioritized by DCPS will include emergencies like stroke, heart attack, severe allergic reaction, difficulty breathing, or major trauma.

While calls such as those from broken bones without bleeding, sprains, or flu-like symptoms will be considered lower-priority and will be responded to as quickly as possible.

On Sept. 25, Dufferin County Council received a mid-year report from Dufferin County Paramedic Chief Gary Staples regarding paramedic services in the community.

One of the statistics shared in the mid-year report was the number of incidents of ?Code Zero? or ?Code Red? that occurred from Jan. 1 to June 30. A Code Zero/Code Red is declared when there are no Dufferin County ambulances available to respond to an emergency.

According to the report, Dufferin County Paramedic Services had a total of 97 incidents of ?Code Zero? or ?Code Red? over the six-month period, resulting in 45 hours of zero ambulances available in Dufferin County.

These numbers are slightly down from 2024, when the DCPS reported a total of 220 Code Zero incidents that resulted in 105 hours of zero ambulances available in Dufferin County.

The report also noted that DCPS has received a total of 5,951 calls for service in the first half of the year, and is projecting to see roughly 6,193 calls in the second half of the year. This is an 11 per cent increase from 2021.

?At Dufferin County Paramedic Service, our goal is to always get the right help to the right people at the right time. The new Medical Priority Dispatch System will support this goal by making sure that the most serious emergencies are handled first in our

community. Residents are reminded to stay calm when calling 9-1-1, always provide as much information as possible and if your condition changes, call 9-1-1 again immediately,? said Chief Staples.

The Medical Priority Dispatch System has already been implemented in the regions of Toronto, Niagara, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Renfrew, Peel, Halton, Simcoe, York, and Kingston.