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County report shows more paramedics are needed to improve rural response times

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In keeping with the universal truth found in Beatles lyrics, rural paramedic services sometimes ?get by with a little help from their friends? ? or in this case, neighbours.

That's one of the takeaways from a look at Dufferin County Paramedic Services' rural response times, detailed in a report tabled at a May county council meeting.

The average response time in 2025 for all types of calls countywide was almost nine minutes. For high acuity calls, the average response time in 2025 was 07:02. The shortest average response time for high-acuity calls last year was in Shelburne at 05:32.

The longest average response time for high-acuity calls was in Mulmur at 15:11.

Councillor Chris Gerrits, Amaranth's mayor, said some of the rural response times are nothing short of amazing. Regarding Amaranth's northwest corner in particular, he said it's amazing the time it takes for paramedics to respond there.

However, the county's boundary municipalities, Mulmur, Melancthon, and East Garafraxa, seemed to have slower response times. Gerrits asked if those areas are being served by other paramedic services.

Gary Staples, the chief at the Dufferin County Paramedic Service, confirmed that it was indeed the case.

?There are a number of calls that are being serviced by other municipalities,? he said and stressed that it was because of proximity to those municipalities.

Some areas of East Garafraxa's south would be closer to Hillsburgh than to Orangeville or Grand Valley, he said. Dufferin County paramedics operate from stations in Orangeville, Grand Valley, and a third in Shelburne.

Staples said other municipalities in Dufferin County served a total of 737 calls last year.

?Some of them would be due to closeness,? he said. ?Some of them would be because we don't have ambulances. And some would be because they (outside ambulance) are at Headwaters hospital. Even though we have an ambulance in town, they might be the closest one.?

That goes both ways: Dufferin County Road 109 through Orangeville is technically in Caledon. Gerrits said that's one of the busier roads.

?It's considered Caledon, even though it's a Dufferin road, so we would technically respond because we are closer,? Staples said.

Dufferin paramedics would respond to calls in some of the more northern Caledon centres because of proximity, he said.

?We tend to respond to those, but they are low numbers,? Staples said.

In 2025, local paramedics sprang into action on 299 external calls, those from outside Dufferin County, Staples said.

Coun. Janet Horner, the mayor of Mulmur, asked whether anything could be done to reduce response time for high-acuity calls in her municipality. Mulmur recorded the longest average response time.

There's been talk in the past about locating a paramedic substation nearby in an effort to curtail response time, she said.

Horner asked if there was anything that could decrease the paramedic response times to Mulmur.

?That is a tough question of what can be done,? Staples said.

Staples said 80 per cent of calls to the service are from Orangeville, Shelburne, and the boundaries of Grand Valley.

?So we're really speaking to 20 per cent of the calls that are spread out through a large area,? Staples said.

He said finances will be reviewed over the summer to better determine what next steps may be to improve those response times. He said there has been talk about a paramedic station on County Road 17.

?[If] there was dedicated staff to that station, the response times across the community would decrease as a result,? Staples said.