This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 11:26:57 2026 / +0000 GMT

Dufferin paramedics improve response, shorten downtime

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

The Dufferin Paramedic Service has seen a decrease in the time paramedics spend at hospitals after transporting a patient.

The paramedic service provided to county council an activity report for the period from Jan. 1 to June 30.

According to the report tabled when council met Aug. 27, paramedics have experienced offload delays in 17.1 per cent of patient transports, continuing a five-year downward trend.

This reflects an improvement compared to 2022, when 23.4 per cent of patient transports resulted in offload delay, and 2025 when the rate was almost 19 per cent.

During the first six months this year, DCPS paramedics spent a total of 134 hours waiting in hospital to transfer patient care. By comparison, DCPS recorded 519 total hours of offload delay in 2022 and 284 total hours in 2025.

?Offload delay remains an ongoing area of focus for DCPS and its hospital partners, with continued efforts underway to identify efficiencies and implement process improvements,? Chief Paramedic Gary Staples wrote in the report.

The service's call volume is down one per cent compared with 2022 and 5.9 per cent compared with 2025. But overall demand for service remains relatively stable.

The patient volume has increased 2.8 per cent compared with 2022, but it's down 6.2 per cent compared with 2025. More patients are being transported than in 2022 despite relatively stable call volume.

All 2026 targets are currently being exceeded, and response performance remains strong across all target categories.

?(DCPS) has exceeded all established response time performance targets,? according to the report. ?Based on current performance trends and sustained achievement across all target categories, it is recommended that the existing response time targets be maintained for 2027.?

Code Zero, also called Code Red, incidents have declined significantly since the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) was introduced in December 2025. This means ambulances are available more consistently when emergencies occur, Staples said. Code Zero occurs when no Dufferin County ambulances are available to respond to emergency calls.

DCPS experienced 30 Code Zero incidents, resulting in a total of eight hours with no ambulances available in Dufferin County. By comparison, over the full 2022 calendar year, DCPS experienced 204 Code Zero incidents and 79 total hours of no ambulance availability.

In 2025, DCPS experienced 182 incidents and 82 total hours. The significant downward trend in both the number of incidents and total hours is directly related to the implementation of the MPDS, according to the county.

In addition to Code Zero incidents, high-priority responses, overtime, and missed meal breaks have declined since the implementation of the MPDS. Some lower-priority patients have waited longer during busy periods, but complaints remain low.

Overall, the new system is improving ambulance availability and day-to-day operations.

Paramedic services are required each year to report response time performance for the previous calendar year by March 31 and

establish response time performance targets for the upcoming year to Oct. 31.

For the period of Jan. 1 to June 30, DCPS exceeded all established response time performance targets. Based on current performance trends and sustained achievement across all target categories, it is recommended that the existing response time targets be maintained for 2027.

County councillor Chris Gerrits, Amaranth's mayor, said he is very impressed with the response times, especially in the county's rural areas. There was discussion when council last discussed decreasing response times that there may have been a need for another satellite ambulance station in the county.

Staples said there was a recommendation in the 2025 ambulance master plan to consider a satellite paramedic station in the county's northern end if it could be financially and operationally possible.

?If we were to do something at this point and just move an ambulance to that station for a period of time, we most likely would be actually degrading our service that we're providing to Orangeville, Shelburne, Grand Valley,? Staples said. ?That is where 75 to 85 per cent of our call are.?

The rest of the paramedic service's call are spread over a vast area.

?We might not actually make a difference if we just move an ambulance there,? he said.