

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2018-01-03

From: Dave Philp, Manager Eg11 & Information Technology

File No: 7150-20

Subject: Dispatch Call Volumes during the December 29th Ice Storm

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the RACS of information pertaining to Fire Dispatch and the call volumes experienced during the ice storm event of December 29th 2017. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

Call volumes in Fire Dispatch continue to increase year over year. In recent years, an exceptionally busy day in dispatch is typically between 250 and 300 calls in a 24 hour period. The busy days usually occur as result of extreme weather events. 2017 followed this trend as expected however the ice storm of Dec 29th was one for the record books in terms of call volumes handled by Fire Dispatch.

DISCUSSION

Officially, Fire Dispatch recorded 577 incidents in our Fire Dispatch Management (FDM) system in the 24 hour period of Dec 29th. Actual 911 calls received exceeded 900 for the same period. The number recorded incidents are lower as we routinely receive multiple calls for the same incident created in the FDM system.

Peak hours for call volume were from 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm with 416 of the 577 calls occurring in that timeframe.

By comparison the day previous had a total of 183 calls and our annual daily average to date for 2017 was 52 calls.

The majority of the calls received were in the Central Fraser Valley where the storm hit hardest. Abbotsford recorded 339 calls and Mission recorded 176. Reports of 'wires down' were the most common incident for the day.

Normally there is one dispatcher on shift until 4:00 pm and a second dispatcher between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm. The first request for assistance in Dispatch on Dec 29th came in at 11:00 am, and by 2:00 pm there were 5 dispatchers on deck through to midnight.

The impact of the storm continued to be felt by FVRD Fire Dispatch for December 30th and 31st. Call volumes did begin to subside in the following two days and additional dispatchers were still required to assist with the call outs to BC Hydro, Fortis and Chilliwack Utilities.

Dispatch finished 2017 with 19,819 incidents recorded in FDM from a total of 24,057 "911" calls. Our previous yearly high was in 2016 with 16,824 incidents recorded in FDM from a total of 20,445 "911" calls.

CONCLUSION

Year over year the Fire Dispatch call volumes are increasing and it seems severe weather events occur more frequently, increasing the workload in call centre. Through it all, there is no doubt the FVRD has a group of professionals manning our Fire Dispatch Center who will give up their personal time at a moment's notice to ensure that the residents of the Fraser Valley and the Regional District of North Okanagan receive professional 911 Fire Dispatch.

COMMENTS BY:

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Throughout the event, Fire Dispatch staff showed their dedication and commitment to their profession by keeping the residents of the Fraser Valley safe. It should also be noted other FVRD staff pitched in to assist in facilitating meal breaks and support. A real team effort was deployed to ensure the centre could run as smoothly as possible.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

No further financial comments.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Staff has budgeted additional shifts for 2018 to help manage the volumes of calls that continue to rise. The additional shifts will begin by the end of January