



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Margaret Misek-Evans, Chief Administrative Officer

Date to Council: November 12, 2019

Report Number: CAO-2019-09

Subject: 911 Misdials

Recommendations

It is recommended:

Whereas the calls for service for 911 Misdials have risen dramatically in recent years, correlated with the rise in cell phone use; and

Whereas 911 Misdials must be responded to as if they were legitimate emergency calls; and

Whereas each 911 call is responded to with two OPP officers at an average time per call of 1.2 hours; and

Whereas each 911 call is a billable call to the municipality; and

Whereas in 2019 alone to date, 911 Misdials in Tecumseh number 1,082 calls, which is 28.8% of all billable calls for service to date; and

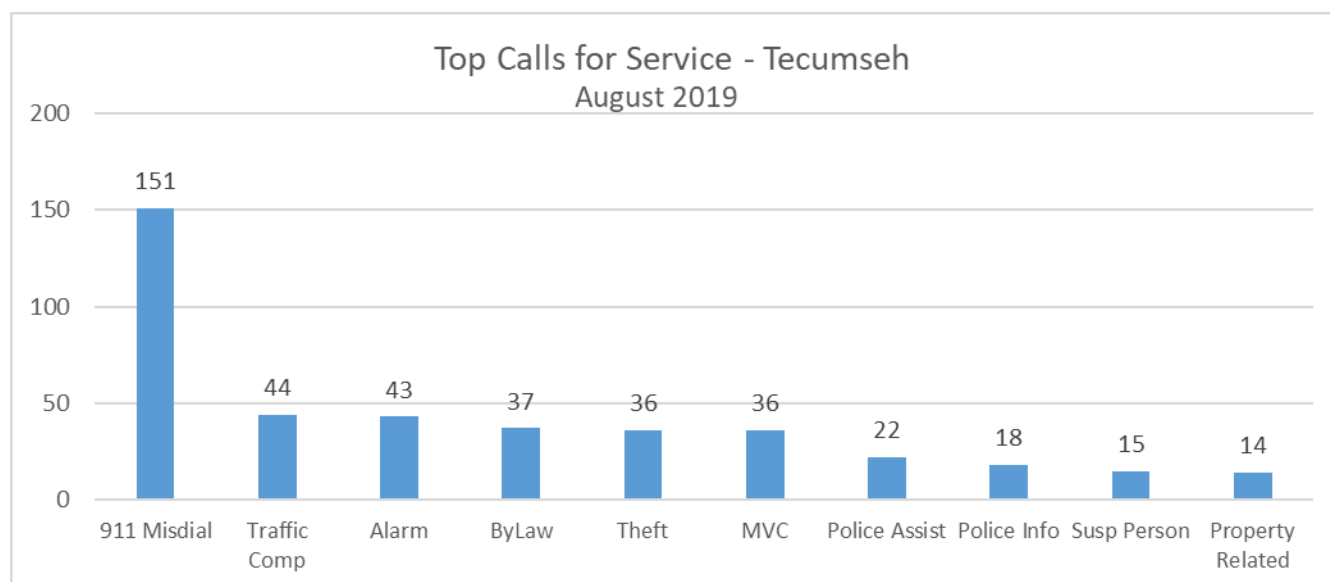
Whereas 911 Misdials are not unique to Tecumseh and in fact are common across the Province at an estimated cost of millions of dollars;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the Municipal, Federal and Provincial governments and relevant associations, including but not limited to, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB), the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), be requested to lobby the telecommunications industry and smart phone manufacturers to develop a solution to 911 Misdials.

Background

The Tecumseh Police Services Board (Board) receives regular reports from the Essex County OPP (OPP) on statistics related to calls for service. Over the past months, the Board has expressed concern on a number of occasions regarding the trend of increasing calls for service related to 911 Misdials, and the high proportion of total calls these represent.

At their October 10, 2019 meeting, the Board reviewed data contained in the 'Police Services Board Monthly Overview August 2019' produced by the OPP. The chart below shows the OPP's top calls for service in Tecumseh for the month of August 2019:



The report includes comparative information with other Essex County OPP Detachment municipalities and notes the following trends in the detachment area:

- A 65.7% increase in 911 Misdials in August 2019 (898 calls) compared to August 2018 (542 calls)
- An average of 29.9 Misdial calls per day
- 911 Misdials are trending 63.2% higher YTD 2019 (5,867 calls) compared to YTD 2018 (3,596)

Concern about escalating 911 Misdials and the effect of this trend on policing and police budgets was also raised at the recent Joint Essex County Police Services Board meeting held in Leamington on August 29, 2019. This meeting was attended by the boards from all Essex County OPP-policed municipalities, namely the Towns of Essex, Kingsville, Lakeshore, Tecumseh and Municipality of Leamington.

Following discussion of this data, and as a result of concerns expressed by members of the Board on multiple occasions, the Board passed Motion PSB 43/19 at the October 10, 2019 PSB meeting:

Whereas the calls for service for 911 Misdials have risen dramatically in recent years, correlated with the rise in cell phone use; and

Whereas 911 Misdials must be responded to as if they were legitimate emergency calls; and

Whereas each 911 call is responded to with two OPP officers at an average time per call of 1.2 hours; and

Whereas each 911 call is a billable call to the municipality; and

Whereas in 2019 alone to date, 911 Misdials in Tecumseh number 1,082 calls, which is 28.8% of all billable calls for service to date; and

Whereas 911 Misdials are not unique to Tecumseh and in fact are common across the Province at an estimated cost of millions of dollars;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the Tecumseh Police Services Board request Town Council to approach the Federal and Provincial governments and associations, including but not limited to, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB), the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), to lobby the telecommunications industry to develop a solution to 911 Misdials.

Comments

Administration obtained the most recent data available for 911 Misdials from the OPP. As of October 12, 2019, the OPP have responded to 1,082 911-related billable calls in Tecumseh, broken down as follows. This represents 28.8% of all calls for service in 2019 YTD. (Note: the categories correspond to those used in the OPP billing statement.)

Billable Category	Description	Number
911 Call / 911 Hang Up	General 911 misdial / hang up	482
911 Hang Up – Pocket Dial	(subcategory) Accidental 911 call using a cell phone	183
911 Call – Dropped Cell	(subcategory) 911 call using a cell phone, then signal was lost. Contact may have been made, then deemed non-emergency or accidental	417
Total	All Categories	1,082

The table below compares the 2019 statistics to previous years. While some 'zero data' is included, the total figures are most relevant. The OPP notes that the Pocket Dial category was introduced in 2013 and the Dropped Cell category was introduced in 2014. As the years went on, officers have become more diligent in classifying 911 misdials into these subcategories as opposed to the more general 911 Hang Up category.

Category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD	2019 Est. *
911 Call / 911 Hang Up	640	698	479	449	411	530	482	578
911 Hang Up – Pocket Dial	1	6	21	20	69	70	183	219
911 Call – Dropped Cell	0	1	12	15	70	87	417	500
Total	641	705	512	484	550	687	1,082	1,297

* This is an estimated year-end total based on the YTD amount.

While some fluctuations are apparent, the estimated total number of misdials for 2019 is more than double the total recorded in 2013 and represents an 89% increase over 2018.

As noted earlier, the Board has expressed concerns about this trend both in relation to policing and the police budget. Each 911 call is handled the same way, with at least two officers dispatched to locate the source and respond. It can reasonably be concluded that time and resources spent responding to 911 Misdials divert resources from other community policing activities and initiatives. Efforts have been made by the Town and the OPP to educate the public on 911 misdials to curb frequency of such calls.

The Board's resolution recognizes that Tecumseh is not alone in dealing with this widespread issue. It also suggests that the solution does not necessarily lie in increased public education and awareness, but rather in the redesign of cell phone technology and the way it interfaces with the 911 system. New, easier-to-use features on smart phone releases are something the public takes comfort in, knowing that in an emergency they can reach 911 dispatch easily and send their coordinates to the dispatcher. However, the issue of 911 Misdials should also be raised with smart phone manufacturers to resolve inadvertent 911 calls, which appear to be on the rise.

Consultations

Information and Communications Services
Police Services Board
Ontario Provincial Police

Financial Implications

With respect to the police budget, the impact of one year's increase in call volume is not proportionately reflected in the billing statement, as the municipality's "Calls for Service" costs (a weighted portion of the provincial total) are calculated based on a four-year average. The escalating volume of calls will, however, contribute to a higher four-year average over time.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable ☒

Website ☐

Social Media ☐

News Release ☐

Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Ellen Preuschat
Executive Assistant to CAO

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
None	None