

Paramedic Services – Missed Meals, Shift Overrun and Standbys

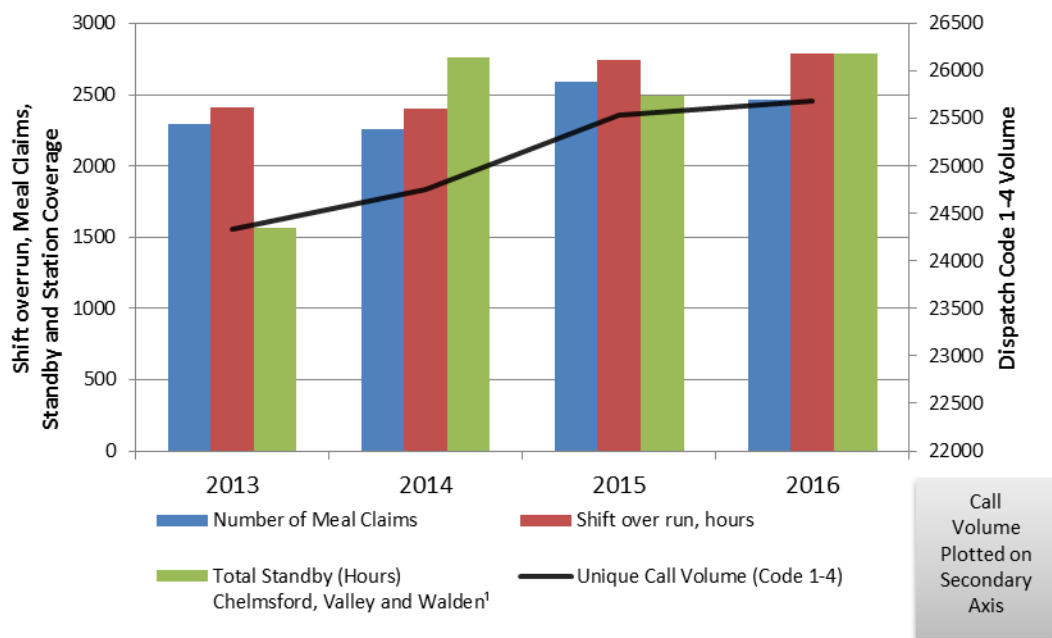
This information report is to provide a response to a question which was asked during the March 22, 2017 Special Council meeting regarding Fire and Paramedic Services. Councillor Lapierre requested a report be brought back to the next Emergency Services Committee on June 21, 2017 regarding Paramedic missed meals, shift overruns and standby activity in the past four (4) years.

Background:

In the provision of Land Ambulance Services in the province of Ontario, Paramedics are required to respond to emergencies at all times during their shift including during their paid meal breaks and extending past their end of shift if they are the closest, most appropriate unit available. To mitigate gaps in Paramedic coverage and to ensure a balanced approach with emergency coverage, the Service implemented an ambulance deployment plan entitled the System Status Plan (SSP) in 2003. The goal of the SSP is to provide direction and guidance to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), Central Ambulance Communications Center (CACC) on the City's expectations when dispatching its Paramedic resources.

Analysis:

The following data has been obtained from the MOHLTC Ambulance Dispatch Reporting System (ADRS). Please note that this data represents a snap shot in time and was obtained in April 18, 2017, and has not been independently validated for complete accuracy and may fluctuate over time as more calls are processed by the MOHLTC.



Meals:

Since 2013 into 2016, Paramedic Services has experienced a 7% increase in call volume, (see the black line in the graph above). Over the same period of time, the Service has experienced an 8% increase in Paramedic missing or having late meals. While there has been an increase in missed and late meals, the Service continues to have a 93% success rate of having Paramedics receive their meal periods on time. For contextual purposes, the current deployment plan has a total of 32,500 meal periods. The Service continues to engage the MOHLTC CACC in an effort to mitigate Paramedics missing their meals.

Shift Overrun:

Similar to the increase in call volume and missed meals since 2013, the Paramedic Service has seen an increase in shift overruns (overtime). As noted in the above graph, shift overrun experienced the largest increase from 2014 into 2015, which is consistent with a corresponding increase in call volume. Yet again, shift overrun remains relatively consistent within the same trending pattern of call volume and missed meals. It must be noted that Paramedic Services several years ago implemented end of shift language in the SSP to help expedite paramedics that are about to go into overtime or are on overtime. However, in April of 2017, the MOHLTC implemented new changes to the Paramedic Documentation Standards that now mandates all patient care documentation shall be completed by Paramedics before they go home. Paramedic Services anticipates that this change to the Documentation Standards will result in an increase in shift overrun as Paramedics cannot leave their shift until all patient care documentation is fully completed.

Standbys:

When an ambulance from a reporting station (Chelmsford, Valley East and Walden) is assigned to a call for service, the MOHLTC CACC will assign the next available ambulance, typically from the City core, to affected area to provide balanced emergency coverage. In 2014, Paramedic Services made a significant deployment change in the SSP to automatically back fill the outlying Paramedic Stations with an available ambulance to help reduce response times in Chelmsford, Valley East and Walden. This proactive measure of balancing emergency coverage by moving available ambulances from the City core has increased the amount of standbys in the outlying areas by 79%. This increase is a reflection of the Services ongoing efforts to continuously look for new opportunities to improve system performance, capacity and paramedic response.