SUBJECT: Simultaneous Dispatch of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to Life Threatening Emergencies (HES10001) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That Report HES10001 respecting the Simultaneous Dispatch for Fire and Emergency Medical Services to Life Threatening Emergencies, be received.

(b) That Item "X", respecting Simultaneous Dispatch of Fire and Emergency Medical Services to Life Threatening Emergencies, be considered complete and removed from the Emergency & Community Services Committee's Outstanding Business List.

Jim Kay
General Manager / Chief,
Hamilton Emergency Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting of June 10, 2009, Council received and referred the correspondence from the Township of South Stormont, dated May 15, 2009, respecting the simultaneous dispatch for Emergency Medical Services and Fire response (attached as Appendix A to Report HES10001) to Hamilton Emergency Services for a report back to Emergency & Community Services Committee.

The Council of the Township of South Stormont passed Resolution No. 94/2009 (attached as Appendix A to Report HES10001) requesting that the province support
simultaneous dispatch of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and has requested other local governments to do the same. South Stormont Fire & Rescue is comprised of four (4) Volunteer Fire Stations.

Currently HES continuously monitors, no less than every month, the length of time it takes to tier Fire services to out-of-hospital medical emergencies; and, if there is an emerging concern, it is addressed immediately with the appropriate agencies.

The Hamilton Emergency Services (HES) is informed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), Central Ambulance Communications Center (CACC) that it takes their Ambulance Communications Officer (ACO), on average less than one (1) minute to tier the Fire service, approximately the same amount of time it takes for the MOHLTC CACC to notify the paramedic of the call. There is an appropriate level of discretion to allow the MOHLTC CACC ACO to modify their actions appropriate to the circumstance.

**BACKGROUND:**

The MOHLTC Emergency Health Services (EHS) operates the ambulance dispatch services CACC for all municipalities in Ontario (except Toronto, Ottawa and Niagara). EMS units are sent to calls by this service; and, in pre-defined cases the MOHLTC CACC dispatches the fire service to medical emergencies to assist the ambulance service.

CACC’s current practice, when a life threatening emergency call is received, is to deploy the paramedic service, and subject to the available resources within the CACC, the ambulance communication officers will simultaneously dispatch EMS and Fire, or dispatch Fire immediately after EMS in accordance to the “tiered response criteria”.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

The recommendation to receive Report HES10001 is based on the current circumstances being acceptable to ensure that the tiered response system is continuously operating effectively and that the existing performance is considered acceptable.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

HES could adopt a request for simultaneous dispatching, however, this is not recommended given that simultaneous dispatching is deemed largely already occurring without being explicitly required, allowing for other appropriate levels of discretion.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial:
None.

Staffing:
None.

Legal:
Risk Management and Legal Services do not contemplate that any risk or legal issues will arise.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Central Ambulance Communications Centre, Policy No. 10-04, Section 4.0 (HES EMS Notify Fire Department Assistance)

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Corporate Services Department, Legal Services Division
Corporate Services Department, Risk Management Section
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Central Ambulance Communications Centre

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Partnerships are promoted.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Waste is reduced and recycled.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Investment in Hamilton is enhanced and supported.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?
☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No
TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH STORMONT

4949 County Road No. 14
P. O. Box 340, Ingleside, ON K0C 1M0
Phone: (613) 537-2362, info@southstormont.ca

May 15, 2009

To: All municipalities in Ontario
Re: Request for simultaneous dispatch for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and Fire Response

Council of the Township of South Stormont passed Resolution No. 94/2009 adopting a report (summarized below) requesting simultaneous dispatch for EMS and Fire Response. Your support and endorsement in this regard would be appreciated. Please send any resolution of support to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and your local MPP with a copy to the Township of South Stormont.

Summary of Recommendation:
That Council receive this Report, and instruct staff to forward a letter to our local MPP and lobby the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to provide a simultaneous EMS and Fire Dispatch.

Summary of Issues:
To provide a simultaneous Fire and EMS Dispatch:
- That the patient has a better chance of survival,
- To reduce unnecessary cost to the taxpayer,
- To reduce the risk of an accident when responding to a false alarm, and
- To eliminate the frustration that firefighters experience when being dispatched several minutes after the call was received.

Background / History
In the mid-nineties the South Stormont fire service entered into an agreement with base hospital to provide First Response with Defibrillators. The concept of this delivery service was designed for rapid intervention by deploying firefighters as first responders. Fire departments are strategically positioned especially in the rural areas to deliver a rapid emergency response. Under the current system, many fire departments are either not being dispatched, or they are being dispatched significantly later than the EMS Ambulance.

In 2008, the South Stormont Fire Service responded to a total of sixty six (66) EMS calls. Thirty (30) of the calls were either cancelled or the ambulance was already on scene requiring no assistance from the Fire Service. This is a clear example of the situation that is currently occurring daily across the Province. Failure to call the community fire department simultaneously, despite existing agreements to do so, compromises the public and severely hampers the fire service’s ability to provide rapid and effective emergency response. While not only being a frustrating situation for both the public and the firefighters this could also have a significant impact on a patient’s outcome.

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association have drafted a “Discussion Paper” (Saving a life in 6.0 minutes or less by utilizing the efficiencies of the Ontario Fire Services) which explains the Winnipeg (Manitoba) Model where the emergency response system has Fire and EMS working closely together and reducing the response time in half. This is an excellent example of better utilization of community fire departments in emergency medical responses.

The Council of the Township of South Stormont appreciates your support in this regard.

Yours truly,
Betty de Haan, CMO
CAO/Clerk