

Peel Regional Police to pilot 911 call screener, automatic abandoned call back

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Peel Regional Police will be trying out some new things to help address increasing demand on the 911 system.

According to a report presented to Region of Peel Council at its January 25 meeting, Peel Region Public Safety Answering Points, led by Peel Regional Police, are currently managing unprecedented call volumes into the 911 System.

The report, authored by 911 Advisory Committee chair Michelle Orth, said despite the Peel Regional Police Communications Centre hiring 38 communicators in 2023, 911 call answer times can still be delayed due to frequent call surges.

“Automated abandoned call back and 911 call screener are two new procedures designed to effectively manage excessive call volumes into the Public Safety Answering Point,” reads the report.

The 911 call screener will be a call-taker whose primary role will be to answer calls and immediately route them to police, paramedics, or fire services.

The report said the screener will address “the backlog of calls waiting in the queue in an expeditious manner, reducing call answer times.”

Automated abandoned call back technology will immediately call back a caller that dialed 911 and hung up. The caller will be able to choose to connect to 911 if there's an emergency, or cancel the call if they called by accident.

Currently, 911 communicators have to manually call back each 911 hang-up, which contributes to delays. “In 2022, 149,232 calls to 911 in Peel were pocket dials or hang-ups.

An update on the status of the 911 call screener and automated abandoned call back pilot will be presented at a May 2 Emergency Management Program Committee meeting.

This new pilot is one way the Region is looking to address issues with its 911 system.

It's also investigating the potential implementation of fines for negligent 911 calls, after Regional Council supported a motion from Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown asking for the investigation on January 11.

Peel Regional Police say 40 per cent of the 911 calls received at the public safety answering point are determined to be non-legitimate, inappropriate, or misuse.

“The wait times for these emergency services are on the rise in Peel, resulting in too many callers waiting for response from a dispatcher when every second counts,” said Brown at the time.

Every day, there's approximately 1,800 calls to 911 in Peel.