

## Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

**January 10, 2022 at 11:00 a.m.**

Members Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W

Good morning.

We continue to respond effectively to the challenges associated with the Omicron wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Toronto.

We continue to have effective and workable plans in place to ensure that the services our residents need the most, continue to be delivered.

This morning, I will provide an update on the delivery of emergency and critical services in Toronto.

Yesterday, our emergency and essential services operated with an average unplanned absence rate of 12.8%.

Between December 23 and January 9, our emergency and essential services operated with an average unplanned absence rate of 11.9%.

Our team continues to implement their mitigation plans effectively, thereby ensuring that these essential services continue to be delivered across the City.

From a City-wide perspective, yesterday, we operated with an average unplanned absence rate of 10.5% across all the City divisions.

Across Ontario, Healthcare services are experiencing increasing pressures and challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This certainly includes Toronto Paramedic Services, who continue to respond to these same challenges, in an effective and efficient means on a daily basis.

Toronto Paramedic Services continues to work in direct collaboration with both Toronto Police and Toronto Fire Service and have strong contingencies in place to ensure that our City remains safe.

Higher risk and higher priority calls will always be responded to first, before lower risk and lower priority calls.

During busier periods, there may be delays in responding to lower priority calls while we respond to these higher priority calls.

Low priority calls that are held receive regular call backs to check for changes in patient condition.

In response to the system pressures arising from COVID-19, Toronto Fire Services continues to respond to a number of lower priority paramedic calls, where there is no clear indication of a patient or injury.

Upon arrival, if a patient is identified who requires the expertise of a paramedic, Toronto Fire Services will initiate patient care and notify Toronto Paramedic Services, who will then respond.

This is one of the ways that we are maximizing Paramedic ambulance availability for high priority calls.

At present, in-hospital wait times, commonly referred to as off-load delays, are the most significant factor contributing to Toronto Paramedic Service ambulance availability and overall emergency pre-hospital system pressure.

Over this past weekend, there were times when more than 50 Toronto Paramedic Service ambulances were out of service in Hospital, waiting to transfer their patients to the care of the Hospital and subsequently return to responding to calls as required.

Chief Raftis and the Toronto Paramedic Services management team continues to work with hospital partners to quickly release paramedics from hospitals, so that they are available to respond to emergency calls as very quickly as possible.

This work and these discussions are continuing.

I would like to remind everyone that patients being transported to Hospital by Ambulance will be taken to the most appropriate hospital based on their condition and location.55tfc cgxcvbnbvcxvb

Requests to be transported to a specific or a preferred hospital are not possible.

Further, in order to ensure the fastest possible response to high priority patients, there are no geographical borders for ambulances.

The closest ambulance is always chosen to respond to high priority calls, regardless of location.

For example, Toronto Paramedics respond to a small number high priority emergency calls in Peel Region, York Region and Durham Region every day.

Likewise, ambulances from those areas also respond to a small number of high priority calls in Toronto every day.

The Toronto Paramedic Services Communications Centre is internationally recognized as an Accredited Centre of Excellence.

Our Emergency Medical Dispatchers and Call Takers are experts at triaging all emergency calls, using the Medical Priority Dispatch System.

Each and every day, our Toronto Paramedic Services team delivers world-class emergency pre-hospital care and I thank each and every member of this dedicated team for all they are doing under these increasingly challenging conditions.

Each of our other emergency, essential and critical services, including Police, Fire, Toronto Water, TTC, Shelter Support and Housing, Senior Services and Long Term Care, Children's Services and our City-operated COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics also continue to provide exceptional service to Toronto residents, and I thank them also.

Each of these teams continue to do an exceptional job of managing through the challenges associated with increased numbers of staff being unable to report for duty as a result of COVID-19.

Our COVID-19 Strategic Command Team continues to work every day in order to ensure that all aspects of our City-wide response to the pandemic remain responsive and effective.

As the situation with COVID-19 evolves, so does our planning and response.

I encourage you to continue to make [Toronto.ca/covid19](https://toronto.ca/covid19) your first choice for up to date, accurate and timely information on all aspects of COVID-19 response in Toronto.

Thank you.