

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent
Chief Administrative Office
Fire and Emergency Services
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Chris Case, Fire Chief
Date: August 26, 2020
Subject: EMS COVID-19 Temporary Service Level Adjustment Extension

This report is for the information of Council.

Since the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demands both clinically and logistically for Paramedic Services have grown, and as a result, a service level adjustment was implemented. Operational Supervisors transitioned from working as part of a two-member crew on an ambulance to working in an emergency response vehicle.

It is recommended that an extension be applied to the current level of service, as Medavie EMS Chatham-Kent Ontario (MEMSCKO) continue operating with four operational supervisors in support vehicles to provide supporting clinical care and paramedic operations in Chatham-Kent.

The timeframe for this service level adjustment would be until January 15, 2021 with the option of an additional extension based on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

MEMSCKO currently operate under a service agreement and the level of service is set by Chatham-Kent Council. Since 2012, MEMSCKO, in partnership with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent have evaluated and implemented numerous system strategies to respond to various demands as they arise.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial state of emergency continues, MEMSCKO demands, both clinically and logistically, continue to tax their operational leadership team and overall pre-hospital system. This pandemic continues to present MEMSCKO with some unique and new challenges for clinical responses, safety preparation, logistical structure, and quality assurance.

Still maintaining a comprehensive focus of public safety, pre-hospital patient care, and paramedic safety, they continue to require a level of frontline support to meet the objective of an efficient and effective land ambulance operation.

Having MEMSCKO Operational Supervisors transitioned to an operational support role has allowed them to respond to major incidents to provide scene oversight, and to provide medical response to low acuity patient calls. When ambulance availability is reduced, they continue to perform administrative and supportive duties in an appropriate fashion.

Completion of COVID-19 personal protective equipment audits, support of staff during high-stress calls, liaising with hospital staff and communication staff to clear offload delays, and supporting senior management staff and the COVID-19 response plan, are all examples of benefits incurred with the operational leadership team adjustment.

Comments

Due to direct impacts from COVID-19 and in the best interest of public safety, pre-hospital patient care, and paramedic safety, an increased level of frontline support was required to meet the service level objectives of EMS.

As a result, Operational Supervisors have been transitioned from working as part of a two-member crew on an ambulance to working in an emergency response vehicle. The Operational Supervisors are available to respond to major incidents to provide scene oversight, and available to provide medical response to low acuity patient calls. Furthermore, when ambulance availability is reduced, the Operational Supervisor would also be available to perform administrative and supportive duties increased from COVID-19.

The Operational Supervisor shift will be backfilled by a primary care paramedic. No additional ambulances have been added to the fleet as part of the COVID-19 increase but rather a support vehicle to assist the existing ambulances on duty.

Consultation

CKFES was in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer Gord Quinton on this matter.

Financial Implications

The impact of the COVID-19 service level increase will be \$40,000.00 per month. This increase will occur until January 15, 2021 or until such time that, the provincial emergency declaration ends.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been notified of this financial impact. The *Ontario Action Plan: Responding to Covid-19* announcement released on March 25, 2020 indicated an additional \$80 million to be allocated to ambulance and paramedic services across Ontario. At the time of writing there is no confirmation of funding to Chatham-Kent. If Chatham-Kent is approved for funding it is unknown if we

will be compensated in full or for 50% of the expenses as generally provided through the Land Ambulance Services Grant.

Covid-19 impacts to Chatham-Kent are being tracked and will be reported to Council in the future for funding options.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

Ken Labonte
Assistant Fire Chief

Chris Case
Fire Chief

Reviewed by:

Gord Quinton
General Manager/ Chief Financial Officer/ Treasurer

Attachment(s):

Appendix A – Medavie EMS COVID-19 Emergency Funding Briefing Note, August 17, 2020

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BRIEFING NOTE

Date: August 17, 2020

Topic:	COVID-19 Emergency Funding Extension Request
Prepared for:	Chris Case, Chief, Chatham-Kent Fire and Emergency Services
Prepared by:	Donald MacLellan, General Manager, Medavie EMS Chatham-Kent Ontario
Expected outcome:	<input type="checkbox"/> Decision <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information

Purpose and Background:

As the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial state of emergency continues, CKEMS demands, both clinically and logistically, continue to tax our operational leadership team and overall pre-hospital system. This pandemic continues to present CKEMS with some unique and new challenges for clinical responses, safety preparation, logistical structure, and quality assurance.

Still maintaining a comprehensive focus of public safety, pre-hospital patient care, and paramedic safety, we continue to require a level of frontline support to meet our objective of an efficient and effective land ambulance operation.

Since March 2020, like many other healthcare organizations, CKEMS has had to make a significant focus on the health and safety of their employees during this global pandemic. With the operational structure and delivery of care this focus needs to be completed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Having CKEMS's Operational Supervisors transitioned to an operational support role has allowed them to respond to major incidents to provide scene oversight, and available to

provide medical response to low acuity patient calls, and when ambulance availability is reduced. They continue to perform administrative and supportive duties in an appropriate fashion.

Completion of COVID-19 personal protective equipment audits, support of staff during high-stress calls, performing vehicle disinfection, moving CKEMS vehicle assets, liaising with hospital staff and communication staff to clear offload delays, and supporting senior management staff and our COVID-19 response plan, are examples of critical functions being performed by our Operational Supervisors on a 24/7 basis .

Based on the operational and safety requirements of our dynamic system during this pandemic, CKEMS would significantly struggle to meet these additional demands in addition to the regular day to day operational demands and system deliverables.

Recommendation(s)

- Continue to have the four operational supervisors support Clinical Care and Paramedic Operations in Chatham Kent by having them in a support unit role opposed to working in an ambulance until January 15, 2021. The timeframe for this level of service adjustment is based on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continued COVID Related-Deliverables

- Improve Overall Response Time Performance
- Decrease Code Zero Events and Durations
- Improve Patient Clinical/Health Outcomes
- Improve System Support
 - o Better collaboration with Communication Centre to provide effective solutions to “in the moment” operational barriers and obstacles
 - o Liaise with CKHA ER staff to minimize offload delays and improving ambulance readiness for responses
 - o Provide a safer working environment in be able to support paramedic crews while on shift.
 - o Act as First Response Vehicle when need be to respond to low acuity calls, support system call demand and support paramedic crews on high demand calls
 - o Improve our partnerships with acute care, primary care, and public to develop and implement and deliver innovative solutions in the healthcare response to COVID-19.
- Improve Employee Morale
 - o Improve on-scene support for COVID-19 requests for service
 - o Improve the mental health response and cope strategies to support frontline paramedic working through a stressful time in healthcare.
 - o Work in partnership with the union

- Improving Communication
- Improve First Responder Safety
 - Providing medical on-scene guidance to CKFES and CKPS personnel
 - Providing support and guidance to CKFES and CKPS personnel in relation to Donning and Doffing of Personal Protective Equipment required for suspected COVID-19 exposures.
 - Work as partnership with the respective services.
 - Being a liaison with CKFES, CFPS, and Communications Centre to build collaborative service capacity and be a support to all stakeholders

Financial Considerations

This recommendation will have a financial request of **\$40, 000** per month until January 15, 2021.