

County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board Report

To: Chair and Members of the Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board
From: Cindy Stevenson, General Manager, Emergency & Protective Services
Date: January 28, 2025
Report #: RPT-0060-25
Subject: False Alarm Statistics – January to November, 2024
Purpose: For Approval

Recommendation

That Staff Report RPT-0060-25 “False Alarm Statistics – January to November, 2024” be received as information.

And that the Progressive Communications Plan to Address Repeat False Alarms is approved for implementation in 2025.

Report

Background

At the County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board’s request, staff compile statistics on O.P.P. response to false alarms on an ongoing basis. This report includes statistics from January 2023 to November, 2024.

In 2019, following a review and recommendations from the former Police Services Board, County of Brant Council approved an escalating fee scale for at-fault false alarms. The escalating fee schedule was implemented at that time as a strategy to reduce the unnecessary use of police resources in response to false alarms.

The County’s Fees and Charges were further updated on April 1, 2024, to the following:

That the County’s fees and charges by-law be updated, effective April 1, 2024, as follows:

Number of Responses to At Fault False Alarms. Fee schedule to reset per new property owner, or following two (2) years since the last at fault false alarm for a property owner:

| | <u>Fee:</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 st | Warning letter only |
| 2 nd | \$150 |
| 3 rd | \$250 |
| 4 th | \$350 |
| 5 th + | \$500 |

The fee schedule will reset when an address has a new property owner, or following two (2) years since the last at fault false alarm for a property owner.

Analysis

False Alarm Statistics

The January, 2023 to November, 2024 False Alarm Statistics are outlined below:

| Month | Responses | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | Total Invoiced |
|-----------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------------|
| January, 2023 | 15 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0.00 |
| February, 2023 | 20 | 19 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$150.00 |
| March, 2023 | 15 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$300 |
| April, 2023 | 22 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 |
| May, 2023 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$300 |
| June, 2023 | 25 | 23 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$300 |
| July, 2023 | 18 | 14 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$600 |
| August, 2023 | 18 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | \$1,400 |
| September, 2023 | 17 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | \$1,900 |
| October, 2023 | 16 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | \$1,900 |
| November, 2023 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | \$650 |
| December, 2023 | 27 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | \$1,400 |
| January, 2024 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 |
| February, 2024 | 22 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | \$0 |
| March, 2024 | 20 | 13 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | \$1,150 |
| April, 2024 | 14 | 12 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | \$0 |
| May, 2024 | 20 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | \$1,500 |
| June, 2024 | 25 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | \$1,450 |
| July, 2024 | 36 | 17 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 11 | \$7,100 |
| August, 2024 | 12 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | \$1,200 |
| September, 2024 | 19 | 15 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | \$700 |
| October, 2024 | 20 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | \$1,650 |
| November, 2024 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | \$750 |

Year-to-date, from January to November 2024, is a total of 210 responses, which is an increase in the statistics from the same timeframe in 2023 at 185 responses, or a 13.5% increase.

So far, for 2024, there has been an increase in repeat responses and false alarm fees charged year to date, from a total of 35 repeat calls January to November 2023, with fines totaling \$7,500 to 59 repeat calls with fines totaling \$15,500 (January to November 2024). There have been a number of outliers so far this year, with 5 properties accounting for 36 false alarms. This is further broken down as follows:

| Property | Number of Responses year-to-date |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| A | 10 |
| B | 9 |
| C | 6 |
| D | 5 |
| E | 6 |
| Total | 36 Responses |

The breakdown for 2024 of repeat responses to the same address is as follows:

| Year | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5 th + |
|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------------------|
| 2024 | 71.4% | 13.8% | 5.2% | 1.9% | 7.1% |

County of Brant and OPP Proposed Enhanced Mitigation Strategy

As presented at the October 2024 Detachment Board meeting, County staff and O.P.P. staff had initiated discussions to consider additional strategies to reduce unnecessary response by O.P.P. to false alarms in the community. With support from the Board members to move forward, Staff have proceeded with the development of a draft two-pronged communications strategy, that includes the following elements:

1. Public Education: objective is to reduce the frequency of false alarms and response through targeted outreach, education, and policy enforcement. Tactics include direct communication (newsletters, web page), social media campaigns, media release, connect with Economic Development and Planning Divisions of the County. Potential costs are approximately \$1,200.
2. Individual Repeat Properties: in addition to current escalating fines and warning letters, provide property owners with educational resources (tip sheet), an on-site visit for the 3rd response and 5th response.

Please find attached a fulsome overview of the draft Progressive Communications Plan to Address Repeat False Alarms (Attachment 1).

A draft False Alarm Prevention Tip Sheet has also been prepared to support the communications strategy. The Tip Sheet is close to finalization and will be reviewed by corporate O.P.P. prior to completion.

Communications staff have also drafted a series of specific letters for each escalation of the false alarm response, which includes the impact of false alarms on police resources, history of false alarms at the property, fine if applicable, on-site visit if applicable, policy on false alarms, what to do if an alarm is triggered, and recommendations to prevent future incidents. The letters are intended to be signed by the Detachment Commander and General Manager of Emergency & Protective Services.

County of Brant Communications staff and O.P.P. Staff have worked collaboratively to develop the plan and supporting documents.

Jurisdictional Scan

One area of concern identified in previous discussions is the continued responses to some outlier properties, reaching up to 10 responses in one calendar year. The current level of fine is not effective as a deterrence for some particular properties, in the commercial/industrial category. Noting this, the first step in addressing enhanced Communications strategy may be effective in reducing false alarms with these property owners.

County staff are currently undertaking a jurisdictional scan of other municipal false alarm response mitigation strategies and will bring this forward to the Board for information at a future meeting.

Summary and Recommendations

The increase in the number of false alarm responses year over year is concerning. It is recommended that the Communications Plan outlined in this report be implemented in 2025 through partnership between the County of Brant and Brant O.P.P., to mitigate unnecessary use of

police resources. The effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored throughout the year and reported to the Board at future meetings.

Consideration of possible additional strategies or changes to the overall fee schedule will be presented to the Board at a future meeting, following information gathered through a jurisdictional scan.

Attachments

1. Progressive Communications Plan to Address Repeat False Alarms

Reviewed By

N/A

Copied To

Heather Boyd, General Manager, Corporate Services
Alison Newton, CAO