

Staff Memorandum



To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	Fire Service Call Types with a Social Services Nexus
Date	December 10, 2025
Ward	All
From	K. White, Fire Chief, Director of Emergency Services
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, GM of Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide members of Council with an overview of identified Barrie Fire & Emergency Service (BFES) call types that demonstrate a measurable connection to social service needs, and to outline the limitations associated with quantifying this relationship across all emergency response categories.

Key Findings

- Approximately **50% of select call types analyzed show a clear connection to social services-related needs.**
 - A significant portion of emergency demand is increasingly influenced by social vulnerability rather than traditional fire risk alone.
 - Several major emergency categories **cannot be quantified** through a social services lens due to their unpredictable and technical nature.
 - This evolving call profile reinforces the need for continued collaboration between emergency services, public health, housing, and community support agencies.
-

Background

Barrie Fire & Emergency Service continues to experience increasing call volume and complexity as the city grows. In recent years, there has been a notable rise in incidents that intersect with broader social issues, including homelessness, mental health, addiction, housing insecurity, and vulnerable populations.

To better understand this trend, BFES conducted a review of select call types and address-based response data to determine where a social services nexus could be reasonably identified.

Analysis of Call Types with a Social Services Nexus

Through this review, BFES analyzed several core incident categories and cross-referenced them with repeat address responses and known vulnerable population locations. The analysis shows that **approximately 50% of certain call types reviewed have a direct or indirect social services connection.**

Call types with identifiable social services overlap include:

- **Encampment fires**
- **Certain structure fires**
- **Medical calls linked to vulnerable populations**
- **Wellness-related emergency responses**

These incidents frequently involve individuals experiencing:

- Homelessness or housing instability
- Mental health crises
- Substance use challenges
- Repeated medical or safety interventions at the same locations

These types of responses represent a growing portion of the workload for BFES and increasingly require coordination with healthcare, social service agencies, and municipal partners.

Call Types Not Quantifiable from a Social Services Perspective

While several call types show a measurable social services component, **other core emergency response duties cannot be reliably quantified through a social services lens**, including:

- **Motor vehicle collisions**
- **Technical rescue incidents (confined space, high angle, water/ice rescue, etc.)**
- **Hazardous materials responses**
- **Commercial and industrial fire responses**
- **Weather-related emergencies and infrastructure failures**

These incidents are typically driven by:

- Infrastructure and transportation systems
- Industrial and commercial risks
- Environmental conditions
- Random or accidental events

As a result, there is currently **no consistent or reliable method** to assign a social services classification to these emergency call types without speculative assumptions.

Operational Impact

The increasing proportion of calls linked to social services has direct operational implications for BFES, including:

- Increased on-scene time
- Higher frequency of repeat responses to the same individuals and locations
- Greater demand for cross-agency coordination
- Elevated risk exposure for responding firefighters
- Increased strain on suppression and medical response resources

BFES remains a response agency and not a social service provider; however, the reality of modern emergency response continues to place firefighters on the front line of social distress and public health challenges.

Conclusion

Barrie Fire & Emergency Service continues to adapt to an evolving emergency response environment, where traditional fire suppression is only one component of a much broader public safety landscape. The findings outlined in this report confirm that a substantial portion of BFES workload is directly influenced by social services-related challenges.

Understanding this shift is essential for future planning, staffing, service delivery models, and cross-departmental partnerships that ensure we continue to protect the public safely, effectively, and sustainably.

Memo Author:

K. White, Fire Chief, Director of Emergency Services

Pending #:

Not Applicable