

Chilliwack Fire Department: Incident Response - Medical Aid

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Why don't Chilliwack firefighters respond to as many medical aid calls as firefighters in similar-sized cities?

A1: BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) are responsible to provide pre-hospital patient care for all British Columbians. Paramedics employed by BCEHS are the primary pre-hospital patient care providers in our province. BCEHS is funded by the Province of BC and administered by the BC Ministry of Health. BCEHS paramedics are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and their salaries are funded by the BC Ministry of Health. All full-time and paid on-call (POC) firefighters are employed by the City of Chilliwack and work in the Chilliwack Fire Department (CFD), which is fully funded by the City and its taxpayers.

Today, many BC fire departments respond primarily to medical aid calls. In some cases, more than 50% of the incidents responded to by fire departments in similar-sized BC cities are medical aid calls. In 2022, medical aid incidents accounted for more than 50% of the total incidents responded to by the fire departments in similar sized cities such as Delta, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Maple Ridge, North Vancouver, and Prince George. In Chilliwack, that number is less than 20% because our medical aid call response practices are very different from other similar-sized cities.

In 2006, the former Mayor, Council, and Fire Chief met with the then BC Solicitor General in charge of Public Safety and the Attorney General of BC to express their concerns about provincial efforts to download BCEHS medical aid calls to fire departments. They did not agree to hire more firefighters to provide pre-hospital patient care. Instead, they encouraged local BCEHS leadership to pursue provincial funding and hire more paramedics. They confirmed with the provincial representatives that BCEHS paramedics would continue to be the primary pre-hospital care provider in Chilliwack, and that the CFD would continue to act as a secondary medical provider and provide support to BCEHS paramedics.

