

HAMILTON POLICE SERVICES BOARD

- INFORMATION -

DATE: July 23, 2020

REPORT TO: Chair and Members
Hamilton Police Services Board

FROM: Eric Girt
Chief of Police

SUBJECT: *Year End Report: False Alarm Reduction Unit - 2019*
PSB 20-042

BACKGROUND:

In September 2019, the False Alarm Reduction Unit (FARU) enhanced the alarm program by introducing a 'Verified Response' requirement. Prior to calling police for dispatch, alarm companies are now required to 'verify' the alarm using one of four ways. Verified Response has proven to be an excellent means to reduce false alarms and allow our service to effectively deploy our police resources to legitimate calls for service.

The PSB annual report provides a summary of statistical information concerning false alarm dispatches, false alarm fee structure, false alarms invoiced, amounts written off and cost recovery generated for 2019.

1. False Alarm Response

Figure 1.1 – Trend: False Alarm Response

Year	Total Alarm Calls	Alarm Calls Attended	Alarm Calls Skipped	Cancelled En Route	Cancelled Before Dispatch	Total Cancelled Calls	<u>Valid</u> Alarm Calls	% of False Alarms
2015	6,189	3,699				2,064	164	97%
2016	4,956	3,107	265	316	1112	1,428	153	97%
2017	4,692	3,118	245	192	994	1,186	135	97%
2018	4,753	3,145	246	245	900	1,145	214	95%
2019	3,234	2,147	242	139	568	707	138	95%

Figure 1.2 – Trend Graph: False Alarm Calls Received

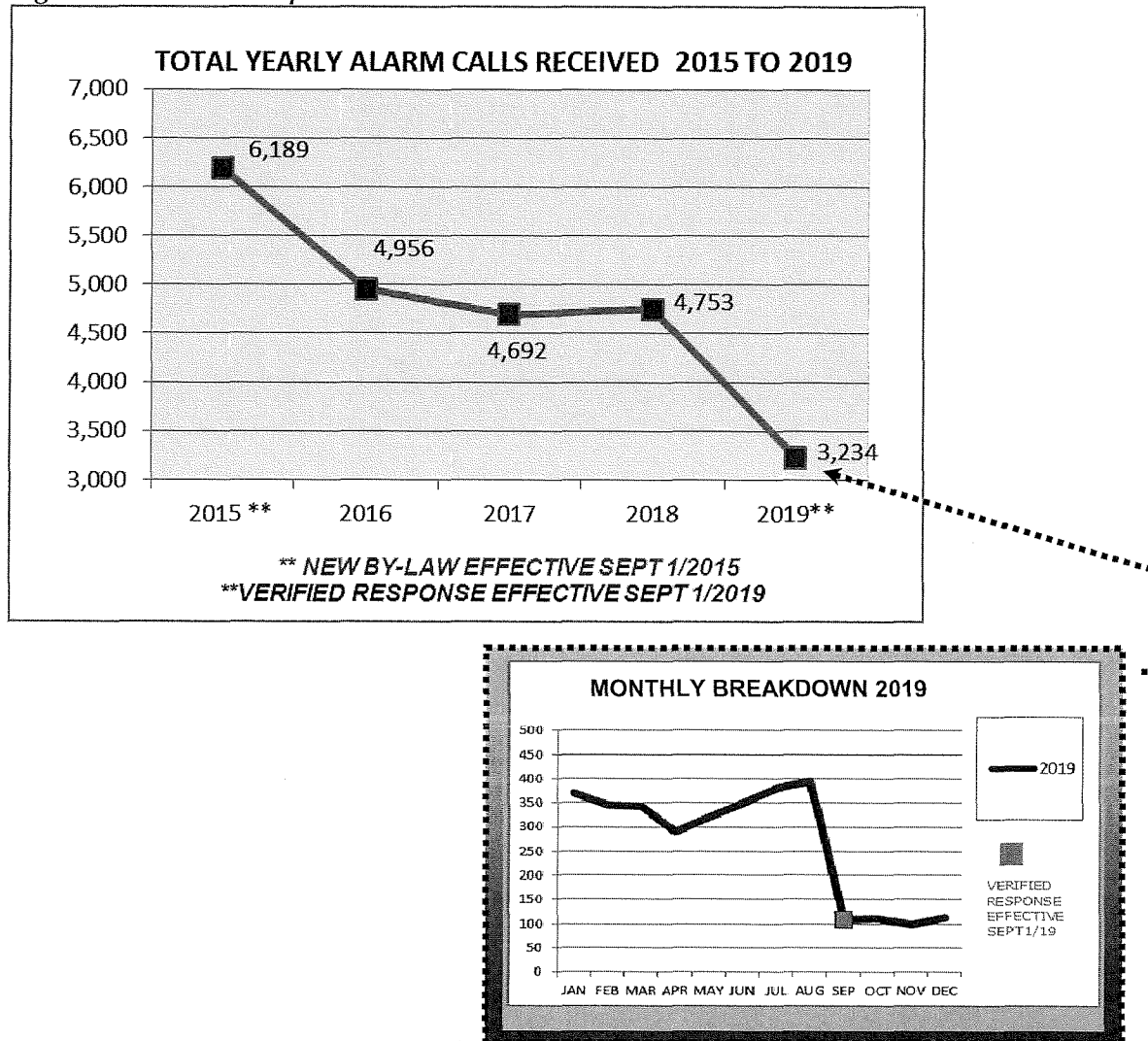


Figure 1.2 depicted above demonstrates the total alarm calls received by the HPS over the past five years. The change to the By-Law in 2015 resulted in a considerable decrease to the volume of calls received as invoicing was directed to the alarm monitoring company rather than the alarm owner. The rate of this decrease was accelerated in 2019 with the implementation of the Verified Response protocol. The monthly decrease in call volume post implementation of Verified Response in September 2019 was approximately 71%.

Figure 1.3 – Graph: False Alarms Attended

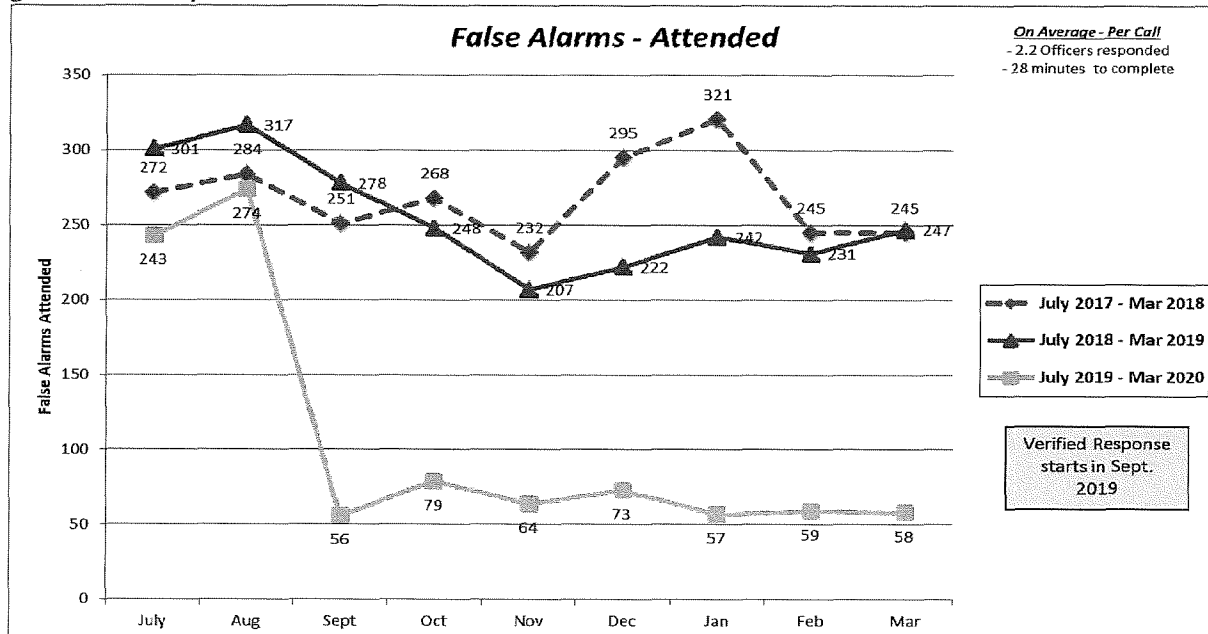


Figure 1.3 reveals the number of False Alarm calls that are attended per month between July 2017 and March 2020. Since implementation was effective part way through the year on September 1, 2019 this chart begins reporting two months prior to the implementation date. Following the green data line, one will observe the change Verified Response had on the attended calls for service. August 2019 produced 274 attended false alarms, but the following month of September produced only 56. This was a reduction of 218 false alarm calls attended in one month.

Figure 1.4 – Chart: Officer Time per Year

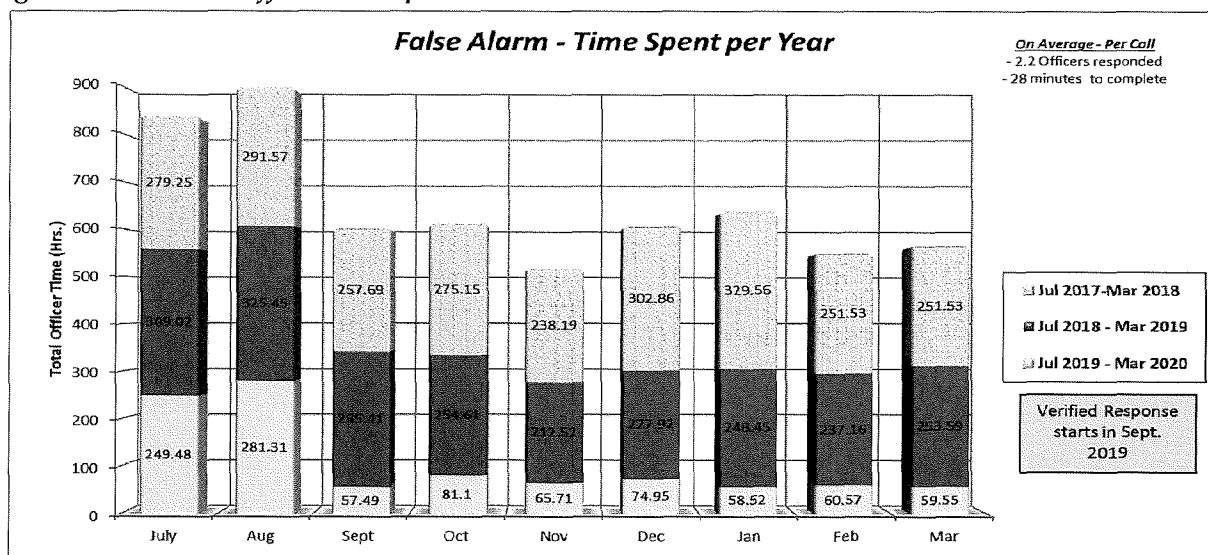


Figure 1.4 Note: Average time spent at each false alarm call was 28 minutes in length, and the average number of officers attending those incidents were calculated at 2.2.

Figure 1.4 explains the total time (**expressed in hours**) spent at False Alarm calls that are attended per month, between July 2017 and March 2020.

Looking at the months of *September to March only*, the savings in hours can be shown below:

Average hours for the 2017/2018 year (Sept. to Mar.) = 272.35 hours per month

Average hours for the 2018/2019 year (Sept. to Mar.) = 245.66 hours per month

Average hours for the 2019/2020 year (Sept. to Mar.) = 65.41 hours per month

Difference between 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 = $272.35 - 65.41 = 206.94$ **Officer Time - Saved (Hrs/Month)**

Difference between 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 = $245.66 - 65.41 = 180.25$ **Officer Time - Saved (Hrs/Month)**

2. Fee Structure

All fees for service are invoiced directly to the monitoring station representing the alarm owners at a cost recovery rate of \$169.50 (\$150 + HST) per false alarm.

A partial fee of \$84.75 (\$75 plus HST) is charged for a cancelled en route dispatch. (Officer(s) have acknowledged the call for service and are actively travelling to the call).

There is no fee if the alarm is cancelled prior to an officer dispatch.

There is no fee if the alarm is valid (e.g. Break & Enter, Property Damage etc.).

In the event a home owner or agent acting on behalf of the home owner calls in an alarm, the home owner will be invoiced at the same cost recovery rate directly.

3. False Alarms Invoiced

In 2019, there was \$ 375,612.00 invoiced for false alarms.

Since the inception of Verified Response in September, alarm calls received and attended are down by approximately 70% compared to the same months the year before. The decrease in alarms attended also affects the number in alarms invoiced. We saw an average of 71% decrease in alarms invoiced for the last four months of 2019 compared to the year before.

4. Write Off Totals

The new By-Law of 2015 greatly reduced outstanding debt, bad debt and collection measures as the responsibility for the payment of false alarms had shifted from residence/business owners to

alarm monitoring stations. There are circumstances where a debt may still need to be written off.

There was \$812.00 written off in 2019.

5. Cost Recovery Summary

The HPS Board By-Law allows for the collection of false alarm fees to recover the costs of false alarms to the Service. The following is a summary of cost recovery generated by the False Alarm Reduction Unit, in the last five years.

YEAR	COST RECOVERY
2015	\$276,169.85
2016	\$482,208.60
2017	\$454,480.00
2018	\$563,177.74
2019	\$409,691.88

The reduction in false alarms attended as a result of Verified Response will impact cost recovery. As false alarms decrease, so will the fines being charged. Cost recovery comparisons show a gradual decrease beginning in October 2019 and reaching a 75% decrease by December as compared to the year before. This percentage of decreased cost recovery should be expected to continue into 2020.

The Hamilton Police Service will continue to respond to alarms providing emergency response to ensure public safety. The Verified Response initiative has ensured that police resources are deployed in a responsible manner ensuring officers are available for other priority calls.



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Chief of Police

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