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NEWS

POLICE REPORT HIGH VOLUME OF INADVERTENT 911 CALLS

Halton police are asking residents to be careful with their phones, noting that for the past two years approximately one of every four calls to 911 have been accidental.

Police said new emergency features on both iOS and Android devices are contributing to high volumes of false 911 calls.

On Feb. 25, officers pointed out that within minutes of an Amber Alert being issued by the Waterloo Regional Police Service, the Halton Police Communications Bureau received two dozen accidental 911 calls as a result of people trying to turn off the alert and inadvertently activating their device's Emergency SOS feature.

In 2021, the Halton Police Communications Bu-

reau reportedly answered 178,616 calls to 911, of which 26 per cent were false, mistaken or non-emergency in nature.

Similar call volumes were fielded in 2020.

To help reduce the number of false 911 calls received, Halton police are asking the community to learn how the emergency features work on their devices and to be more aware of where and how they are storing their devices.

Police also recommend parents do not give deactivated phones to children to play with because, even without a SIM card or cellular plan, calls to 911 can still be made.

Accidental or unintentional 911 calls not only take Halton police call takers away from possible in-

coming priority calls, they also tie up resources when officers must complete well-being checks if the call taker is unable to verify the call was made mistakenly, police said.

If residents do mistakenly call 911, they are asked to stay on the line, let the call taker know what happened, and confirm they are not in need of emergency assistance.

For more information on these emergency features, visit the Apple and/or Android websites.

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