

# Increase in medical calls for firefighters concerns council

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Medical calls made up 42 per cent of incidents Whitchurch-Stouffville's fire department responded to in 2012.

Fires comprised 8 per cent of the emergencies the department responded to, according to the annual stats presented to council Tuesday afternoon.

"The emphasis should be on medical people doing medical calls," said Councillor Phil Bannon during Tuesday's meeting.

In January 2010, the department elevated its response protocol level from B to A.

## 108 FIRES

Level B response meant Whitchurch-Stouffville answered medical calls only when an ambulance was 12 to 15 minutes away from the scene, fire Chief Rob McKenzie told The Sun-Tribune last year.

As a Level A responder, the department receives the call at the same time as EMS. Sometimes Whitchurch-Stouffville firefighters arrive before the paramedics, Mr. McKenzie told council Tuesday.

When the fire department responds to medical calls, they do so with a fire truck.

"It's perplexing to me we send three or four people in a fire truck to a medical call," said Councillor Ken Ferdinands.

Whitchurch-Stouffville firefighters respond with a full fire truck because if they get called to a fire while attending the medical emergency, they can get to the fire quicker by not having to return to the station to change trucks, according to Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

In 2009, when the fire department was a Level B responder, it answered 150 medical calls.

## NO SURPRISES: CHIEF

In 2010, when it was upgraded to Level A, the department answered 327 medical calls and in 2011, it was up to 523. There were 570 last year.

For a town this size, combined with its growth and senior population, the number of medical calls the department answered last year was on par with what was anticipated, according to Mr. McKenzie.

The department can revert back to being a Level B responder. Mr. McKenzie does not know if this will be pursued by council.

Vehicle accidents/rescues were the second most responded to emergency calls in 2012 (14 per cent), followed by public hazards and remote alarms (11 per cent), other (9 per cent) fires (8 per cent) and pre-fire conditions (3 per cent).

The 108 fire calls of last year consisted of structure, chimney, miscellaneous, vehicle as well as bush/grass fires and authorized burn controls. It was the most in three years.

In 2010, the department answered 76 fire calls and in 2011, 75.



STAFF PHOTOS/STEVE SOMERVILLE

MPP Helena Jaczek addresses the York-Durham Heritage Railway's media day at the Stouffville Station Thursday.

# Heritage train adds modern luxuries

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The rail cars were built between 1919 and 1955 but the lounge cars now have a few modern amenities — air conditioning and heating.

Food is also now served on the Uxbridge to Stouffville York-Durham Heritage Railway run, which chugged into town Thursday morning to give area politicians and others a trip through the northern countryside.

"It's just like the European experience where they go whizzing by. But you actually get to see things," said CTV weather

personality Tom Brown, who MC'd the morning.

The train travels at 11 km/h.

"It's our version of the Hogwarts Express," he said.

This is the 17th year for the Uxbridge to Stouffville rail line.

Heritage passenger coaches regularly in use include a 1919 car that was originally built as a colonist sleeper car but later converted for commuter service. There are also a pair of 1950s-era former CN coaches, as well as Boise Budd coaches built in 1955, rebuilt in 1982 and updated in 2008. There is a baggage car and caboose.

The rail line had more than 10,000 pas-

sengers last year, according to Kerri King, manager of tourism for Durham region.

In 2003, the tourist attraction received a \$69,000 Ontario Trillium grant. It received another \$158,000 in 2010 to be spent over three years.

In addition to the regular Sunday trips — you can catch the train at noon in downtown Stouffville — throughout the summer, the YDHR also runs themed rides and charter trips for families, organizations and tour operators.

For more details, go to [www.ydhr.ca](http://www.ydhr.ca)

See a video from Thursday's event at [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com)

with files from Torstar News Service



The Marion Drexler Band serenades the York-Durham Heritage Railway's train during media day at the Stouffville Station.