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# EMS System Improvements

## Performance Update

March 2024

# AHS Four Priorities



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Reducing EMS Response  
Times



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Decreasing Emergency  
Department (ED) Wait Times



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Reducing Wait Times for  
Surgeries



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Improving Patient Flow  
Throughout the Healthcare  
Continuum

Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory  
Committee Report

Alberta EMS Dispatch Review

HQCA Review Report into EMS response  
to fatal dog attack

AHS EMS Provincial Service Plan

AHS EMS Culture Research Findings

AHS EMS  
2023/24  
Operating Plan

Initiatives

# AHS EMS Improvement Strategies

## Workforce Strategies and Supports

- Improve the workplace for existing staff
- Increase and enhance recruitment of new staff
- Ensure an efficient and supportive work environment

## Capacity Increase

- Increase the number of paramedics and ambulances and/or ensure existing resources are used effectively
- Ensure resources are more readily available in communities

## Demand Management

- Reduce the number of unnecessary ambulance responses and/or reduce the number of unnecessary ambulance transports to hospital
- Ensure patients receive timely, appropriate and safe care

## Strategic Initiatives

- Support long-term improvements to EMS system including:
- Engagement with partners and communities
  - Medical First Response
  - Public Education
  - Enhancing EMS system design

## Other Initiatives

Initiatives that will benefit patients, Albertans and/or the EMS system.

*\*These can reflect improvements elsewhere in the healthcare continuum that will support EMS excellence.*

# 2023 Actions and Progress



## Increased ambulance capacity

- Additional ambulances (Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Lethbridge)
- Dedicated resources Central Zone
- EMS/811 Shared Response



## Safe and timely transfer of care to Emergency Depts

- Return to Service initiative implemented March 15<sup>th</sup> in 16 regional hospitals



## Managing Demand

- Assess, Treat & Refer (ATR) Guidelines
- EMS/811 Shared Response



## Interfacility Transfer (IFT) Policy & Process

- RFEIOIQ process for dedicated low-acuity IFT metro resources
- Non-ambulance transfer policy & process



## Medical First Responder Program Enhancements

- Funding
- Training



## Workforce Strategies

- Workforce Strategy and Action Plan (2023-26)

## Engagement on EMS

- Staff
- Elected Officials
- Public



## Addressing Report Recommendations

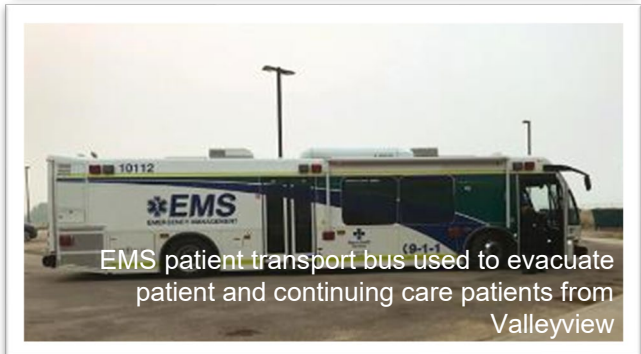
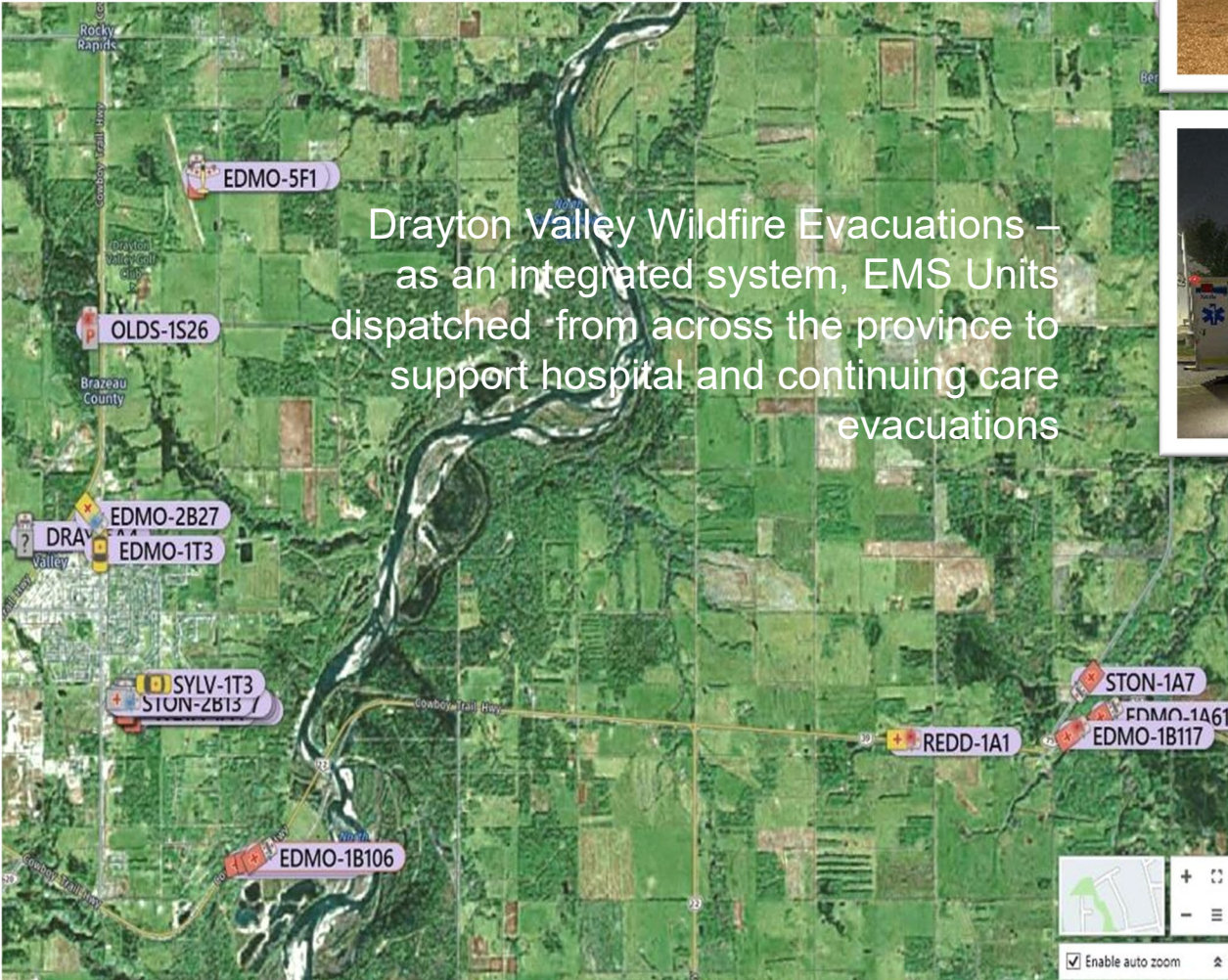
- Moving forward for 2024/25 Operating Plan





# Wildfire response 2023

Many Albertans were impacted by the 2023 Wildfires, and we want to acknowledge the care and work that frontline teams from all across the province put into responding to this crisis



## Providing care where it was most needed between April 29 to June 21

- **360** patients evacuated from **11** communities
- **161** paramedics deployed from Calgary, Edmonton and South Zones to support North and Central (**759 shifts**)
- Support from local community EMS resources, Provincial Air Fleet and contracted aircraft, Multi-patient bus and ambulances, and Paramedic Response Unit.



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# Initiative: Recruitment & Retention

## The Goal:

To recruit new paramedics while also ensuring every effort is made to retain our dedicated staff.

## What we did:

- Launched a multifaceted marketing campaign targeting local, national and international audiences, to recruit new EMS staff to Alberta.
- Mental health supports for EMS staff have increased to keep staff healthy.
- Implemented the EMS fatigue management initiative to reduce fatigue-related service outages.
- Expanded the EMS Peer Support Program, providing consistent peer training and clinical oversight to support paramedic resiliency and mental health.

## Results so far:

- The number of EMS staff employed by AHS has increased by 555 (17.7 percent) between December 2019 and February 29, 2024.



*Congratulations and welcome to the newest  
North Zone Emergency Communications Officer graduates  
February 2024*



# EMS Recruitment Campaign

## National Advertising Campaign

- Launched October 5, expanded on December 7
- Includes radio, outdoor advertising, digital media

## Candidate Intake Pipeline

- Launched October 5
- Nearly 600 responses to date





## Coming up

- Career & Recruitment Displays
- Will be profiling other career pathways in paramedicine

ABOUT AHS ▾ FIND HEALTHCARE ▾ INFORMATION FOR ▾ CAREERS ▾ NEWS ▾ AHS IN MY ZONE ▾ ENGAGE ▾

Home > Careers > Emergency Medical Services


## Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

FOLLOW AHS CAREERS    

**Find your Calling.**


All across Alberta, our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) teams are there to respond whenever and wherever they are needed. Every year, more than 5,600 EMS professionals support nearly a half a million emergency and transfer calls, both on the ground and in the air.


EMS is often the first point of contact for patients during a crisis, we bring care to people and people to care, during every step of an emergency. Join our dynamic team and help make a meaningful difference in your community.


[Join our Talent Community >](#) 


[Search Current Openings >](#)

### Why Choose Alberta Health Services?

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Join an award-winning workplace that has been recognized as a top employer since 2017.
- 

Get access to comprehensive benefits to support your health and well-being at work and at play.
- 

Celebrate the differences in our experiences, backgrounds, and cultures.
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Alberta boasts expansive natural beauty so you can find activity and wonder at your doorstep.



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# Initiative: EMS/811 Shared Response

## The Challenge:

Some people who call 911 for EMS may be seeking help, advice or guidance. They may not require an ambulance, but still require assistance and care.

## The Goal:

- Helping Albertans who call 911 get the care they need from the right provider.
- Reduce non-urgent ambulance responses, freeing up EMS to respond to life-threatening emergencies.

## What we did:

- Launched January 2023, collaboration between EMS and Health Link 811 allows for the transfer of EMS callers who EMS assesses as low-acuity – or not experiencing a medical emergency that requires an ambulance - to Health Link 811 registered nurses for further triage, assessment and care.
- This collaboration provides better support for patients while allowing ambulances to remain in the community to respond to life-threatening emergencies, meaning faster emergency response times and better flow through the health system.

## Results so far:

- Since the launch in January 2023, more than 8000 EMS 911 callers were assessed as low acuity, transferred to, and helped by Health Link 811, keeping more ambulances available for higher acuity calls and reducing pressure on Emergency Departments.



EMS/811 Shared Response Video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJV55ppFqoE>

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# Initiative: Returning EMS to Service Faster

## The Challenge:

To support the offload of patients brought into an ED by EMS in a safe and manageable way, and to more quickly return EMS to the community.

## The Goal:

Safe transfer **within 45 minutes**

## What we did:

- Launched first in Calgary on March 15, 2023, and then rolled out across the province to 16 regional hospitals.

## Results so far:

- The amount of time paramedics spend in hospital is down, with the current average at approximately 1.6 hours, compared to more than three hours in November 2022.
- Between implementation and November 2023, there were over 77,000 hours returned to community availability.
- Seeing a decrease in rural and remote response times.



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# Initiative: Dedicated IFT Resources

## The Challenge:

To address capacity pressures at hospitals by providing more transportation options to move patients.

## The Goal:

Provided by contracted partners, dedicated resources to be used for scheduled, low-acuity, inter-facility transfers which will also help patients return to their home communities sooner to heal closer to friends and family.

By contracting third party partners to transport patients requiring support between care facilities, patients receive the supports they need, and EMS ambulances are freed up to respond to emergencies.

## What we did:

- Red Deer/Central Zone IFT Pilot and Implementation (launched April 18, 2023)
- Issued an RFEIOQ for Calgary and Edmonton metro areas

## Results so far:

In Red Deer, dedicated people and resources have improved IFT on-time performance, helping to ease capacity pressures at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre. This has increased ambulance availability by 28% and reduced emergency response times in some communities by over four minutes.

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# Initiative: MFR Program Enhancement

Medical First Responders (MFR) are important partners that co-respond with EMS to many 911 emergencies, providing on scene support to EMS.

MFRs include fire departments, rural and remote municipalities and Indigenous communities. They are often the first to arrive on the scene and provide life-saving care especially in remote communities, until an EMS ambulance arrives

## The Goal:

To strengthen the quality and delivery of MFR in communities across the province.

## What we did:

- As announced by the Government of Alberta on February 21, funding has increased. More than 200 MFR partner agencies across Alberta will receive targeted funding for EMS.
- A total of \$3.85 million in funding will be distributed to MFR partner agencies across the province to provide training, equipment and direct financial support to strengthen emergency medical services in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

Two streams of funding:

- Equipment and Training funding, used for Automated External Defibrillators, medical kits, training equipment such as CPR manikins, and training courses.
- Direct Financial Support, will provide direct financial support to MFR agencies to help partially offset the costs incurred to respond to medical emergencies alongside EMS.



Medical First Response Online Portal  
<https://www.albertamfr.ca/>

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# Performance Improvements Update

# Response time – Performance at 90<sup>th</sup> Percent

- All call times: h:mm:ss
- Represents performance for February 2024
- Blue = benchmark times from November 2022
- Green = Improved
- Red = Degraded

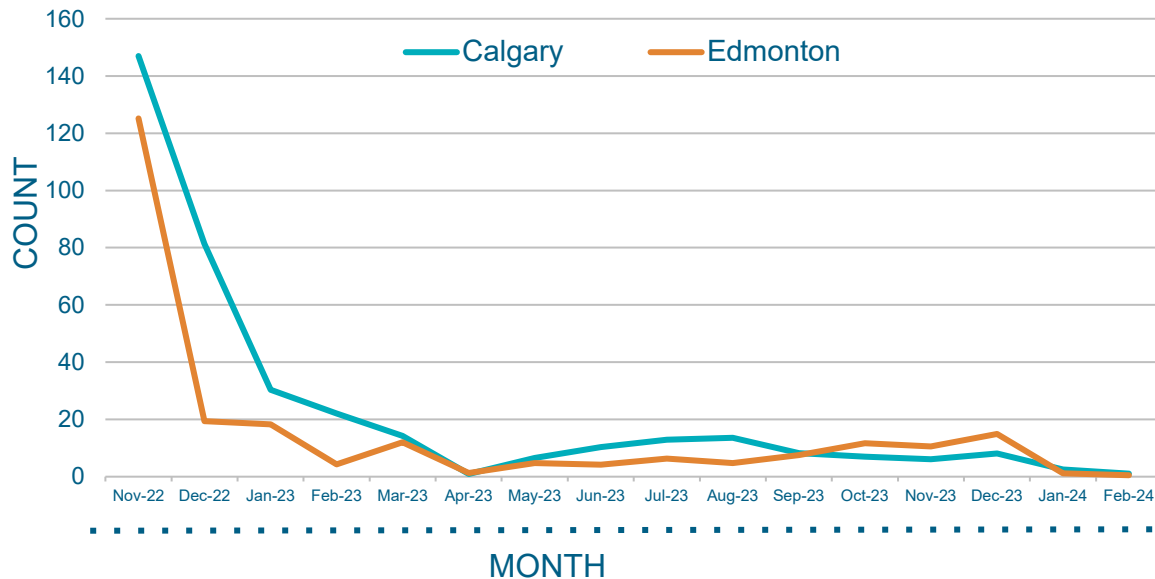
Call Type	Metro/Urban		Communities >3000		Rural		Remote	
	Nov 2022	Feb 2024	Nov 2022	Feb 2024	Nov 2022	Feb 2024	Nov 2022	Feb 2024
Delta/Echo	0:21:48	0:13:11	0:21:29	00:15:21	0:35:59	0:34:19	1:03:55	1:06:55
Bravo/Charlie/ Delta/Echo	0:33:36	0:15:59	0:24:01	0:16:56	0:37:25	0:34:31	1:04:33	1:03:54
Alpha	1:54:17	0:30:28	0:27:12	0:23:60	0:42:41	0:42:57	1:20:20	1:17:44

# Red Alerts

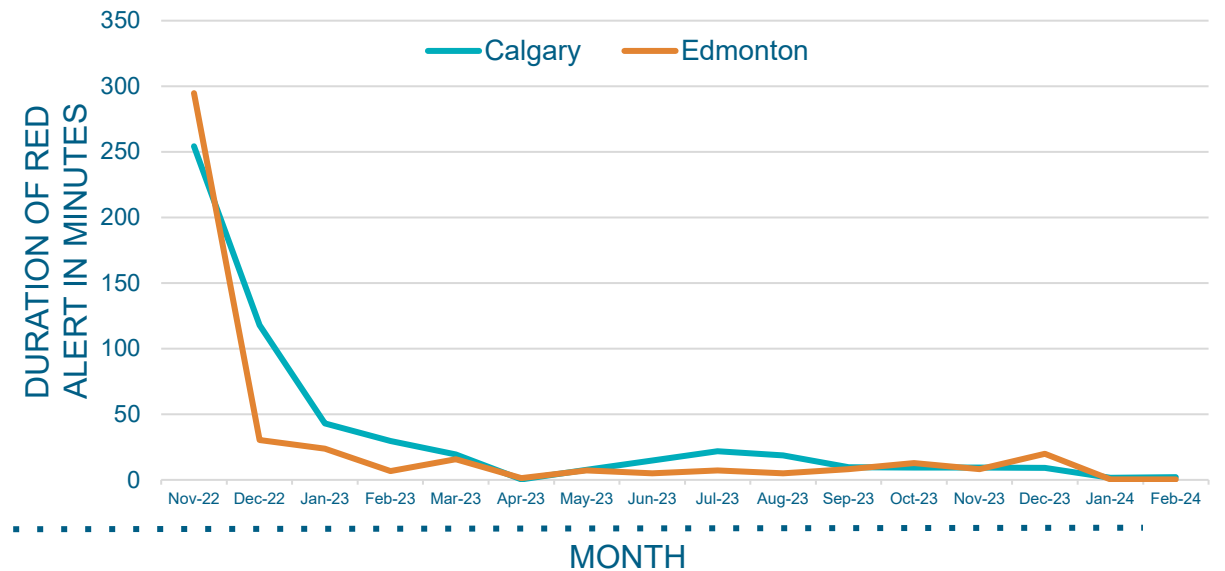
Red alerts measure the brief instances when all available ambulances are busy helping patients at a point in time but are prioritized to response to the most urgent calls.

Time in Red Alert (weekly averages)	Nov 2022	Sept 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024
Edmonton	295 minutes	8.1 minutes	12.7 minutes	8.3 minutes	19.8 minutes	0.5 minutes	0.5 minutes
Calgary	254 minutes	9.5 minutes	9.3 minutes	9.4 minutes	9.2 minutes	1.7 minutes	2.0 minutes

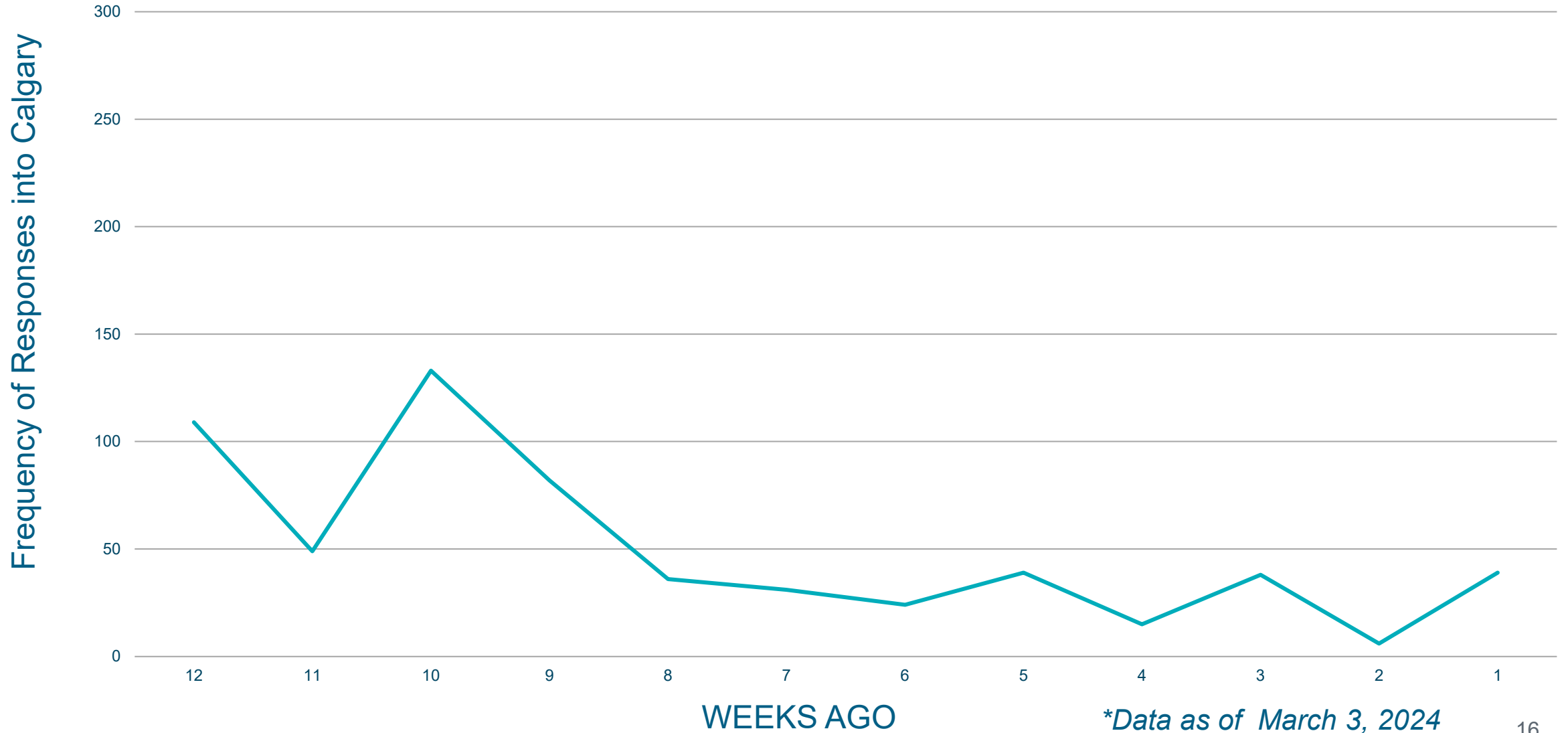
Weekly Average Red Alerts (count)  
Calgary/Edmonton



Weekly Average Time in Red Alert (minutes)  
Calgary/Edmonton



# Suburban unit responses into Calgary

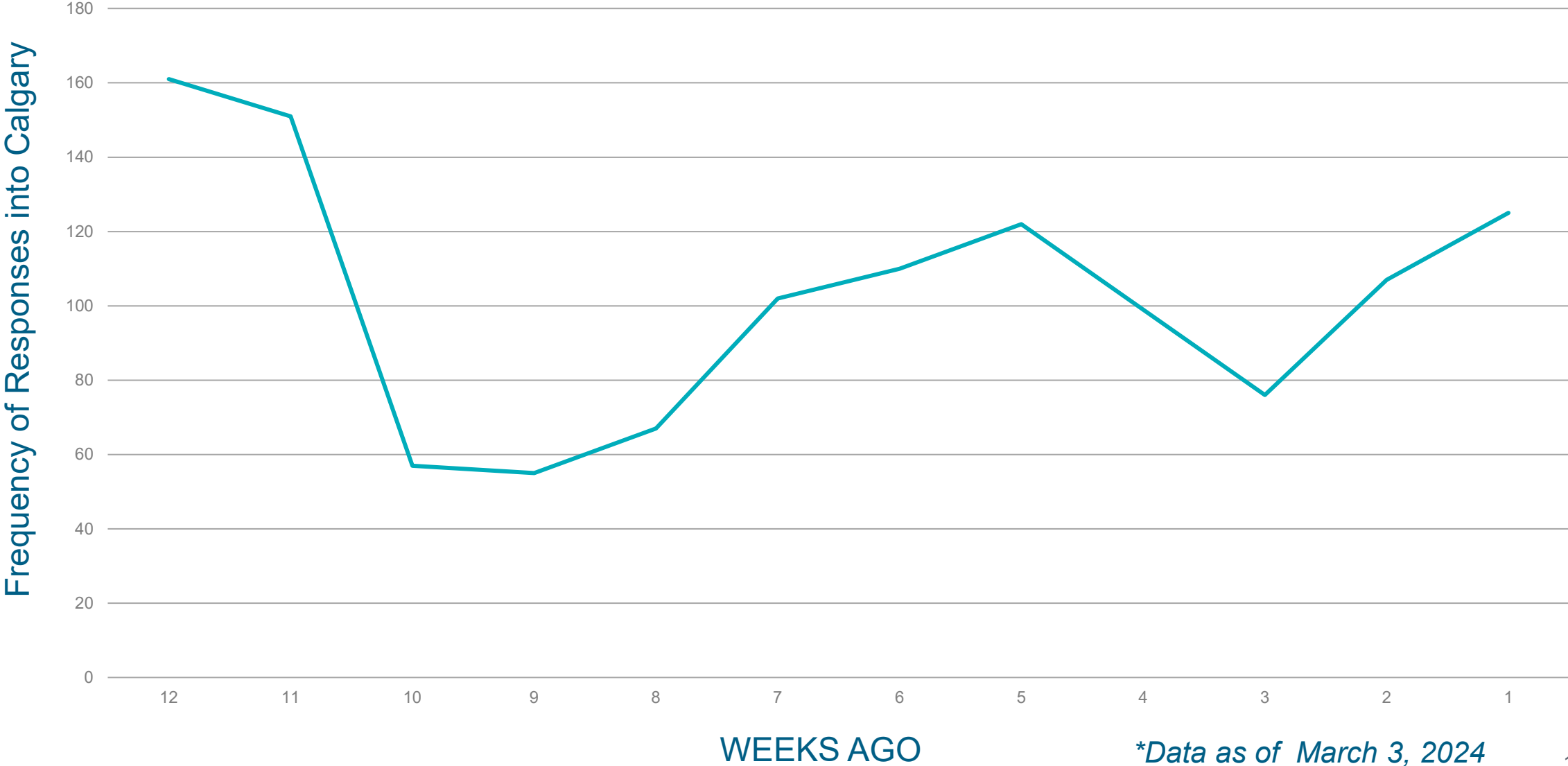


*\*Data as of March 3, 2024*

*\*\* 911 Emergency Events only*



# Suburban unit responses into Edmonton

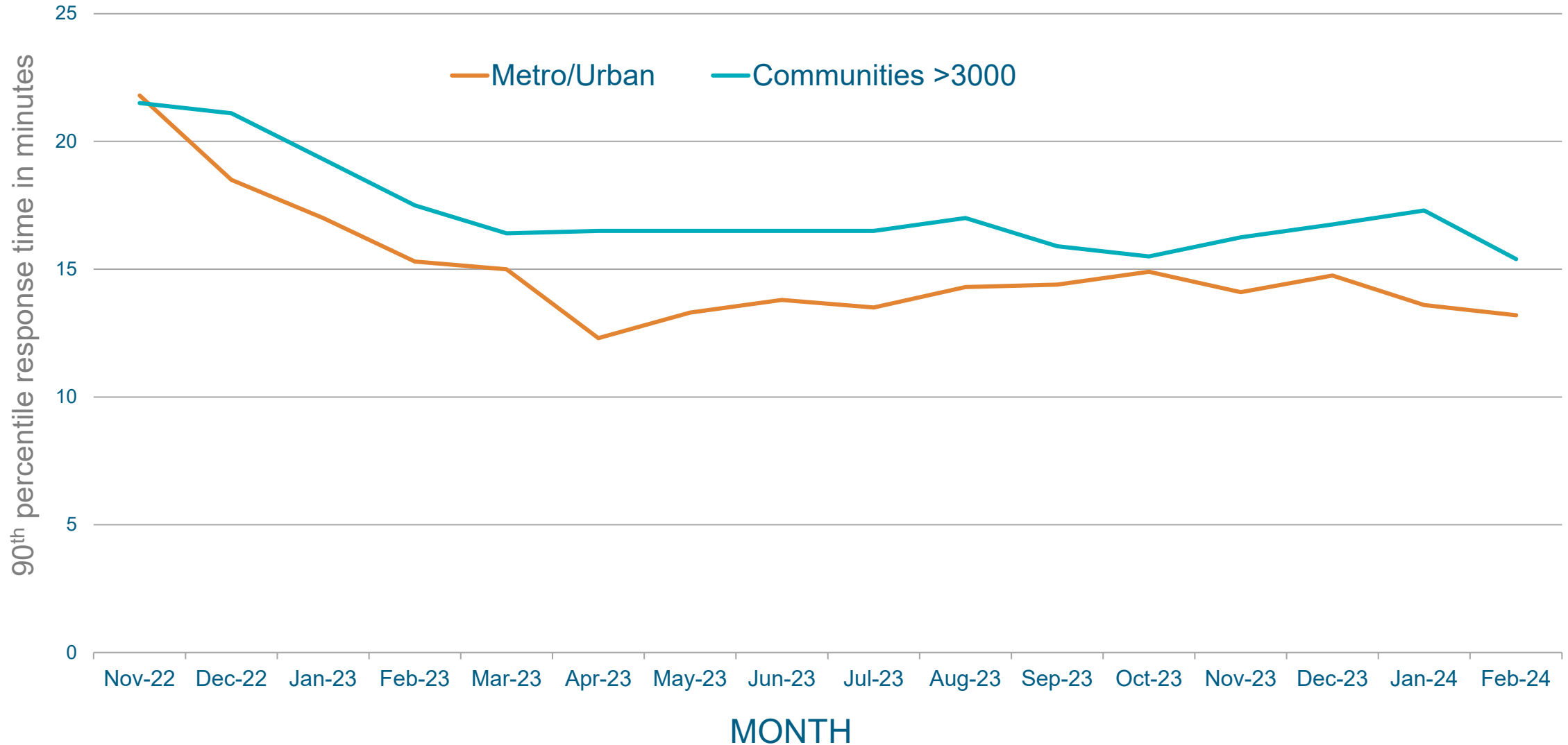


*\*Data as of March 3, 2024*

*\*\* 911 Emergency Events only*

# Response Time Performance Summary

Response Time Performance - Urban/ Metro and Communities 3000 (Delta/Echo)



# Response Time Performance Summary

## Response Time Performance - Rural and Remote (Delta/Echo)

