



## Pocket Dials/Unintentional 9-1-1 Calls Putting Public at Risk, Impacting Police Resources

*Police Say Unintentional Calls from Mobile Devices a Growing Problem in Ontario*

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**(Toronto, ON)** – Police services across Ontario are seeing an increase in pocket dialed and unintentional 9-1-1 calls, which represent a serious threat to public safety and negatively impact police resources according to the Ontario 9-1-1 Advisory Board (OAB) and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP).

“With more and more people using mobile devices, our police services are reporting an increase in unintentional 9-1-1 calls and so-called pocket dials”, said Inspector Paulo DaSilva of York Regional Police. “When unintentionally dialed calls are made to 9-1-1 call centres, they become a public safety issue and are a drain on law enforcement resources.”

Pocket dials happen when a keypad on a mobile device carried in a pocket, purse, backpack, etc. is accidentally pressed. Unintentional 9-1-1 calls are generated from a mobile device and are not intended as emergency calls.

Unintentional 9-1-1 calls tie up phone lines that deliver 9-1-1 calls to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), which handle 9-1-1 calls. This negatively impacts a PSAPs’ ability to respond to real emergencies.

The Ontario 9-1-1 Advisory Board brings together police personnel to act as advocates for the 9-1-1 system in the Province of Ontario. OAB is partnering with the OACP to raise public awareness of the unintentional/pocket dialed calls.

OAB and OACP have found that hundreds of unintentional/pocket dial 9-1-1 calls are being received daily by police services across Ontario from cell phones and other devices where no emergency exists. For example:

- The Toronto Police Service received 1,227,791 calls to 9-1-1 in 2011. 1 in 5 calls were not valid emergencies. Pocket dials accounted for 107,748, or half of the false calls; misdialled calls to 9-1-1 (116,770) accounted for the remainder.
- York Regional Police received 97,886 unintentional 9-1-1 calls from wireless devices in 2011, accounting for 37.33% of all 9-1-1 calls received.
- London Police Service received 6,622 pocket dials from August to November, 2011, averaging 11.24% of total 9-1-1 Calls
- Peel Regional Police received 80,724 unintentional 9-1-1 calls from wireless devices between June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011, accounting for 33% of the 9-1-1 calls received.

For every unintentional/pocket 9-1-1 call received, a 9-1-1 emergency telecommunicator must determine whether an emergency exists. Every second counts when someone is waiting for an emergency communicator to pick up a 9-1-1 call and dispatch police, emergency medical services, or fire.



**For more information, contact:**

Inspector Paulo Da Silva  
York Regional Police  
905.830.0303 ext 7903  
916@yrp.ca

**Joe Couto**  
Ontario Association of  
Chiefs of Police  
416-926-0424 ext. 22  
jcouto@oacp.ca

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“Citizens have the power to stop unintentional 9-1-1 calls from their mobile devices. It could be as simple as locking a key pad or putting the device in stand-by mode,” said Chief Matt Torigian, President of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. “Such actions do not impact a user’s ability to receive a phone call but may significantly reduce the chance of a pocket dial. To further reduce the pocket dial risk, users should not program 9-1-1 into their devices and should prevent small children from playing with such devices.”

Someone who places an unintentional 9-1-1 call should stay on the line. Every 9-1-1 call is taken seriously. When a 9-1-1 caller doesn’t respond, that could be a sign of trouble – a possibility an emergency responders can’t ignore. Users are urged to let the emergency operator know it was a pocket dial/unintentional call. This will eliminate the need for the emergency operator to call back to determine if there is a legitimate emergency, saving precious seconds and allowing them to move on to the next emergency call.

Citizens can prevent pocket dials or unintentional 9-1-1 calls by:

- Locking keypads using the keypad lock feature. Keypad locks, some of which can be programmed to activate automatically, prevent a mobile device from responding to keystrokes until the user unlocks the keypad using a short combination of key presses.
- Turn off the 9-1-1 auto-dial feature, if your mobile device has one. To determine whether a device has this feature and how to turn it off, check the user manual or the manufacturer’s website, or call the service provider.
- Refrain from programming a wireless device to speed or automatically dial 9-1-1.