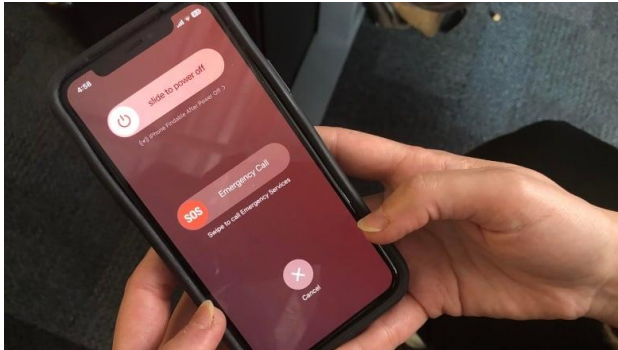




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A software update on smartphones may be the cause of hundreds of dropped 911 calls

Waterloo regional police saw 330 dropped 911 calls in 24 hours



OPP and WRPS are asking you to consider turning off the emergency 911 feature on your phone because of an increase in hang up calls. (Aastha Shetty/CBC)



Aastha Shetty

Local police departments are seeing a significant increase in the number of dropped 911 calls — and it may be connected to the emergency 911 feature on your phone.

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) are among many North American police departments asking people to consider turning off the emergency 911 feature on their Apple or Android phones and smart watches.

Similar messages have been tweeted out by police departments across Ontario, including the [London Police Service](#), [Durham Regional Police](#) and [Cornwall Police Service](#).

The 911 emergency feature allows users to quickly dial 911 without unlocking their phone. On iPhones, it can be accessed by holding down the power button and the volume button at once. On Androids, it pops up when you hit the power button five times in a row.

There are also reports of an increase in the number of dropped 911 calls in other parts of Canada and in the U.S.

Waterloo regional police said they typically receive about 800 emergency calls everyday but recently, they began to see an increase in the number of dropped calls. By Thursday morning, WRPS had received over 330 dropped emergency calls within a span of just 24 hours, prompting them to send out a tweet, asking people to consider turning the emergency feature off.

Police said in an emailed statement to CBC News that such a large number of dropped 911 calls can put a strain on their ability to answer legitimate emergency calls.

Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) in Wellington County have also noticed a sharp increase in the number of 911 hang-up calls. In an emailed statement, they said the dropped calls "seem to be associated with an Android update".

In a tweet sent out in late May, the local OPP detachment posted instructions on how to turn off the emergency SOS feature on Android phones.

"Our biggest concern is making sure that 911 lines are kept available for those who have a life-threatening emergency," OPP's written statement to CBC News said.

Android aware of the issue

In an email statement, a Google spokesperson told CBC News that the company is aware of an increase in unintentional emergency calls related to their "Emergency SOS" feature.

Google owns the Android operating system which is used by large smartphone manufacturers like Samsung.

"Android phone manufacturers who choose to offer Emergency SOS on their devices manage the implementation of the feature," Google's statement said.

"To help these manufacturers prevent unintentional emergency calls on their devices, Android is providing them with additional guidance and resources. We anticipate device manufacturers will roll out updates to their users that address this issue shortly. Users that continue to experience this issue should switch emergency SOS off for the next couple days."

Previous issues with iPhones, Apple Watch update

Apple did not respond to CBC News request for comment on its emergency call feature.

But the technology giant had previously been criticized for faulty updates when a [recently launched crash detection software on the new iPhone 14 and Apple Watch 8 proved to be a bit too sensitive](#).

The feature was primarily designed to detect when its users have been in a car crash. Once triggered, an alert screen would pop up and users would be given 20 seconds to respond before the iPhone or Apple Watch automatically called 911 with an approximate location.

The software did help emergency services respond to real incidents — but it also was accidentally being set off by people riding roller coasters or skiing on bumpy trails.

Parks Canada reported receiving several false 911 calls because of the new iPhone. The new software had also accidentally launched several search-and-rescue events in B.C.

A newer upgrade to the software in December seems to have corrected the issues with the crash detection feature.

It is not clear if Apple is aware of the potential issues with the current emergency call feature or if the company is working on an update to curb the number of accidental 911 calls.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/apple-android-glitch-911-emergency-feature-1.6870232>