

Unprecedented weather brought about a flurry of inappropriate 999 calls



Police are urging people to only dial 101 and 999 when they need police assistance, after the unprecedented weather brought about a flurry of inappropriate calls.

As the heavy snowfall sparked the first red weather alert, Police Scotland's Service Centre responded to thousands of calls from members of the public.

A total of 23,626 '101' calls and 5,508 '999' calls were received in the four days leading up to and including Thursday 1st March 2018. The number of 999 calls was twelve per cent higher than in a typical four-day period.

At the peak, between 8am on Wednesday 28th February and 8am on Thursday 1st March, service centre advisers answered 8,272 calls (1892 calls to 999 and 6380 to 101 calls). This was 50 per cent more 999 calls than normal, for that timeframe.

Most of the calls made were of an appropriate nature, however we also received a high volume of calls asking about:

- Information on road closures

- Information on school closures
- Details of bus service operations
- Information regarding airport openings

Despite various messages on social media informing the public that the service centres were experiencing a high volume of calls and redirecting people to the appropriate agencies or organisations, calls were still received.

Throughout this period, our staff received many examples of unsuitable calls to the service:

- A member of the public called to ask police how to get to the shops for alcohol and cigarettes.
- A call asking if police officers were able to make deliveries of bread as they had run out.
- A caller to report that a gate had frozen.
- A call to request an emergency vet as the local vet wouldn't arrange a home visit.
- A member of the public asking if they could borrow a snow shovel.

101 and 999 are the key channels for the public to request help from Police Scotland on police matters and our service centre advisers are vital frontline staff who provide an excellent service.

Chief Inspector Alan Gray, of Contact, Command and Control Division based in Govan, said, "These types of calls are taking an adviser away from what could be an important 999 call and a member of the public who may need urgent assistance. Our service centre advisers deal with a call every 10 seconds. They are highly trained, skilled and knowledgeable and are there to help. Most people contact the police appropriately, however there are a small percentage who do not – this misuse of 101 and 999 could cost lives."

101 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be used from anywhere in Scotland to contact Police Scotland, or

any other force in the UK. Members of the public can also use the Police Scotland website to report a range of issues. Alternatively, they can approach an on duty police officer or attend at a police station front counter. More information about 101 and the ways to contact Police Scotland are available on the Police Scotland website via www.scotland.police.uk/101999aware.

Look out for the hashtag #101and999aware.