

e-COMMUNIQUE

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E-Comm 9-1-1
Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

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Photo: Vancouver Sun

Record call volumes make for Olympic-sized dispatch effort

By the time the Olympics began, E-Comm Operations staff were well positioned for gold-medal performances during the busiest two weeks in our region's policing history. The results were no accident though—it took years of pre-planning by the Integrated Security Unit (ISU) and our 2010 team, and more than 900 hours of in-house training for our 250 Operations staff.

As the 9-1-1 answer point for southwest B.C., ensuring increased call volumes did not increase call-answer times, was our first priority. Additional staffing helped to manage the more than 41,000 calls that were placed to 9-1-1 between February 12-28 and as a result, service levels remained exceptionally strong throughout the Games.

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A special dispatch role known as “E-Liaison” was created to work with our partners at the ISU to help ensure seamless communication between our two dispatch functions (ISU dispatch managed events inside the venues for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games; E-Comm dispatched events outside the venues in three of the four host cities: Vancouver, Richmond and Whistler). Coordination between the two dispatch centres was critical in order to ensure smooth operations for a safe and secure Olympics.

9-1-1 call volumes up 11%

All shifts during the Games were extremely busy for Operations and contained many challenges, particularly in handling the significant increases in both emergency and non-emergency calls. There were also record increases in radio traffic (particularly for Vancouver police) but our staff showed great composure in meeting the demands placed on dispatch while also responding to the changing needs of our partners—inevitable when managing the many logistical challenges of an event of this magnitude.



Vancouver Police is dispatched by E-Comm; Chief Jim Chu stopped by on opening day

“While the cameras focused on the crowds and uniforms in the street I was always keenly aware of the outstanding support we were receiving from the call takers, dispatchers, and radio technicians at E-Comm.”

*Vancouver Police Chief
Constable Jim Chu*

In the early days, the rotating protests really tested our teams’ stamina. “We witnessed first-hand the movement of call-taking and dispatch to a new level. The volume of work our staff managed with such calm and professionalism is a testament to their dedication to public safety,” says Doug Watson, Vice-President of Operations.

Big results

The more than 41,000 calls placed to 9-1-1 during the Games represents an 11 per cent increase over the same timeframe in 2009. Calls for VPD emergency increased by 42 per cent and by 34 per cent for Richmond RCMP. When you add up all the calls E-Comm managed (9-1-1, emergency, non-emergency and reports) our total call volume for the Olympic period was 79,683—up 15 per cent over 2009. With figures like this it should come as no surprise that our radio system was also stretched to its highest usage ever but like our staff, performed tremendously under the pressure.

ISU Partnership

“On behalf of the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit I want to compliment and offer my thanks to the E-Comm team,” says Bud Mercer, RCMP Assistant Commissioner. “The tremendous work E-Comm and the ISU have done to define shared processes and communication paths during the Games has paid off handsomely.”



Staff cheer on the Olympic torch as it passes by E-Comm

E-Comm wishes to extend its congratulations to the Integrated Security Unit and the men and women of every emergency services agency in our region for their outstanding efforts in providing exceptional service during the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Cell phone location coordinates now available to 9-1-1



Wireless Phase II has the potential to reduce a search area from four thousand metres (the dotted line) to 300 metres (the red dot)

Public safety in southwest B.C. received an important boost on February 1, 2010 with the completion of Wireless Phase II — general location information from cellular phones to 9-1-1.

In the past, 9-1-1 call-takers have received only the address of the cell tower the call was transmitting from, which was of little use to emergency services. That's because a cell tower can be many kilometres away from the actual emergency or in a different municipality altogether.

Following the implementation of Wireless Phase II, 9-1-1 call-takers now receive latitude and longitude coordinates that can be plotted on a computerized map. "For those callers who absolutely can't communicate their location, this technology has the potential to shrink the current search areas from up four thousand metres to 300 metres or less," says Doug Watson, E-Comm's Vice-President of Technology.

Wireless Phase II is being implemented in stages in Canada because of the amount of technology development that's required. The first stage, now completed at E-Comm and in



Despite what you see in the movies, Wireless Phase II will NOT pinpoint a caller's exact location nor will it provide an address. Callers themselves still remain the best source of information.

most areas of the country, is general location information (latitude and longitude). It will be followed by the development of the technology required for mid-call location updates (e.g. callers in moving vehicles) and out-of-country cell phone users (roamers).

While this is a major advancement for 9-1-1, it is important for the public to understand that despite what they see in the movies, Wireless Phase II will NOT pinpoint a caller's exact location nor will it provide an address. Callers themselves still remain the best source of information and they should always be prepared to provide their exact location (address, apartment numbers, cross streets, highway signs, trail markers). Location information can also be impacted based on the strength of the cell signal and terrain and cannot be solely relied on.

Tips for calling 9-1-1

Know your location

- Know your location at all times and communicate it as soon as you are asked
- Cellular phones do not display exact location information. Always know your location
- You should know what city or area you are in, building and home addresses, cross streets, and any other information that will help emergency personnel find you (e.g., landmarks, highway exits/markers)

Don't hang up or pre-program 9-1-1

- If you dial 9-1-1 accidentally, stay on the line and tell us. If you hang up we don't know if you are okay and will have to call you back or send police to check on you.
- Don't program 9-1-1 into any telephone—speed dials lead to accidental 9-1-1 calls
- Store your cell phone in a safe position when not in use to prevent accidental calls
- Please do not test 9-1-1 to see if it's working

E-Comm radio system surpasses performance expectations



Two thousand additional radios were deployed by E-Comm during the Games

With more than two thousand additional radios on the ground to support police communications during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, radio transmissions were up significantly in comparison to last year.

“The radio system got a major workout during the Games and we’re extremely pleased with how it performed under such intense pressure,” says Peter Gauthier, E-Comm’s Director of Wireless Services.

Comparing 2009 data with results in 2010 paints a clear picture of just how much of a workout the radio system got. Transmissions (number of times a responder speaks over the radio) for February 15, 2010 hit 376,000, up 53 per cent over the same day in 2009. That equals 1.4 million seconds in radio airtime or 389 hours of talk in just one day!

Broken down by community, Vancouver was the clear winner in terms of radio use, showing an 108 per cent increase for police, fire and ambulance during the Olympics. Richmond also reported an increase of 78 per cent in radio traffic.

Despite heavy volume, the E-Comm radio system continued to outperform Industry Canada guidelines by keeping queuing (responders waiting to speak due to heavy traffic) to a minimum.

Radio system manages huge increases during Games

Metro Vancouver	% increase in radio traffic over same day 2009
February 13, 2010	40%
February 14, 2010	39%

Vancouver	% increase in radio traffic over same day 2009
February 13, 2010	92%
February 14, 2010	97%

Richmond	% increase in radio traffic over same day 2009
February 13, 2010	62%
February 14, 2010	77%

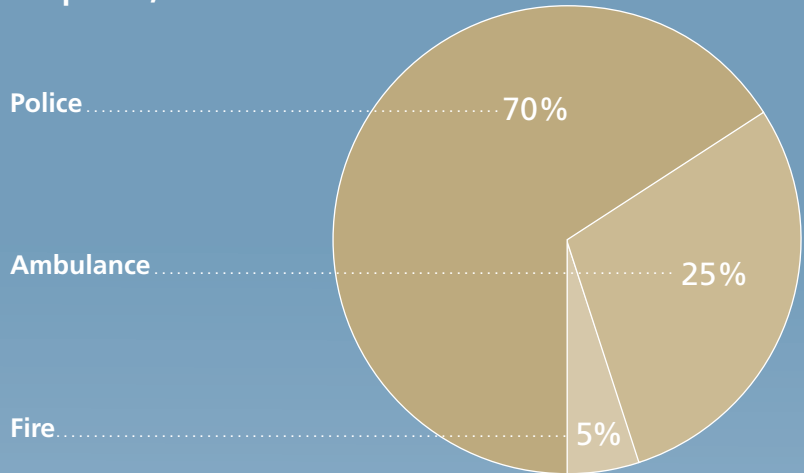
9-1-1 service levels

January – March 2010

	911 calls placed to E-Comm	Service level*
January	81,055	96%
February	79,097	98%
March	82,353	97%
Total	242,505	97%

*Service Level Target: 95% of all 9-1-1 calls answered in five seconds or less.

9-1-1 calls directed to police, fire and ambulance



Technology

9-1-1 Uptime: 100%

Number of 9-1-1 calls from landlines and cell phones

	Landline Telephones		Cellular Telephones	
January	39,329	49%	41,726	51%
February	36,468	46%	42,629	54%
March	39,140	48%	43,213	52%
Total	114,937	48%	127,568	52%

Wide-Area Radio system

January – March 2010

System grade of service and availability

2010	System Air Time (secs)	Transmissions (#)	System Availability	System Queuing
January	31,701,330	8,477,162	99.9978%	0.0001%
February	39,075,214	10,405,664	99.9966%	0.01%
March	33,369,111	8,826,087	100.0000%	0.02%

System grade of service average*

Target: <3.00% **Actual:** 0.01%

System availability average

Target: 99.99% **Actual:** 99.9993%

*Grade of service represents the ability of the radio system to handle radio traffic volume. Industry Canada sets the standard for the public safety community, which is 3%. This means at the radio system's busiest times, there cannot be more than 3% queuing (responders waiting to speak). The E-Comm radio system is well within this standard.

E-Comm mission

To provide emergency personnel and the public with exceptional communication services that help save lives and protect property.

E-Comm values

Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, Collaboration

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