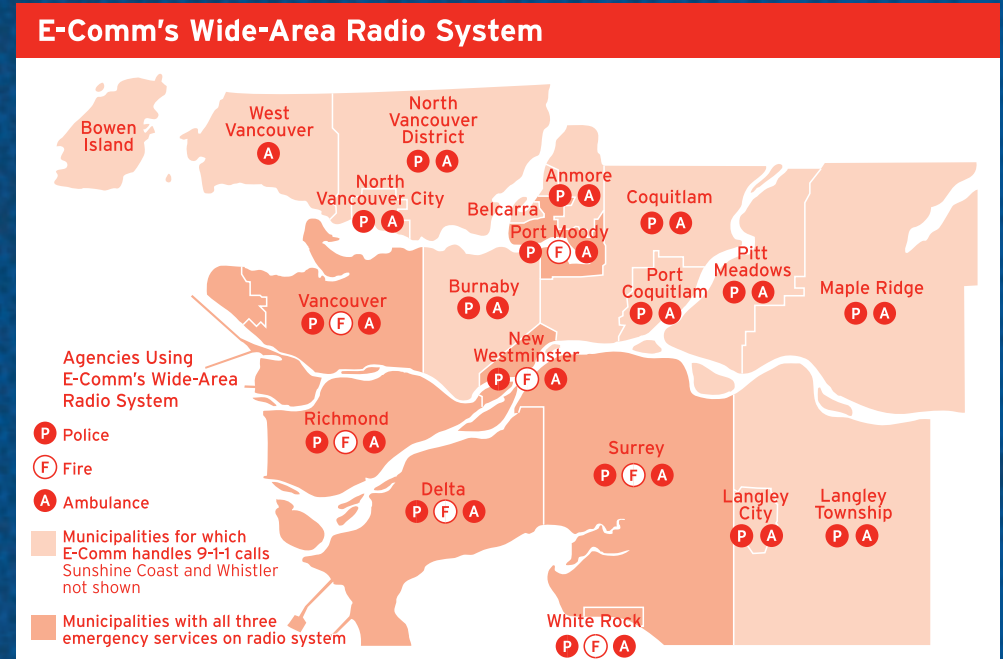


>>> "New West" continued from front page

coverage (extremely important to firefighting), increased reliability and clarity.

The total radio fleet consists of 12 mobiles and 35 portables which are now deployed among the three fire halls serving New Westminster. Dispatching currently takes place from New Westminster Police via the E-Comm Radio Maestro Consoles, but is scheduled to move into E-Comm in 2005. More than 5,400 wide-area radios are now active throughout southwest British Columbia. Currently, the network processes approximately 7.8 million radio transmissions each month.

Thanks to everyone involved who helped make this transition a success!



New Westminster is the seventh municipality in the GVRD to have all three of its emergency services on the shared radio system.

## E-Comm Staff Honoured

At the February E-Comm Board of Directors meeting, call-taker Kelly McGrath and IT technician Kapila Jayaweera were acknowledged during a special presentation for their outstanding efforts over the Christmas holidays.

Kelly truly exemplified the holiday spirit by initiating a collection fund for a distraught family that had their house broken into on Christmas Eve. In the end a total of \$800 was raised for gifts for the family, and an additional \$500 was donated to Ronald McDonald House.



L-R: David Korbin (Chair, E-Comm Board of Directors), Kelly McGrath, Ken Shymanski (E-Comm President & CEO) and Kapila Jayaweera.

Kapila also organized a company-wide fundraising effort in December, which resulted in more than \$700 in funds and hundreds of dollars worth of much needed medical supplies for the victims of the Southeast Asia tsunami. In total, E-Comm employees donated \$6,789.46 towards the Canadian Red Cross Asia Earthquake and Tsunami Relief fund.

>>> "FAQs" continued from inside

**3. What if I don't know what service I need?**  
 If a caller is unsure of what service they need, the E-Comm 9-1-1 call-taker is trained to ask a few quick questions to help determine which agency is required and will connect the caller accordingly.

**4. What happens if I dial 9-1-1 accidentally?**  
 The best thing you can do is just tell us. If you hang up, then our call-takers must now take the time to call you back to confirm you are okay. If you dial us by mistake, you will not be charged a fee, so there is no need to be concerned.

**5. What special services does E-Comm provide?**  
 E-Comm has access to a 24-hour translation service available in 144 languages. E-Comm is also a leader in providing 9-1-1 call response to members of the deaf and hard of hearing community who use TeleTYpewriters (TTY) to access police, fire and ambulance.

For more information visit [www.ecomm.bc.ca](http://www.ecomm.bc.ca)

Number of 9-1-1 Calls Placed to E-Comm	January	February	March
	99,709	97,533	103,405

*includes abandoned calls*

Number of 9-1-1 Calls Placed to E-Comm in 2004	Month	Number of Calls
	January	98,056
	February	93,966
	March	101,575
	April	101,708
	May	104,444
	June	107,802
	July	114,455
	August	115,600
	September	107,259
	October	110,969
	November	98,973
	December	104,017
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,258,824</b>

*includes abandoned calls*

E-Comm's 2004 Annual Report will be available after May 5, 2005 in both hard copy or online at [www.ecomm.bc.ca](http://www.ecomm.bc.ca)  
 Contact 604-215-4877 to receive a copy.

E-Comm is committed to the use of environmentally responsible papers. By choosing 100% post-consumer recycled fiber instead of virgin paper for this printed material the following savings to our natural resources were realized:

Trees Saved	Wood Reduced (Lbs)	Landfill Reduced (Lbs)	Energy Reduced (btu)	Water Reduced (Gallons)	Net Greenhouse Emissions (Lbs)
.5	292.93	45.7	710.06	430.72	88.62

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EC300 Apr 05



## New Westminster Fire/Rescue Services Increases Communication Power

L-R: New Westminster Fire Chief Carl Nepstad, E-Comm Director of Wireless Services Peter Gauthier, and New Westminster Mayor Wayne Wright.

On December 14, 2004 the City of New Westminster further enhanced the communication capability of its emergency responders by transitioning its fire service to the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio System. The cutover occurred at 10:00am with the first call—a Combined Event—being dispatched at 10:12am. The E-Comm radio network replaces the outdated UHF conventional radio system previously used by the firefighters.

New Westminster is now the seventh municipality in the GVRD to have all three of its emergency services (police, fire and ambulance) on the shared radio system (the others include Vancouver, Richmond, Port Moody, Surrey, Delta and White Rock). This will allow local emergency responders to communicate directly with each other and with their counterparts in other communities that also use the E-Comm system. This is critical on both a day-to-day basis and in a major emergency or disaster. The New Westminster Police Service and the BC Ambulance Service have been on the system for more than two years.

Equally important, New Westminster Fire/Rescue Services will also be able to now communicate directly with fire departments in Surrey, Richmond and Delta, all of which have mutual-aid agreements with New Westminster.

Mayor Wayne Wright summed up the move as "Good news all around. This important step enhances the delivery of emergency services with a superior communication system that improves firefighter safety and without doubt, provides better service to our citizens and visitors to New Westminster."

In addition to the ability to directly communicate with other emergency responders both in and outside of New Westminster, the E-Comm radio system offers enhanced personnel safety (emergency buttons), better in-building

*"Operationally it makes absolute sense for us. Interoperability and increased building coverage are two significant features that will help us complete our response more effectively, but more important, keeps firefighters safer. That means enhanced public safety for New Westminster."*

Fire Chief Carl Nepstad

Story continued, see "New West" >>>

**INSIDE**

- 9-1-1 is the Number: Part II
- E-Comm Staff Honoured
- 9-1-1 Stats
- Meet the E-Comm Board



## 9-1-1 is the Number: Part II

In the last issue of E-Communique we took an in-depth look at the world of 9-1-1—how the system works and how to make it work best for those who need it the most. In the last installment of this two-part series we will be looking at some of the technological issues surrounding 9-1-1, along with some frequently asked questions.

The speed with which consumer technology changes in the world of emergency communications poses many challenges for call centres around the world. Often we find ourselves striving to keep up with the technological purchases of consumers who forget that 9-1-1 technology is inevitably impacted by their use.

**WIRELESS 9-1-1:** The commonality of cell phones as a means of communication has had both positive and negative impacts on 9-1-1. While cellular phones significantly increase the public's ability to call 9-1-1 and receive help, it also means call centres are dealing with higher call volumes (there are an estimated 500,000 cell phone users in the GVRD alone). Also, while a cell phone number is now presented to call-takers through the computer system, exact location information is not. This is why it's important to know your location at all times and to provide this information to the call-taker as soon as you're asked. If this information is not communicated and the call becomes disconnected, there are only limited means of determining where to send help.

Another challenge facing 9-1-1 is unintentional wireless calls. These typically occur when callers accidentally depress keys without knowing it; when a cell phone does not have the key lock system activated; when 9-1-1 is pre-programmed into speed dial; or when an auto-9-1-1 feature is triggered by pressing the appropriate one-digit button.

These unintentional or 'dropped' calls have become extremely problematic and are one of the most common and frustrating issues facing 9-1-1 call centres. The time spent making repeated callbacks to unintentional calls in order to ensure no one is in danger, is precious life-saving time not spent processing legitimate 9-1-1 calls.

**9-1-1 AND VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP):** Over the last few years we have witnessed a significant revolution in the telephone industry through the introduction of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or Internet Telephony. With this emerging technology, several critical operational issues have come to light.

In order to eliminate long-distance phone charges, an increasing number of people are using their high-speed internet connection as a replacement for landline phones. However, in some cases VoIP is currently not capable of dialing 9-1-1 or alternatively the calls come in on a non-emergency ten digit line. Also, there are ongoing issues around determining the VoIP caller's location and ensuring that they are directed to the correct 9-1-1 centre. What this means is that if you live in Vancouver and call 9-1-1 from your laptop while traveling in Toronto, your call could end up at E-Comm and not the Toronto centre. If you are considering using VoIP as your primary method of communication, you need to be aware of these issues.

Organizations such as APCO Canada (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Number Association) are working together to achieve greater compatibility between VoIP and 9-1-1. Through collaborated efforts, the public safety industry will be able to gain a better understanding of where the technology is headed and how the industry will be regulated. E-Comm is keeping abreast of VoIP developments through its association with both APCO and NENA.

### FAQs:

#### 1. How is 9-1-1 funded?

The 9-1-1 service is contracted to E-Comm by the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). The GVRD collects for this service from each municipality in this region through property taxes and then remits payment to E-Comm.

#### 2. How does 9-1-1 work?

When a caller dials 9-1-1, the E-Comm call-taker asks, "do you need police, fire or ambulance?" The call-taker will also confirm for which city. E-Comm's job is to then connect the caller as quickly as possible to the agency the caller has requested. The E-Comm call-taker will remain on the line with the caller until the agency answers. The entire process usually takes around 25-30 seconds.

"FAQs" continued on back panel >>>

## MEET OUR BOARD...



### Mayor Joe Trasolini (Port Moody)

- 11-year resident of Port Moody
- Mayor since 1999; served as councillor for three years prior to being elected Mayor
- On the E-Comm Board since 1999

Joe Trasolini is no stranger to the pressures of emergency response or the importance of preparedness. He's worked in the oil-spill response industry as a private businessman and also has 10-years of emergency response experience while employed at Environment Canada.

Being in a ready state-of-response is critical to the Mayor and to Port Moody. That commitment no doubt played a part in the City capturing first place in the international Planning for the Future award (beating out such competitors as Honolulu, Seattle and Camden, Australia) and third place for the most livable city in the world! Both awards are presented by the International Awards for Livable Communities.

*You've been involved with E-Comm since the outset. What jumps to mind when you reflect on the past five and a half years?*

E-Comm provides a high-level of service and we can all take a great deal of pride in that. E-Comm is a young company that has accomplished an extraordinary amount very quickly—and the success of this organization is dependent on our ability to continue to provide a high-level of service. We know the radio system is second to none and a critical component to emergency communications in the GVRD; we continue to meet 9-1-1 performance expectations and our dispatch customer service base continues to grow. Our Board of Directors is a mix of business, government and emergency service professionals which lends itself to responsible decision-making and a focus on the future.

*How important is public safety among all of the issues facing municipalities?*

It ranks very high. In fact, we have a bylaw in Port Moody that mandates that the Mayor chair an Emergency Measures Policy & Planning Committee, which I do. We have a very comprehensive plan for our city and we are all very proud of that. No community is immune to a disaster...in fact, we have had two train derailments and a chemical spill/fire in Port Moody

ourselves. The question for every community is not whether it's going to happen but whether the community is prepared for when it does. We believe we are prepared and our association with E-Comm has helped with that.

*What are your frustrations with regard to emergency services/communications?*

The lack of understanding of what E-Comm is about, how it is funded, what services it provides, how it is managed and what's been accomplished so far. I take exception to some of the comments I have heard about our structure and service, but I recognize that it's incumbent on us to do more education. The number one issue facing us is a perception that we are not sustainable and that must be countered. We have a strategic financial plan that will see us break-even by 2007. All start-up organizations face the same financial challenges that E-Comm has. Our efforts must also focus on enticing a larger customer base.

*What are some notable achievements?*

The technology we use is what sets us apart. In 2004, we had a major fire in Port Moody on the edge of an urban forest. It spread quickly and it became a critical situation because the fire was jumping from the forests into neighbourhoods.

Continued on next panel >>>

# e-Communique

E-Communique is pleased to continue with its profiles of E-Comm Board members. This issue we speak with Mayors Joe Trasolini and Jon Kingsbury.



### Mayor Jon Kingsbury (Coquitlam)

- 38-year resident of Coquitlam
- First elected to City Council in 1988
- Elected as Mayor in 1998

Jon Kingsbury, who has served on the Board of Directors several terms, says "I want to be there when the Corporation reaches its 'ultimate goal' of integrating all emergency communications in the GVRD."

*What have been the biggest challenges in reaching that "ultimate goal" as you put it?*

The biggest challenge has been the speed with which this project has been put together. It has been so fast for such a massive undertaking, and yet it's been very successful in many respects. It takes any company 6-7 years to get fully operational, to get all the bugs out and to get profitable. A post-disaster building has been erected, an entire radio system has been engineered and rolled out, 9-1-1 has been streamlined and more than a dozen different police and fire departments have moved their dispatch operations to E-Comm. And people are surprised there have been bumps along the way?

*How has the focus on public safety changed in your municipality over the years?*

It's always been a priority because Coquitlam is a mountainside community with a dam on Coquitlam Lake. We have to be up-to-date in all our emergency procedures, particularly with the threat of an earthquake, and communication is an underlying factor in that for both the public and emergency workers. The Home Emergency Response Organization System (HEROS), a program we share with Port Moody, helps us provide training on emergency preparedness for residents. And being involved

*Continued >>>* I went down to the site to see things first hand and I saw one of the best integrated communications systems in full swing. Port Moody Police were able to communicate directly with Port Moody Fire and with their counterparts from neighbouring jurisdictions who were called in to lend a hand. It could have easily escalated into a disaster situation without that level of communication and the standard of excellence our emergency responders provide.

with the E-Comm radio system is a huge advantage on the responder side as our RCMP detachment, which serves both Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam, can speak directly with Port Moody police and RCMP detachments for Ridge-Meadows and Burnaby.

*Speaking of the radio system, how important is it for Coquitlam to be part of a shared radio system?*

It's very important and I know Coquitlam has had good, positive results with its involvement. We are enthusiastic about the radio system and all it has to offer for shared communications. Let's face it; it would be foolish to be an island the way our geography is set out here on the Lower Mainland. The technology implementation at E-Comm is really coming along nicely.

*What are some of the notable achievements?*

Certainly the Wide-Area Radio System is an enormous success but I also think that 9-1-1 service has been enhanced since it moved to E-Comm in 1999. The service level requirement is high, but it was met yet again in 2004. 9-1-1 is now located in a post-disaster building, where it's secure, and with the people who are doing the work day in and day out, who know the technology and know how it should best operate.