



*Cutting the "9-1-1" ribbon to mark the opening of the South Island 9-1-1/Police Dispatch Centre on March 6, 2019.*

## It's official: 9-1-1 call-taking and police dispatching now underway at new post-disaster emergency communications centre on Vancouver Island

Just two years since the initiative was first announced, representatives from E-Comm, government and police agencies gathered to celebrate the opening of the South Island 9-1-1/Police Dispatch Centre on March 6.

The new two-storey, 1,200-square-metre, post-disaster facility in Saanich, built and owned by the Capital Regional District (CRD) and operated by E-Comm, amalgamates 9-1-1 call-answer, police call-taking and

dispatch services for the Central Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria police departments and 11 RCMP detachments in the central and southern Vancouver Island region.

More than 100 police, local government representatives, stakeholders and contractors who worked on the building participated in the ceremony, which started off with the Greater Victoria Police Pipe Band leading

*Continued inside >>>*



CRD Board Chair Colin Plant (left) and Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth.



E-Comm CEO Oliver Grüter-Andrew salutes the 70-plus staff at the centre who are part of the E-Comm public safety team.

the speakers to the podium followed by a territorial welcome by Florence Dick of the Songhees Nation.

B.C. Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth praised those who work on the front lines of public safety every day. "Here in this building, we have professional call takers and dispatchers. They are the reassuring voices you hear when you call 9-1-1 and the take-charge, highly-trained people who get you the help you need."

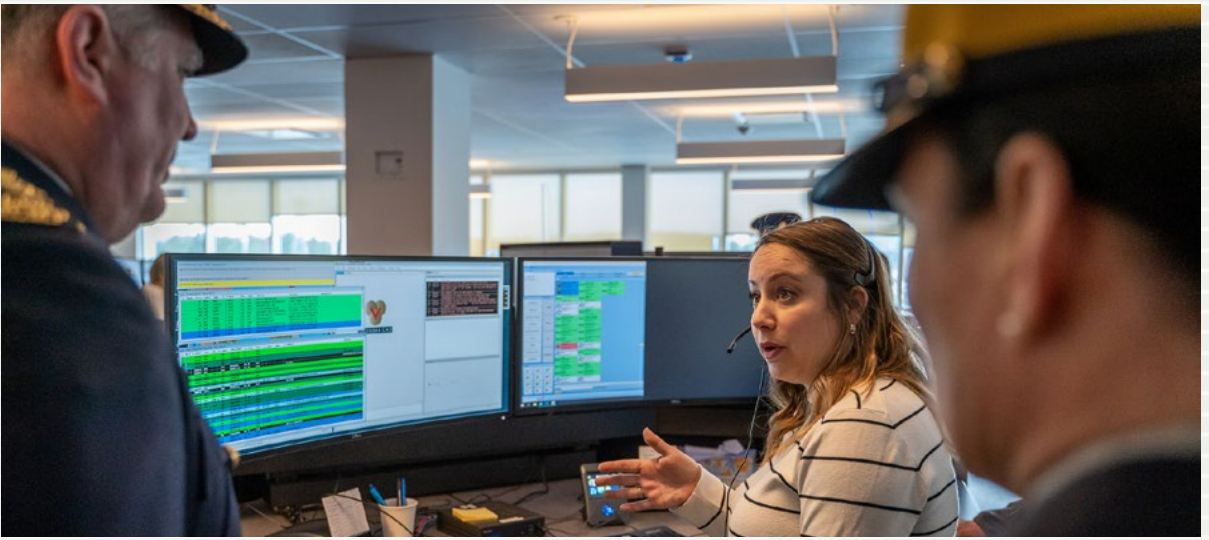
The CRD invested \$13.1 million to build the facility on time and under budget. "The CRD welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with partners to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. This new centre is a strong example of how working together will improve efficiencies and help us to meet post-disaster

standards," said Colin Plant, CRD Board Chair and emcee for the event.

E-Comm President and CEO Oliver Grüter-Andrew said the organization is all about emergency communications. "All E-Comm staff share a dedication to public safety that makes me incredibly proud. We are ready to continue to serve police officers and Vancouver Island residents to the very best of our ability no matter what the circumstance or time of day."

The centre began operations in late January, following the successful transition of all police agency call-taking and dispatch operations over a two-week period. An estimated 100,000 9-1-1 calls will be answered each year by the new centre.





*E-Comm's Rachel Carlow demonstrates how calls are handled.*

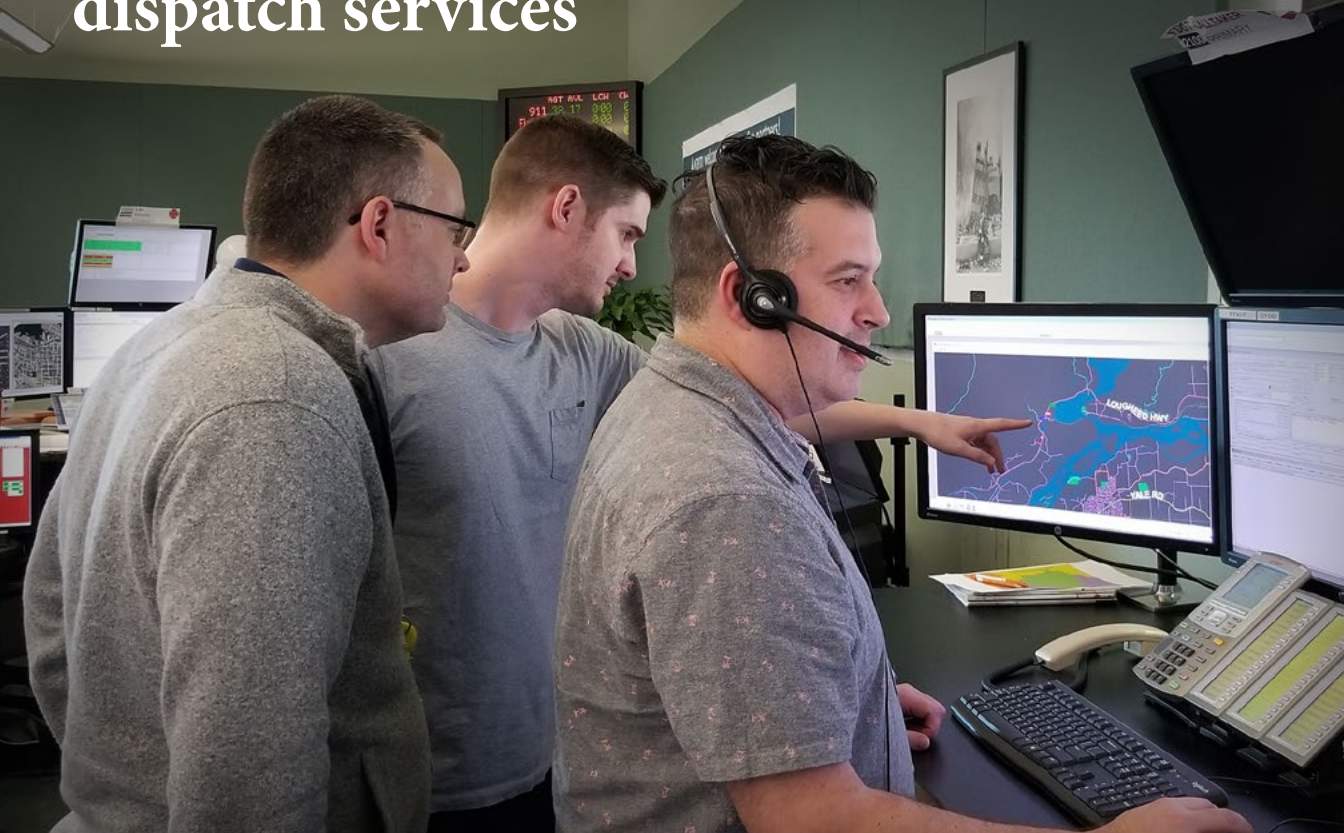


*Victoria Police Chief Constable Del Manak (left) and E-Comm's Lauretta Lockwood inside the 9-1-1 Centre.*



*Police representatives from across the central and southern Vancouver Island region joined the celebration.*

# E-Comm welcomes 22 fire departments in the Fraser Valley and North Okanagan to its dispatch services



*(L-R) E-Comm fire dispatch staff: Ted Rivers, Andrew Gillan and Rob Kennedy during the FVRD fire dispatch transition go-live on February 20.*

E-Comm is now providing dispatch services for 15 fire departments in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and seven fire departments in the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO). Dispatch transitions were completed in February.

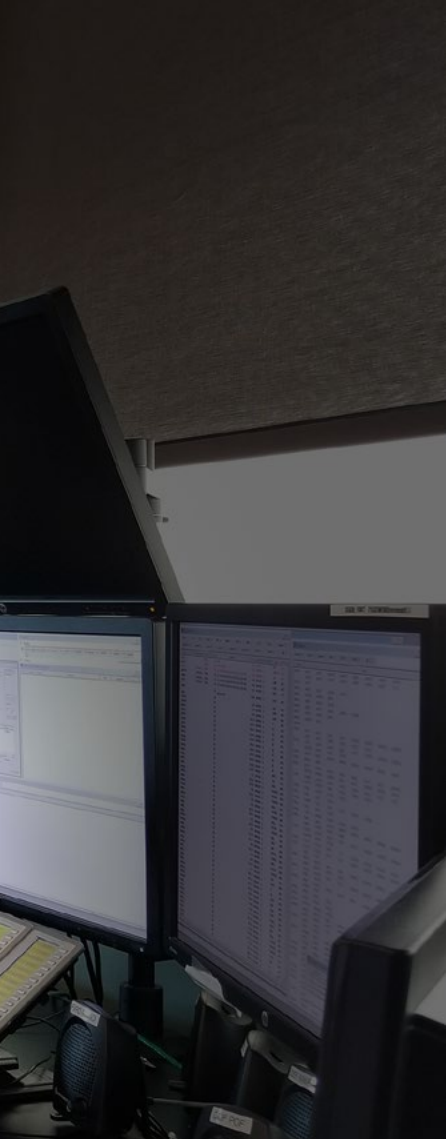
E-Comm has been the 9-1-1 answer point for the RDNO and FVRD since 2014 and 2016 respectively. "This expansion of our existing working relationship is a great step to further strengthening public safety in both regions, and I know our fire team will provide the same level of excellent service to these new

fire departments as they deliver to all agencies we serve," said Erin Ramsay, E-Comm vice-president of Operations. "We know the firefighters and citizens of both regional districts are in good hands."

E-Comm's experienced fire staff, including call takers and dispatchers, have undergone specific training to learn more about the geography of both regions in order to provide the best emergency response to these new partners and the public. As part of the training, fire call takers and dispatchers learned more about local areas including commonplace

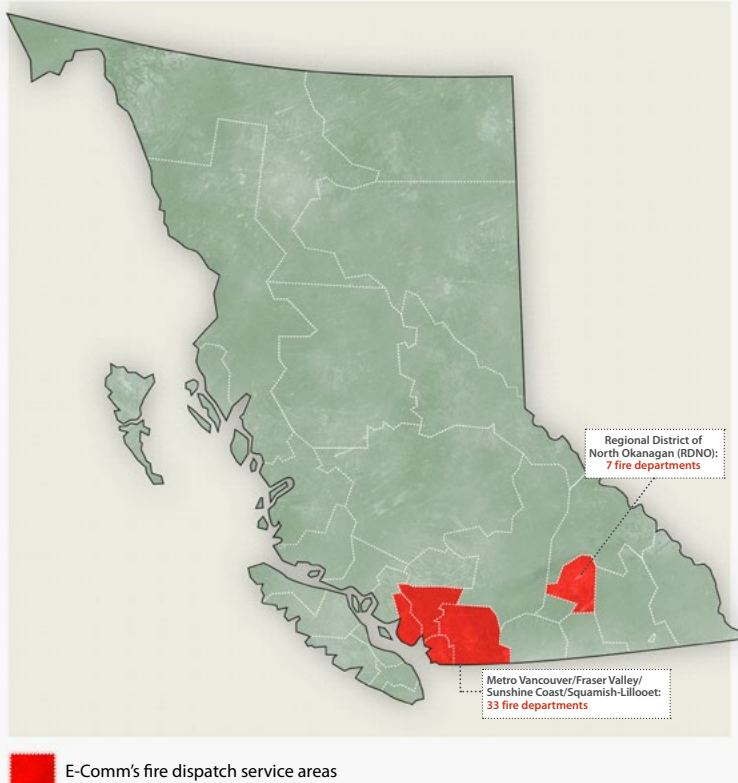
names (such as Browns Corner in the RDNO, Vedder Canal and Bear Mountain Trail in the FVRD). On the technology front, E-Comm worked with staff from both regional districts and the fire departments and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) specialists to prepare for these transitions. This included reviewing all policies and procedures from the fire departments and setting up wireless communication to each of the departments so firefighters on the ground can communicate with E-Comm dispatchers. E-Comm gathered and loaded data such as locations of schools, community





## Fire dispatch service areas

E-Comm provides dispatch services to 40 fire departments across B.C.



*From the Sunshine Coast to the North Okanagan, E-Comm now dispatches for 40 fire departments.*

centres and other commonplace names into its computer systems. Representatives from the fire departments took part in workshops to review maps and policies as part of the transition process.

E-Comm is expected to handle about 20,000 fire calls a year from both regions. In 2018, E-Comm staff managed more than 68,000 fire emergency calls on behalf of its fire dispatch agencies. With the addition of the 22 fire departments from the FVRD and RDNO, E-Comm is now dispatching for 40 fire departments in B.C.



*E-Comm GIS Technologist Tammy Chabot conducted workshops with fire department representatives as part of the transition planning.*



# CEO Update

Oliver Grüter-Andrew, President and CEO

March 6 was an incredibly proud moment for all of us at E-Comm, as we joined our Vancouver Island partners in officially opening a new public-safety asset for British Columbia: the state-of-the-art South Island 9-1-1/Police Dispatch Centre.

The vision demonstrated by police leadership and the Capital Regional District cannot be overstated, as we collectively witnessed the culmination of four years of planning come to fruition with the cutting of the ribbon by Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth and two of our newest E-Comm team members, Rachelle and Laurretta. To be welcomed to lands of the Lekwungen People by Florence Dick of the Songhees Nation just prior to that ceremonial moment was a great honour for us all. We now turn our attention to what we focus on every day—the safety of the public and the police officers we send to help them. We are committed to providing the best possible service to all.

Public-safety service expansion was not isolated to just Vancouver Island this past quarter as we also welcomed the transition of dispatch services for 22 fire departments in the Fraser Valley and North Okanagan to E-Comm in February. This move enhances and strengthens our public safety relationship with both regional districts, as we have been handling 9-1-1 calls for the Fraser Valley since 2014 and the North Okanagan since 2016. We know our fire team—our call takers and dispatchers—will provide the citizens and firefighters in both regions with an excellent level of service as we work together to help save lives and protect property.

We have just recently put the finishing touches on our new strategic plan and are rolling it out starting in May. We have shared our plan with all E-Comm staff to ensure they are fully aware of the direction we want to take our work in support of our public safety partners and the public. The focus of our plan is on five key Commitments, or pillars—Service, People, Innovation, Relationships and Expansion—and 10 key initiatives that we believe will be of great interest to our stakeholders.

I am grateful to our Board for its leadership in developing our plan and to our many stakeholders for their input. I look forward to sharing the details in the coming months.

Before then, I wish to acknowledge all 9-1-1 call takers, dispatchers and support staff at E-Comm and around the province for their incredible contribution to public safety as we close out another 9-1-1 Awareness Week. I also wish to thank Province of British Columbia for its April announcement that Amendments to Mental Disorder Presumption Regulation will now provide emergency dispatchers with easier access to workers' compensation for mental-health disorders that come from work-related trauma. This is an incredible acknowledgement of these roles and one I look forward to providing more information on in our next issue.



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# Assistance dog joins B.C.'s largest 9-1-1 team

In what's believed to be a first for a 9-1-1 emergency call centre in Canada, E-Comm has added a registered clinical counsellor and certified assistance dog to its public safety team.

"Working behind the scenes, emergency call takers and dispatchers are the first, first responders and are on the frontlines of incredibly serious situations," said Oliver Grüter-Andrew, E-Comm President and CEO. "We see this mental health and wellness initiative as an important way to help our staff cope with the day-to-day challenges of the job, especially in the aftermath of emotionally-wrought calls and events."

Lynn Gifford, a specialist in trauma stewardship, has joined E-Comm as its full-time Workplace Wellness Manager along with certified assistance dog Koltan, a four-year-old Yellow Labrador Retriever.

"We are honoured to be able to work directly with this team of dedicated emergency communications professionals," said Gifford. "Whether they are answering or dispatching emergency calls or maintaining critical technology that are lifelines for first responders, the work of E-Comm staff is essential to public safety."

Before joining E-Comm, Gifford and Koltan had been focused on supporting police, paramedics, nurses and social workers, who have also experienced various trauma in their line of work while caring for others.

Koltan was trained by the Pacific Assistance Dogs Society—known as PADS. It breeds, raises and trains



*Lynn Gifford and Koltan are now part of E-Comm's public safety team.*

fully certified assistance dogs. PADS' accredited facility dogs work with community professionals, such as teachers, RCMP and psychologists to help support healthy communities.

Research shows emergency call takers and dispatchers experience an elevated level of emotional distress doing their work compared to other professions and their exposure to duty-related trauma can lead to occupational stress injuries including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As part of E-Comm's Critical Incident Stress Team program, therapy dogs have visited E-Comm in the past, providing comfort and support following serious events.

E-Comm Training Specialist Jordan Robitaille, who is also a

call taker and dispatcher, says Koltan will provide extra support and comfort for staff. "There are some days when you are going to have rough calls and will think about them at home. When you have a big call your adrenaline can be through the roof." But when Koltan is at your side, "he essentially forces cuddles upon you. How can you say no to that? It's amazing."

"Combined with peer support, and other health and well-being initiatives, we are focused on making sure our staff remain healthy both mentally and physically," added Grüter-Andrew. "I liken it to being on an airplane. You need to put your own oxygen mask on first if you want to help others."



# E-Comm

IN THE COMMUNITY



ALI, E-Comm's 9-1-1 Moose Ambassador, had a great time marching in the Vancouver Chinese New Year parade on February 10, 2019 with our Vancouver Police Department partners and friends from local Community Policing Centres.

## ON SOCIAL MEDIA



To mark International Women's Day on March 8, 2019, E-Comm recognized the women who work to help keep British Columbians safe.

### E-COMM MISSION

To deliver exceptional emergency communications to the public and first responders that help save lives and protect property.

### E-COMM VISION

Safer communities in British Columbia through excellence in public safety communication.

### E-COMM VALUES

Respect • Accountability • Integrity • Service • Collaboration

e-communiqué was printed with vegetable-based inks on chlorine-free, 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper.

# E-Comm service

by the numbers

January to March 2019

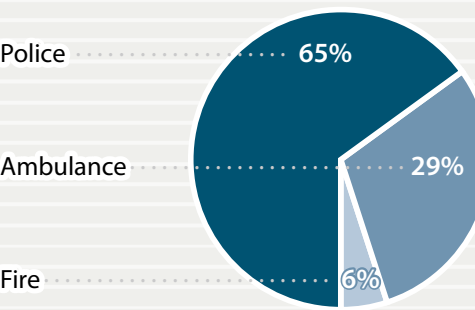
### 9-1-1 service levels

9-1-1 calls placed to E-Comm*	Service level achieved*
408,956	98%
* Total number of 9-1-1 calls for 25 regional districts served by E-Comm.	
* Service Level Target: 95% of all 9-1-1 calls answered in five seconds or less.	

### Number of 9-1-1 calls from landlines and cellphones

Landlines	Cellphones
118,950	290,006
29%	71%

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



### Technology

9-1-1 availability	100%
Radio network availability average	100%
Radio calls (#)	13,157,419
Radio system air time (seconds)	83,106,449

For more information on E-Comm, or to comment on a story, contact [corpcomm@ecomm911.ca](mailto:corpcomm@ecomm911.ca).

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