

Next Generation 9-1-1: Frequently Asked Questions

What is NG9-1-1?

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) is a new IP-based or digital network that will replace the current aging analog system for 9-1-1 calls. The new technology is designed to support safer, faster, and more informed emergency responses.

Why are we transitioning to NG9-1-1?

The transition to NG9-1-1 has been federally mandated across Canada by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Canada's current analog system was designed decades ago primarily for landlines, and the aging infrastructure needs replacing. The CRTC has set a deadline of March 31, 2027, for the national transition. E-Comm's implementation of NG9-1-1 is on track to take place ahead of that time, by the end of 2026.

What are some of the key benefits of NG9-1-1?

The transition to NG9-1-1 lays the foundation for safer, faster, more informed emergency response. The first phase, launching this fall, migrates voice 9-1-1 calls to the new network. In the future, NG9-1-1 will allow for capabilities such as real-time texting to 9-1-1, sharing of streaming video, as well as enhanced location details through GPS and geographic information systems or GIS to ensure help gets to where it's needed as quickly as possible. These are **future-state capabilities** and are not part of E-Comm's first transition phase in 2026.

What changes can the public expect with this transition?

The transition to NG9-1-1 will happen behind the scenes and will largely be undetectable to callers who dial 9-1-1. Callers will reach a 9-1-1 call taker just as they do today who will ask if they need police, fire or ambulance, and for which location. The call will then be directed to the proper agency for call-taking and dispatch just like today. From a caller perspective, the transition to NG9-1-1 will be invisible. The only immediate public facing change will be how quick hang up 9-1-1 abandoned calls are handed.

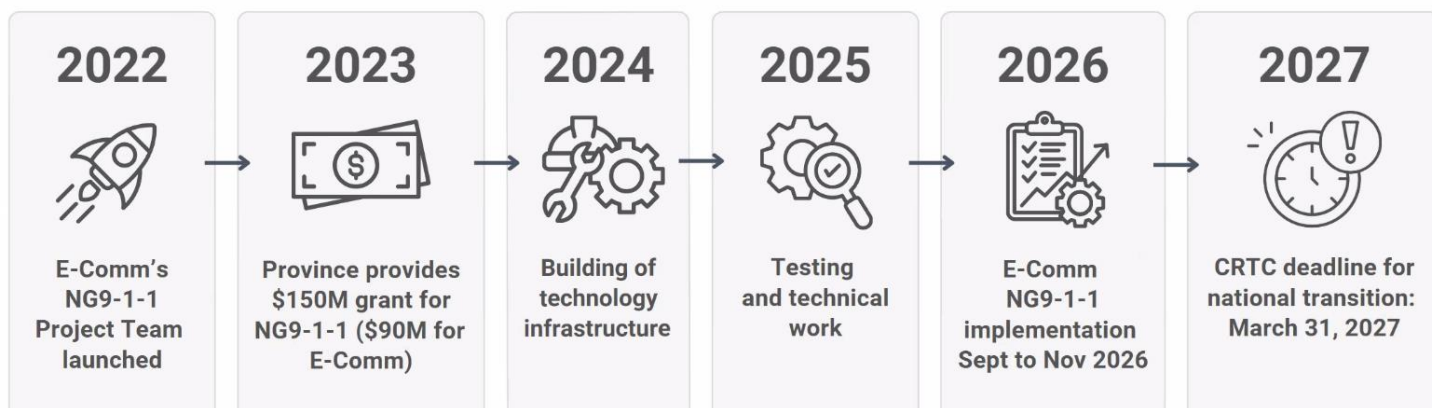
When will capabilities like real-time text be available in B.C.?

A timeline is not yet known for when real-time text to 9-1-1 will be available in B.C. and timing will be largely dependent on further direction by the CRTC on a national rollout.

What is E-Comm's role in NG9-1-1?

As the largest public safety answering point in the province, E-Comm is overseeing the implementation of NG9-1-1 on behalf of all its 25 regional district partners who are responsible for administering 9-1-1 services for their communities and E-Comm's police and fire call-taking and dispatch partners.

E-Comm is also responsible for transitioning other agencies such as BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS), BC RCMP and Saanich Fire. E-Comm's project team has been working to build the physical infrastructure necessary to support the new network, while also conducting rigorous testing, and helping to develop technology solutions such as the new automated system for accidental 9-1-1 calls. The scope of the project means E-Comm is leading the largest NG9-1-1 migration in Canada.



How is Next Generation 9-1-1 implementation being funded in B.C.?

In March 2023, the Province provided E-Comm with \$90 million towards the initial implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1. The one-time funding has helped to offset start-up costs, resulting in a significant savings for local governments and agency partners. An additional \$60 million in provincial funding went to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) for implementation associated with emergency communication centres, including for the police and fire agencies who do not contract with E-Comm for their dispatch services or who are not part of E-Comm's NG9-1-1 program. It's also important to note that implementation funding does not cover ongoing costs related to NG9-1-1 after 2026.

Will NG9-1-1 cost more in the future?

Yes. As E-Comm transitions to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), partners will see increased costs associated with the new platform. The cost trajectory is driven by the platform, not by E-Comm's decisions. NG9-1-1 is a complete replacement of Canada's legacy emergency communications system and requires ongoing investment to remain secure, resilient, and reliable. Unlike the legacy system, it requires modern IP networks, enhanced cybersecurity, continuous software updates, specialized technical expertise and vendor support. These are requirements of the national NG9-1-1 standard and other jurisdictions across Canada are also experiencing increased costs. E-Comm's shared province-wide model helps manage these costs by building and maintaining these capabilities once for participating agencies, rather than requiring each agency to develop and fund them independently. Ontario and other Canadian jurisdictions have also pursued shared models for the same practical reasons.

What are the benefits of the shared model?

The shared model delivers resilience that decentralized alternatives cannot match. Geo-redundancy, 24/7 monitoring, and continuous change management are built into the platform and organized once across all partners. Individual agencies cannot sustain this at equivalent standard or cost. NG9-1-1 is not a fixed end-state. National standards will continue to evolve, and the platform creates the conditions for broader public safety integration over time. A shared model absorbs those changes once for all partners; a fragmented approach would require each agency to manage independently.

Will anything change for how the deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech impaired (DHHSI) access 9-1-1?

There will be no immediate changes to how people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech impaired access 9-1-1. Text with 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) is a specialized texting service available that provides 9-1-1 call centres with the ability to converse via text messaging with a DHHSI person during an emergency. Registration is required for this service. To register visit: www.textwith911.ca. With future capabilities on the horizon with NG9-1-1, there will be more options for a DHHSI person to connect with emergency services.

Will there be any impacts to 9-1-1 service during the transitions?

E-Comm has a thorough plan in place for its site transitions to mitigate potential disruptions to 9-1-1 service. Ensuring the continuity of emergency communications services throughout the migration to NG9-1-1 has been a top priority for the project team.

What measures are in place to safeguard the NG9-1-1 network?

With the introduction of NG-9-1-1, technology complexity will significantly change. Ensuring business continuity and technology resiliency is paramount. The NG-9-1-1 call handling system is designed with multiple layers of redundancy - spanning system, data centre, and remote site levels - to minimize the impact of technology failures and other service disruptions. E-Comm is placing significant emphasis on robust Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity, and technology resiliency measures to ensure uninterrupted emergency services.

Will there be more accidental dials to 9-1-1 because of NG9-1-1?

With the faster IP-based network, E-Comm anticipates an increase in the number of abandoned calls received largely because of accidental or pocket dials. Even 9-1-1 calls disconnected by the caller in milliseconds will register through NG9-1-1. To ensure every 9-1-1 call receives a call back and ensure call takers can concentrate on active emergencies, E-Comm will be implementing a new automated callback system.

How will the new automated callback system work?

The new automated callback system will automatically call back when an abandoned 9-1-1 call is detected, before reaching a call taker. The caller will hear a voice recording letting them know their phone dialed 9-1-1 and provide them with two options: press one to be connected to a call taker if their call is regarding an emergency, or press three to indicate an accidental 9-1-1 call, and no further action will be taken. The message will repeat three times prior to the call disconnecting. If there is no response to the first call back, a second automated call back will be made by the system. Currently, quick hang up calls may not receive a follow-up if it is not detected in the system.

Will the automated callback system be activated for all abandoned calls?

The new system will not be used to respond to open line abandoned calls, where the call reaches an call taker before disconnecting. For those abandoned call types, a call taker will continue to place two manual call backs as they do today, based on standard operating procedures.

When will the new automated callback system launch?

The system will launch during the first phase of the transition and is expected to be operational for 9-1-1 callers within the 25 regional districts E-Comm services by October 6, 2026.

What happens if the caller doesn't pick up the automated call, or doesn't select one of the options?

No further action will be taken, which is aligned with the current call back practice when a caller doesn't pick up or voicemail is reached. The new system will follow the same procedure for both cell phone and landline calls. For open line abandoned calls with no response, call takers will continue to follow current policies based on the relevant police of jurisdiction.

Is there a risk some true emergency calls could be missed if there is no response to the automated call back?

The automated system will ensure all quick hang ups prior to call taker pick-up receive an automated call back, unlike today. Currently, some very quick hang ups do not receive a call back, as their call information never comes through to E-Comm. While no system can eliminate risk entirely, automated call backs for quick hang ups will also allow call takers to focus on active emergencies. Similar automated callback systems for quick hang up calls are already in use in other jurisdictions across the country, including Peel Region and Toronto, with the technology operating successfully in Canadian communities.

Does the automated system recognize voices or background noise?

Voice and sound recognition are not expected to be initial features of the system; however, these functions will be sought for future iterations of the software.

What will people see on their phone displays when automated system calls, and how will they know the call is legitimate?

A call back from the automated system will display as a ten-digit number beginning with a 604-area code. If someone calls the number back, they will hear a message indicating they have contacted E-Comm and to call 9-1-1 if there is an emergency. We will be sharing public education materials about the new system and how it functions, so more people will be aware about receiving a call from E-Comm if they dial 9-1-1 by mistake.

Will the automated callback system have options for those who speak languages other than English?

The system's initial phase will incorporate English-language messaging only. E-Comm recognizes that some callers may experience language barriers when receiving an automated callback, which is why we are creating a public education campaign for the new system so that callers who get this recording, despite having a language barrier, can press 1. If someone contacts 9-1-1 and requires service in a language other than English, our call takers can access a 24-hour interpretation service for over [200 languages](#).

How will the new automated system work for those who are deaf/hard of hearing?

Accessibility services including Text with 9-1-1 and Teletype Writers (TTY) will continue to be available with the launch of Next Generation 9-1-1.

For Text with 9-1-1, when a 9-1-1 call is made from a registered user, the call taker receives an alert and will initiate text communication. In the event a 9-1-1 call from a registered user was quickly hung up before connecting to the call taker, the system would place up to two automatic calls back. Future capabilities may include other methods of contact other than a voice recording, including text messages.

Learn more about Next Generation 9-1-1 by visiting ecom911.ca/NG911.