The events of June 15 tested both E-Comm’s technology and our staff, but each performed exceptionally well under the pressure. Call data dramatically illustrates an enormous spike in 9-1-1 calls and an extraordinary increase in radio traffic in the hours following the game seven final.

Because of the size of E-Comm’s communication centre and our multi-skilled staff, on-duty managers were able to ramp-up resources and re-assign staff to where they were needed most. This ability helped to ensure calls continued to be answered in the centre’s usual fast and efficient manner.

“In the four hours right after the game, our staff managed 2,000 calls, the vast majority of which were for the Vancouver police, Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services and the BC Ambulance Service,” says David Guscott, president & CEO.
The centre was fully staffed that night with 65 call-takers, dispatchers and reports agents handling almost an entire day’s worth of calls in just those few hours. “I was in the centre that night and it was intense. But the pre-planning undertaken by our Operations team prior to the start of the playoffs, combined with our highly-skilled and professional staff, ensured both our partners and the public received excellent service under extremely challenging circumstances,” added Guscott.

Call volumes for Vancouver police were almost eight times higher than usual and Vancouver Fire & Rescue’s call volumes were almost 38 times higher than normal as members of the public called in to report acts of vandalism, looting, fires and injuries.

To support Vancouver Police Department officers in the downtown core, a dedicated dispatch channel was set up for the fan zone. “I was overwhelmed with the teamwork demonstrated that night by my colleagues,” reports Laura Doiron Dalstrom, E-Comm dispatcher, who worked that special dispatch channel during the mayhem. “Officer safety was our priority so my attention was focused on listening to and recording everything officers said over the air. I relied on my colleagues to analyze the information being received from 9-1-1 callers and notifying me when someone had critical information that I needed to broadcast. It truly was a team effort.”

Doiron Dalstrom communicated with officers over E-Comm’s Wide-Area Radio Network, a key aspect of E-Comm’s communication systems. The radio system also performed in an exemplary fashion, easily coping with the enormous spike in radio traffic experienced throughout the region.

“E-Comm was created following the 1994 riot to provide emergency responders with a radio system that could handle massive amounts of radio traffic and facilitate cross-communication between agencies. On June 15, radio transmissions were up 243% during the five hours after the game and it performed impeccably,” says Guscott.

“I want to thank each of you for the incredible service you provided. I am extremely proud to be a Vancouver firefighter and proud of each of you. Well done.”

Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services Chief John McKearney
9-1-1

• Total 9-1-1 call volume for June 15, 2011 was 4,000 – up more than 60% over an average day at that time of year (1,500 more calls)
• The biggest spike in 9-1-1 calls happened in the hours just after the game concluded – 2,000 calls in four hours
• 89% of the day’s total 9-1-1 call volume was answered in five seconds or less

Wide-Area Radio Network

• The E-Comm radio system, used throughout Metro Vancouver by 25 police and fire departments and the BC Ambulance Service, easily coped with the enormous amount of radio traffic on June 15
• Radio traffic was 50% higher than a typical May-June midweek day (243% increase in first five hours after game)
• Additional radios were provided to Vancouver police for game 7

Dispatch

• Vancouver police experienced an extraordinary increase in emergency calls: about eight times higher than normal (more than 850 calls between 1945 and 2345 hrs)
• Vancouver Fire-Rescue was also inundated: 38 times higher than normal call volume (more than 260 calls)
• E-Comm call-takers also fielded calls the following day to our non-emergency line from residents wanting to provide information about what they had witnessed and to help the police with identification

Senior Wireless Technician Greg Hunter is part of the team supporting the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio Network.
Richmond blaze highlights benefits of consolidated communications

Residents from across the Lower Mainland called in to 9-1-1 in May when a massive fire overtook two, six-storey buildings in Richmond.

Typical of any high-visibility event, there was an immediate influx of calls to E-Comm — more than 150 in 30 minutes — all of which were calmly handled by our call-takers and dispatchers. The fact that Richmond, Delta and Vancouver fire departments are all dispatched by E-Comm helped to support a fast and expert response by Richmond Fire-Rescue.

The first 9-1-1 call came in at 2243 hrs and 94 others followed in the next four minutes. Callers were reporting fires throughout the Lower Mainland, but it soon became apparent that the Richmond fire was so large that callers thought they were seeing flames in Delta, New Westminster and Vancouver. All reports were double-checked to ensure those fires were unfounded, which they were.

“There was a lot of collaboration and fast action between call-takers and dispatchers,” says Doug Watson, vice-president of Operations. “The whole event exemplifies how beneficial it is having cross-jurisdictional call-taking and dispatch operating out of the same facility.”

Our large staff size meant we were able to provide additional resources to Richmond and also allowed dispatchers to speak directly to their in-house partners in other jurisdictions about this massive incident.

The fire itself was huge and spread to a nearby barn and the roofs of six houses. To further complicate matters there was a four-thousand litre propane tank at risk, a gas station close by, three construction cranes melting and threatening to block a major thoroughfare and blown transformers (which caused power outages and alarm calls).
The District of North Vancouver has strengthened the communication capabilities of its firefighters following the transition of its fire service to the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio Network in May.

“We are now able to seamlessly communicate with the partner agencies we respond with daily,” says Deputy Fire Chief Victor Penman. “Not only is this an improvement in the area of responder safety, but we strongly believe that the service we provide to our citizens has now significantly improved.”

“We’re very pleased to welcome the District of North Vancouver Fire-Rescue Service, our tenth fire department, onto our radio system,” says David Guscott, president and CEO. “Shared radio communication is critical to both emergency responder and public safety. The E-Comm network, which is one of the largest of its kind in Canada, will offer better coverage, security features and an earthquake resistant infrastructure to District firefighters.”

There are more than 7,100 E-Comm wide-area radios in use throughout the Lower Mainland, generating approximately ten-million radio transmissions per month.
Pemberton Fire Rescue Service chief Russell Mack said the E-Comm 9-1-1 dispatch service that has now been operating for several weeks is making life much easier on his staff in a number of capacities.

Mack delivered his First Quarter Fire Services Report to Pemberton council at Tuesday’s (May 17) meeting and explained that the new system provides better background information on service calls than before — particularly to firefighters responding to calls.

“When the guys show up at the hall and get in the truck to go, they’ve now got some really detailed information,” said Mack. Firefighters receive a “rip and run” sheet faxed in from the dispatcher that includes all necessary information about calls coming in for service. “It’s improved the response dramatically,” said Mack. “You’re not writing stuff down and then calling back to dispatch” for clarity of information, he said. “So when you’re going there, you know exactly what you’re going to, what to look for.”

The E-Comm service has also made post-event details more readily available and organized for the department to complete its own call-logging procedure. “After the event is over, they give you a full printout of the whole event and all of the times going with it,” explained Mack.

Mack said the department is in the process of ordering a new rescue truck that will have the “rip and run” information available right inside. “You’ll have a screen and everything in the truck so the incident commander can get everything at the scene that you would get (at the fire hall),” he said.

Mack also noted that the department has purchased a small, inflatable boat for less than $5,000 to be used on water rescue calls. The boat should arrive at the fire hall within the next week or so. Mack’s report shows an increase in calls compared to the same period in 2010, going from 23 to 40, though it notes that a number of the additional calls were ambulance assists where the fire service was dispatched but not always required. The fire department is continuing to work with E-Comm to better clarify where a dispatch to assist ambulances is necessary.
In a move designed to strengthen partner relationships and help extend both our technology and dispatch services, three key veterans of the public safety community have joined E-Comm: Mike Webb, former manager, Telecom & Specialty Systems, Emergency Management B.C., Mike Dunbar, former RCMP superintendent in charge of Informatics and Dave Mitchell, well-known fire services specialist.

“There are many opportunities for E-Comm to pursue expansion of radio and other technology services,” says Mike Webb, vice-president of Technology. The need for enhanced interoperability and information-sharing among public safety agencies, supported by various regional, provincial and national initiatives, will enable E-Comm to demonstrate leadership by providing connectivity services and applications involving all types of media: voice, text, data, image and video.

David Guscott, president and CEO, says these three new leaders bring experience and expertise in the police and fire communities. “Their understanding of the perspective of police and fire needs and the tactical benefits that our radio and combined dispatch model brings, makes us a stronger organization better able to serve our partners,” says Guscott.

E-Comm announces the 2011-2012 Board of Directors

• Jocelyn Kelley, Board Chair
• Dr. Penny Ballem
• Helen Blackburn
• Mayor Ernie Daykin
• Rebecca Denlinger
• Councillor Charlie Fox
• Len Garis
• Mayor Pamela Goldsmith-Jones
• Councillor Barrie Lynch
• Ernie Malone
• Councillor Bill McNulty
• Clayton Pecknold
• Karl Preuss
• Bob Rolls
• Michael Sanderson
• Sheldon Stoilen
• Mayor Joe Trasolini

To review our many significant milestones in 2010 please visit ecomm911.ca to read our 2010 Annual Report.
**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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