Amateur radio operators gathered at Vancouver’s Queen Elizabeth Park in June to participate in the international emergency training exercise “Field Day.” The operators, members of Vancouver Emergency Communications, worked around the clock to set up field radio communications, get on the air, and contact thousands of other operators around the world. Field Day is the annual “shakedown run” for the amateur radio component of the City of Vancouver’s Emergency Operations Plan. The team, a new club and an E-Comm partner, placed third in Canada for making the most radio contacts.

“Field Day is a chance to fine-tune emergency communication skills,” says Paulette Schouten, president of VECTOR. “We use generators and battery power, and we set up antennas in the field. The idea is to quickly put together a self-sufficient, working station and begin making contacts as though it was a real emergency.”

Amateur Radio has been effective in establishing emergency communications nets during floods, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes and other major disasters. Field Day is the largest ham radio on-air event in North America.

Vancouver Hams place third in Canada

E-Comm welcomes Ken Shymanski

Ken Shymanski joins E-Comm as president and general manager following a career in the telecommunications industry that spans more than 33 years. Ken has held senior positions with TELUS/BCTEL at both the operational and executive level, beginning as a radio and microwave technician in 1968 and retiring as vice-president, Strategic Alliance Management and Integration in December 2000.

“Ken’s track record of success is built on a foundation of executive leadership, business expertise, and a love of technology and the community,” says E-Comm Board Chair Don Evans. “Ken’s skills absolutely qualify him for advancing E-Comm’s vision of providing exceptional emergency communications and for positioning the organization as a world leader in the development of emergency technology.” Evans adds, “The E-Comm board is delighted to have found a president who not only possesses an extensive telecommunications background, but also has the energy, drive and determination to get the job done.”

Ken’s background also includes a Master of Business Administration from Simon Fraser University, a Certificate of Business Administration from the University of Ottawa and a Diploma of Electronics Technology from the Manitoba Institute of Technology. Both quality, cost and service are what define successful companies and I look forward to being part of the team that will steer E-Comm through the 21st century,” Ken says.

New Human Resources Manager

E-Comm is pleased to announce the appointment of Tracey Lee Lorenson as Manager, Human Resources. Tracey obtained her Bachelor of Arts (International Relations) and Law degrees from the University of British Columbia. Since her admission to the Bar in 2001, Tracey has practised as a registered immigration consultant and a labour lawyer with an emphasis on immigration law. Tracey also has the designation of Certified Human Resource Practitioner by the Human Resource Management Association of British Columbia.
September 11, 2001
How Did We Respond?

The impact of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC, was felt in B.C., almost immediately. At E-Comm, 911 call-takers and police dispatchers braced themselves for potential emergency situations here at home and for the usual influx of "information calls" that follow major incidents, even if they are at a distance. Thankfully, those calls did not surface and the 911 lines were kept free, which is of utmost importance should there have been a threat to southwestern B.C.

As North American airports were shut down and aircraft were ordered out of the skies, the Vancouver International Airport's (YVR) Emergency Operations Centre was activated. Planes were guided safely to the ground as Emergency Social Services coordinated accommodation for more than 6,000 stranded travelers.

Vancouver's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated in part just before 8:00 a.m. as a precautionary measure. It's known as a "shadow activation," and involves senior representatives from Vancouver's police and fire departments, as well as the BC Ambulance Service and E-Comm. Together, they monitored the events of the day and collected and co-ordinated information from their respective agencies. If necessary, the EOC would have been elevated to a full-scale activation to coordinate communications in the event of an incident within the Lower Mainland.

In the days that followed the September 11 tragedy, authorities remained on high alert however. Six weeks later, the EOC was again activated for a full exercise called "Silver Streak." More than 100 EOC members played out emergency response scenarios surrounding a fictitious train derailment that led to a major hazardous materials incident. The exercise lasted six hours and was followed by a full de-brief.

Forensic video experts gather at E-Comm

Forensic video experts from across North America met in Vancouver in October for the 12th annual Law Enforcement/Emergency Services Video Association (LEVA) conference. Delegates were shown the latest advances in video-identification techniques.

As part of the conference, a pre-event workshop on Digital Forensic Video Analysis was held at E-Comm. Analysts from North American police agencies worked on their own homicide cases using advanced forensic image analysis systems supplied by AVID Technology of Massachusetts.

Top three images: Photos of the World Trade Center attacks taken by Allison Greenwood, daughter of E-Comm’s Director of Finance, Peter Greenwood. Allison and her sister Nicole live in New York City and thankfully, Peter’s daughters are both okay.

"Vancouver was seen and is currently still seen, as the leader of forensic video technology.”
— Grant Fredericks, a forensic video expert, led the workshop. “The experiences that we learned in Vancouver (from the 1994 Stanley Cup riots, the catalyst for E-Comm) are now being applied to police agencies throughout North America.”

Message from Don Evans, chair

There’s no question it’s been a busy year for E-Comm... one that’s been filled with many successes and challenges.

In the past year we have seen the 911 call centre surpass the old system in terms of speed of answer; the wide-area radio system has continued to be successfully deployed and respected by its users; the new records management system has been introduced and is receiving good initial reviews; and the new Altair® CAD went live at Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services in September. And the work has only just begun.

With the resolution of the labour dispute now comes the need to work together to build a strong and amicable corporate culture for the future. I would like to thank all E-Comm staff for their commitment to maintaining public safety during this difficult period.

"We will continue to work hard with our partner agencies and municipalities to ensure the systems of E-Comm are deployed so we can achieve the increased public safety for which they are designed." — Don Evans

Significant steps are being taken to meet these goals and we must keep at it until they are achieved.

With that in mind, I would like to welcome our new president and general manager, Ken Shymanski, to the E-Comm team. With Ken’s leadership, we will achieve our objectives and move the organization forward.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all 2000-2001 board members for their commitment and hard work this past year and to especially acknowledge those who have left the board. This includes Derek Dang of Richmond, Jon Kingsbury of Coquitlam, and Mervin Harrower of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, and past chair and independent director, Tung Chan.

I would also like to welcome our new directors, Mayor Scott Young of Port Coquitlam, George Duncan of the City of Richmond, Tony Heemskerk of the Ministry of the Solicitor General and David Korbin.

The tragedy that struck the United States September 11, 2001 hits us all hard...as we watched brave emergency responders go and risk their own lives to help others. The outpouring of emotion, dedication, and solidarity has been remarkable. September 11 tested the E-Comm network administrator Bryan Canuel keeps systems running.

Above left: New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani thanks E-Comm 9-1-1 staff for the hand-made card they sent to NY’s police dispatchers.

Above right: E-Comm network administrator Bryan Canuel for the hand-made card they sent to NY’s police dispatchers.

Number of 9-1-1 calls to E-Comm

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