

# Amateur Radio Helps with Fires

By Paulette Shouten  
President, VECTOR

On Friday, August 22nd, I was called by the PREOC (Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre) that had been set up in Kamloops, asking if I could mobilize 20 to 25 hams who would be willing to go to Kelowna at a moment's notice to help out. On Sunday the call came in and by 0600hrs Monday, the first of four hams were starting their shifts. By the time we had arrived, the fire had done the worst of its damage and the winds shifted taking the fire up the mountain away from the City. 246 homes were lost and 24,000 people were evacuated on that weekend. It was a stressful time for everyone involved in the Kelowna EOC and Reception Centres.



Paulette Shouten in EOC



Our group consisted of 12 hams from the Lower Mainland—seven from VECTOR, two from the Richmond Amateur Radio Club, two from Chilliwack/Abbotsford and one from the North Vancouver Amateur Radio Club.

While I was in Kelowna I met up with many people that I knew and worked with here in Vancouver, not just hams. It was amazing to see how so many people from different professions were willing to drop everything to help out in this emergency even though it was a long way from their own homes. Not to mention the support that the City of Kelowna residents, who were not affected by the fire, gave to those who were and to the many men and women fighting the fire. It was an experience I will not soon forget.

## AMBER Alert

AMBER Alert (America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response) is being introduced in the Lower Mainland. Named for nine-year old Amber Hagerman, who in 1996 was abducted while riding her bike in her Dallas-area neighbourhood and found murdered just a few days later, is a joint partnership between law enforcement, the media and the public. The AMBER Alert combats abduction by sending out immediate, up-to-date information that aids in the child's safe recovery.

An organizing committee comprised of the Vancouver, Port Moody, Delta, New Westminster, and Abbotsford police departments, along with the RCMP, E-Comm, Canada Customs, Child Find BC, the BC Children's Foundation, the media and several technology companies, are meeting regularly to establish protocols. The introduction of the AMBER Alert is a major undertaking that will impact all agencies including E-Comm. If the Alert is activated (there are strict criteria on when it can be activated) there will be an immediate increase in calls to 9-1-1. More information will follow as AMBER Alert protocols are established.



## E-Comm Staff Visit USNS Mercy

Several staff members from E-Comm were invited to visit the US Naval Ship Mercy during its trip to Vancouver in August. The Mercy's purpose is to provide acute medical and surgical care in support of US armed forces no matter where in the world. It also has a mandate to provide disaster relief and humanitarian aid.

E-Comm radios were taken on board to test transmission capability in case the ship was ever called to this region in support of humanitarian aid. Preliminary discussions on

how to handle transmission and reception issues caused by the ship's steel structure (steel blocks radio frequency energy) were held and a number of options were identified.

"The crew were extremely accommodating with respect to letting me carry a radio on board and try it where ever I wanted," says E-Comm Wireless Technology Director Peter Gauthier. "I believe we could work something out in very short order if the need arose to establish radio communications with the USNS Mercy," Gauthier adds.

## It's Easy Being Green

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Tree Saved	Wood Reduced	Water Reduced	Landfill Reduced	Net Greenhouse Emissions	Energy Reduced (000)
5	292.93 lbs.	430.72 gal.	45.7 lbs.	88.62 lbs.	710.06 btu.

## Number of 9-1-1 calls to E-Comm\*

\*since Summer issue of e-communiqué

June ..... 113, 805  
July ..... 117,671  
August ..... 117, 223

This newsletter is produced by E-Comm Corporate Communications. For more information on E-Comm or to comment on a story featured in this newsletter, contact Jody Robertson at:  
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## BC Ambulance Bids Adieu to Paper Dispatch

June 16, 2003 – BCAS moves to CAD system

On Monday June 16, 2003, the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) and E-Comm reached a milestone when BCAS transitioned from a pen and paper dispatch system to the new Altaris® CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) at its Vancouver centre. There are three BCAS dispatch centres in British Columbia and the Vancouver centre is responsible for the "604" area code—the GVRD, Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast, and Whistler area.

The first call to be processed under the new CAD came in at 05:25hours ("general sick" call in Secht) and was dispatched by paramedic-dispatcher Steve Williams at approximately 05:26 hours.

As the last major North American dispatch centre to transition to a CAD system, BCAS will enjoy significant benefits such as:

- Automatic transfer of 9-1-1 telephone number and location information on landline calls to the 9-1-1 incident form
- Pre-alerting of the dispatcher while a call taker is still on the line, allowing the dispatcher to alert the ambulance crew sooner
- Validation of the address

\* Agencies using the Altaris CAD system:

- BC Ambulance Service Department and the Sunshine Coast fire departments
- Fire dispatch: Vancouver Fire-Rescue Service; Port Moody Fire-Rescue; Whistler Fire
- Port Moody Police Department
- Vancouver Police Department

- Graphical display of the call location on a map
- Detailed location information which will alert the dispatcher to known problems such as hazardous materials or other dangers
- Display of common places on the map including major public venues and medical facilities
- Detailed location history which will alert the dispatcher to previous incidents at that location
- Visual representation of last known vehicle locations (Automatic Vehicle Location technology may be added to the vehicles later).

It is now possible to share call information between police, fire and ambulance (between those agencies\* using the shared CAD system) if a call-taker selects a "combined" call type. This incident will be created for each involved agency and each agency dispatcher will be able to decide when and if they need to add remarks or additional information to the call and if each agency needs to see the additional information or if only a specific agency needs to.

**E-Comm 9-1-1**  
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS FOR SOUTHWEST BRITISH COLUMBIA  
INCORPORATED  
Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

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**e-communiqué**  
 Connecting You with Emergency Communications  
 E-Comm Quarterly Newsletter  
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MESSAGE FROM  
**KEN SHYMANSKI**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

doing an exceptional job and have already received commendations from customers and colleagues alike.

The BC NurseLine, one part of the provincial government's BC Healthguide Program, is operated by E-Comm and has grown considerably since its April 2001 GO LIVE. The NurseLine has helped more than 280,000 callers to date by providing easy access to health information.

I am also pleased to announce two key leadership appointments. Tracey Lee Lorenson, LLB, has been named Vice-President & Corporate Counsel of E-Comm. Tracey has been with E-Comm since October of 2001 and has held the key positions of Director of Human Resources & Labour Relations and Strategic Development. Tracey's contribution to E-Comm has been extensive and I know her experience, business acumen and commitment to E-Comm and our partners will continue to be highly valued. I am also delighted that Deborah Cherry, previously of the BC Ambulance Service, has joined our organization as Director of Operations. I know that Deborah is going to make an important contribution and we all look forward to working with her. I invite you to read about Deborah's extensive background in public safety contained in this edition of E-Communiqué.

E-Comm is a unique organization that continues to make an important contribution to the safety of the communities where our shareholders, customers and employees live and work, and we will continue to deliver on that contribution.

The past 12 months represent another important year for E-Comm. The 2002-2003 Annual Report, to be tabled at the October 2003 Annual General Meeting, is a reflection of just how much has been accomplished and also paints a picture of what is on the horizon.

Some of the highlights during the last year include the transitions of the BC Ambulance Service to the new Altaris® Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and the transition of the Richmond RCMP's Operational Communications Centre to E-Comm.

We were also delighted to welcome both the City of Surrey and the City of White Rock as Class A Shareholders and are looking forward to ensuring both cities' fire services are smoothly transitioned onto the Wide-Area Radio system. We are also extremely pleased that the Corporation of Delta announced the purchase of Class A shares for its police and fire departments. We know that the addition of all of these agencies will further enhance public safety in southwest B.C. Transition meetings are now underway with Delta, Surrey and White Rock and although specific transition dates have not yet been selected, the purchase of user equipment will be done in the near future.

We continue to recruit new 9-1-1 call-taker trainees and to promote and train current call-takers into radio operator positions in an effort to address the ongoing shortage of qualified radio operators. I am pleased to report that our new radio dispatch trainees are

**2003 Calls to 9-1-1 Compared to 2002**

	2002	2003	
June	103,850	113,805	(increase of 9,955)
July	108,932	117,671	(increase of 8,739)

## BCAS Transitions to Altaris® CAD

### Special Thanks:

#### BCAS

Al Boulier  
Paul Byford  
Deborah Cherry (now of E-Comm)  
Don Elzinga  
Martin Ford  
Fred Gele  
Derek McClure  
Geoff Moffat  
Paul Morgan  
Keith Neithercut  
Jim Sutherland  
BCAS IT team

#### E-Comm

Glen Miller  
Kathy Wunder  
Cassandra Boone  
Nick Bryant  
Sean Collier  
David Hamilton  
Milena Ilieva  
Myron Sawiuk  
Mel Smith  
Sam Wolf  
Andrew Worthington and the entire E-Comm IT team



From l-r, Don Elzinga, Geoff Moffat, Graham Louis



Don Evans, E-Comm Board Chair (far left) congratulates E-Comm and BCAS staff on GO LIVE



David Schillington (left) and Dave Hodgins on June 16 GO LIVE (5:22am!)

## New Director of Operations Appointed

E-Comm is pleased to announce the appointment of Deborah Cherry as Director of Operations.

Deborah has a long association with public safety and emergency services and will be a valuable addition to the E-Comm team. She is the former Superintendent of the BC Ambulance Services' Vancouver Dispatch centre (since 1998) where she managed all aspects of Dispatch Operations. She also served as the Director of the CAD project for BCAS and is a member of several public safety-working committees.

Deborah also has a substantial amount of "front line" experience, having worked as Charge



Deborah Cherry

Dispatcher for BCAS for 12 years and as a 9-1-1 operator, radio dispatcher, radio trainer and Manager of Complaints and Enquiries while at the Vancouver Police Department from 1974-1980. Deborah was also a committee member during the original implementation of 9-1-1.

Deborah has earned a reputation as an outstanding leader, communicator, decision maker and project manager. Her passion for emergency services and her desire to help provide exemplary customer service will greatly benefit our organization and we are very excited to have her join us.

Welcome, Deborah!

## Surrey and White Rock Fire Departments to Join E-Comm Radio System

In June, the Cities of Surrey and White Rock voted in favour of purchasing Class A shares for both their police and fire agencies, paving the way for the Surrey and White Rock fire departments to join the E-Comm radio system. Once both agencies are transitioned onto the radio system, firefighters will be able to communicate directly with both the Surrey and White Rock RCMP detachments, which have been using the E-Comm radio system for some time.

The Corporation of Delta also voted in favour (May 2003) of transitioning both its police and fire departments to the E-Comm radio system, further adding to the power of shared communications system within the GVRD.

It is the goal to have all these transitions complete by the end of 2003 or early 2004.

### Share Capital September 2003

