The cities of Surrey and White Rock have linked their Fire Department emergency communications services to the E-Comm radio system, creating the largest shared emergency communications coverage area in British Columbia. The communications circuits were completed with the March 16, 2004, transition of the Surrey and White Rock Fire Departments to the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio System, already in use by the Surrey and White Rock RCMP and the BC Ambulance Service. Now all three major emergency service agencies in Surrey & White Rock Fire (police, fire, ambulance) will be able to communicate directly with each other and with their counterparts in surrounding jurisdictions. The only other municipalities with this communications capability are Delta, Richmond, Port Moody and Vancouver.

In addition to the ability to directly communicate with other emergency responders both in and outside of Surrey and White Rock, the E-Comm radio system offers enhanced personnel safety capabilities (emergency buttons), increased reliability and clarity, and higher peak traffic capacity.

Surrey Fire Chief Len Garis says, “on a day-to-day basis, the opportunities for the previous system. The impact on public safety and response personnel safety is going to be very significant.”

More than 5,400 wide-area radios are now active in southwest British Columbia. Currently, the network processes approximately 7.8 million radio transmissions each month.

The uniqueness of the Surrey coverage area made for a technically complex transition, and so the experts found in the Surrey and White Rock Fire departments greatly assisted E-Comm in the interfacing of our two systems.

With the addition of the Delta (December 2003), Surrey and White Rock Fire Department, there are now six fire departments on the E-Comm radio system including Vancouver Fire & Rescue, Port Moody Fire Department and Richmond Fire-Rescue.

Brian McMurdo adds, “White Rock is pleased with the coverage footprint of the radio system, which provides a dramatic improvement over the previous system. The impact on public safety and response personnel safety is going to be very significant.”

The Richmond and Delta fire departments have transferred dispatch responsibilities to E-Comm bringing the total number of fire departments dispatched by the regional communications centre to ten.

The Richmond and Delta Fire and E-Comm operational and technical staff. The first 9-1-1 call was fielded by E-Comm at 1056hrs—just seconds after the official开局. It was a call for a person who had fallen. Richmond Fire Chief Jim Hancock says he is “confident dispatching will be carried out efficiently and effectively by E-Comm.”

The first 9-1-1 call for Delta Fire was a combined event. “The transition team that moved us into E-Comm over the last few months was fantastic—very professional and responsive to our needs,” says Delta Fire Chief Gord Fireborn. “When a dispatch service ‘shifts’ from one organization to another it’s more than just a relocation and implementation of technology. The entire process takes months of planning and training—there is a significant knowledge transfer required including policies and procedures regarding individual agencies’ response methods. Dave Mitchell, project manager for E-Comm, adds, “the work that has been completed has enhanced the template for current and future transitions and this will only strengthen the relationship between fire services and E-Comm.”

Story continued inside...
Continued from front cover.

Our Thanks To:

Delta
Chief Gord Freeborn
Rick Lehbauer, Deputy Chief
Robin Cullen, Deputy Chief
Gordon Williams, Training Officer

Richmond
Chief Jim Hancock
Geoff Lake, Deputy Chief
Ron Beamant, Deputy Chief
Dave Scorgie, Deputy Chief [retired]

And the Hard-Working E-Comm Teams:


From the “Awesome Performance” Department

Congratulations to E-Comm dispatcher Davey Hamilton, who received a Deputy Chief Constable’s Commendation from the Vancouver Police for her outstanding effort in the performance of her duties as the Chief Dispatcher on the night of the “Lost Six” shooting incident (multiple shooting in Gastown in August 2003).

And thanks to E-Comm dispatcher Karen Parnell (and her many colleagues) who takes “going the extra mile” to a whole new level.

During a night shift at the beginning of April, 2004, Karen Parnell was asked by VPD to assist a member by accompanying him to the apartment of a hearing impaired BNE victim and taking his statement. Karen’s sign language abilities greatly aided VPD, and also allowed her to advise the building manager that the victim wanted his locks changed. But her kindness did not stop there!

“I was proud to have served both our VPD member and the victim,” explained Karen. “But when I was in the victim’s suite I realized the only thing stolen was his 13” colour TV with closed captioning. That broke my heart.”

Two and a half weeks went by, and Karen could not stop thinking about the victim sitting alone in his apartment after losing the only form of entertainment available to him. She mentioned it to a few of her E-Comm colleagues, who made a group decision to ask staff to donate some money towards purchasing a new television for the victim.

“In less than 24 hours we had raised enough money, allowing me to purchase and deliver the TV to the victim the next day,” continued Karen. “Words cannot express the love and appreciation I got from the victim. It took all of my composure to keep it together until I got back to my car. I am very proud to be a part of this great group of employees.”

Combined Events Technology

The implementation of “combined events” technology atAltairi CAD became a reality on April 14th. “Combined Events” means that when a BCAS Call Taker creates a call that warrants a first response, the information will be sent to a Fire Dispatcher automatically and instantly. This technology is presently available to all fire departments that are using the Altairi CAD system, which includes Vancouver, Port Moody, Whistler, Richmond, Delta, and five fire departments on the Sunshine Coast.

Our Thoughts To:

Shawn Smith, Firefighter
Brandy Dutka-Menges, Delta IT
Mike Theal, Training Officer
Colin Redwood, Delta IT

Dave Anderson, Chief Training Officer
Mike Dwiggins, Business Systems Analyst
Daryle Warkentin, Firefighter
Tim Wilkinson (Richmond Firefighters’ Union)