Mock Disaster Tests Response

Emergency planners at the Vancouver International Airport Authority (VYR) staged a mock disaster September in test response practices. 26 agencies participated including the Airport Authority. Richmond RCMP, Richmond Fire-Rescue Services, BC Ambulance Service, the Canadian Coast Guard, Vancouver Police, Vancouver Fire-Rescue Services and E-Comm. High school students from around the Lower Mainland participated including the Airport Authority’s Vancity Harbour Authority (YVR). E-Comm.

High school students acted as crash victims during mock exercise. Fire-Rescue Services, BC Ambulance Service, the Canadian Coast Guard, Vancouver Police, Vancouver Fire-Rescue Services and E-Comm. High school students from around the Lower Mainland helped out by playing disaster victims, each with a different level of injury. The scenario involved an inbound flight from Toronto requesting an emergency landing. The aircraft was carrying 230 passengers and 10 crew and crashed short of the airport near Iona Beach. When response agencies arrived at the scene, “survivors” managed to get to flotation platforms deployed from the air by a helicopter. The air deployment is part of the airport contingency plan for a “Crash on Tidal” incident, as the hovercraft is not available at the time of a crash.

V.Y.R. Exercise Director Marlene S. Lund said the event planning was complicated as the exercise needed to be designed to meet the dozens of objectives set by key agencies. “We really wanted this exercise to be as practical as possible, and to be of maximum benefit to all participants, while keeping safety of the volunteers our number one priority.”

Lund says the agencies involved took the event very seriously and called it a great success because everyone learned things that will improve future response. “Some response protocol problems and communication deficiencies were identified in pre-event planning sessions so we were already ahead before the exercise took place,” she added.

Police Pursuit Ends in Arrest

The benefits of a shared emergency radio system were evident on November 3, 2002 during a police pursuit that began in Vancouver and worked its way through Burnaby, New Westminster and Delta.

Vancouver Police officers were pursuing a stolen vehicle containing several suspects wanted in connection with a hold-up the day before. The pursuit travelled through the city, then out of the province, until the suspects took off on a jet ski. The suspects were followed through Burnaby, New Westminster and into Delta, where they were successfully apprehended.

Since Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster are all on the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio network, they were able to communicate directly with each other on a common channel as the surveillance moved through each municipality. This allowed officers in the to remain in constant contact, increasing both officer and public safety.

Interoperability Key to Information-Sharing

The International Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) recently released its Homeland Security White Paper, which details the findings of its Homeland Security Task Force formed following September 11. The purpose of the White Paper is to begin a process that leads to dramatically improving security by improving public safety communications.

An interoperable radio system has been identified as a key component of improving public safety communications.

... "It takes energy and deliberate planning for different agencies to cross over their geographic, jurisdictional and organizational boundaries and work together toward creating an interoperable communication system. Clearly the less time responders need to spend solving the how do I talk to the person next to me problem during a major event, the more they can focus on the dangerous, time critical tasks at hand..." APCO International Task Security White Paper. For more information visit www.apco911.org.

E-Comm has completed the transition of the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to the new APCO Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. VPD is the police agency in B.C. to begin using the new CAD, which will eventually be used by police and fire agencies throughout the Lower Mainland and the BC Ambulance Service.

The move to the new CAD began in September 2001 when Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services was successfully transitioned to the new system, followed by the Port Moody Fire Department in February 2002 and then the Port Moody Police in August.

The CAD is designed to provide quick access to information that is critical to safe and effective emergency response. It allows for increased data sharing and common language and provides more access to emergency response resources both in and outside of an agency’s jurisdiction. In many areas, the CAD system can be configured to fit any agency’s needs without negatively impacting other agencies using the same CAD platform.

“The new CAD will not only allow to share that information with other agencies in a matter of seconds,” says Glen Miller, E-Comm’s manager of Information Technology.

One of the key reasons the new CAD is expected to make a dramatic impact is because of an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the BC Ambulance Service and police and fire services in southwest B.C. The MOU provides those agencies with the framework needed for sharing information. For example, if the police respond to an address where the fire department had previously found hazardous goods, the police dispatcher would have that information in front of them immediately.

"Imagine firefighters and paramedics arriving on scene with no historical information on an address,” says M. Elaine Smith, E-Comm’s CAD Administrator. “The house could be home known to police and that information could have a direct impact on responder safety.”

Access to information will remain limited to only those authorized and will be protected under the auspices of the Freedom of Information and Protection of

Number of 9-1-1 calls to E-Comm:
September . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 101, 423
October . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 105, 905
November . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 99, 853

Visit our website: www.ecomm.bc.ca

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Message from Ken Shymanski
Mock Disaster
9-1-1 Stats
Richmond RCMP Transition
Cross-boundary Police Pursuit

$2000 000 9-1-1, 2001-2002

Connecting You with Emergency Communications
Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

E-Comm's Quarterly Newsletter

E-Comm has completed the transition of the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to the new APCO Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. VPD is the police agency in B.C. to begin using the new CAD, which will eventually be used by police and fire agencies throughout the Lower Mainland and the BC Ambulance Service.

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E-Comm has driven to enhance performance this past year by working on a number of key operational objectives. It is our intention to continue this forward momentum by keeping our three core business functions: 9-1-1, the Emergency Communications Centre and public safety, and the BC Ambulance Service. The transition to the new CAD system marks the beginning of a new era in emergency response. As the ability to share information between agencies will increase significantly, as will the speed of information reaching emergency responders in the field. The department and our employees recognize there is pride in delivering high-quality service.

In the New Year, additional capabilities will be added to the new CAD including an automatic vehicle locator and unit recommendations that include vehicle routing. This will provide the dispatcher with a breakdown of which units are closest to an event in terms of time and distance, and the ability to take into account daily traffic patterns and street closures.

Transitioning any agency onto the CAD system involves a large amount of work including the review of all operational procedures to determine how the new system will work for each agency. There are also vast amounts of data that must be collected, data entered and then tested. The system, for example, has been equipped with all of the user agencies’ local information, including street maps, police records, building locations, floor plans, and hazardous materials information. The CAD system also interfaces with PRIME E-BC, the BC Ambulance Service, the BC Police Service, and Fire districts on the Sunshine Coast and in Whistler.

The database is so comprehensive, explains Smith, “a dispatcher will be able to track down exactly what resources a police officer might need with just a few key strokes. For example, a police officer could say ‘find me a French-speaking hostage negotiator, four police dogs, two fire engines with defibrillators and seven firefighters trained in hazardous materials . . . and within seconds the dispatcher could have this information even if the resources are located in another municipality.”

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