Amateur (ham) radio operators across North America competed in the annual Field Day contest June 28th and 29th in Queen Elizabeth Park, and the City of Vancouver. Amateur Radio group VECTOR (based at E-Comm), took first place in Canada.

In the annual contest, participants set up and operate field radio stations and contact as many other ham radio operators in Canada and the US as they can during the 24-hour contest period. Contact can be made using voice and packet radio, Morse Code, satellites, amateur television and other digital technologies. Points are given for each contract and for using alternate power sources such as solar, wind and methane.

The event is designed to test communications skills used in emergency situations. In a real disaster, members of VECTOR would work out of the E-Comm building and provide back-up communications for emergency responders. There are also a vital link to the Red Cross for reunifying families.

In honour of the event Mayor Larry Campbell declared June 22-29, 2003 Amateur Radio Week. Congratulations to the 30 VECTOR members who participated in the Field Day contest.

Recent E-Comm Statistics

Some interesting statistics from E-Comm’s Wireless Department who recorded, just in the month of October, that the total air time of all calls on the radio system equaled more than 312 days.

The radio system also experienced more than seven million push-to-talks during that same time period. Over the last six months the system has used a total of 1,700 days of airtime.

E-Comm ensuring that all 9-1-1 calls to E-Comm until Monday evening. Dan Cunningham, E-Comm Board Director comments that the team and work cooperation experienced were apparent that in order to repair the damaged cables, a service disruption would likely escalate to BC Ambulance Services, whose offices are located on West Broadway.

E-Comm’s Information Technology, Wireless, and Operations departments, and TELUS, immediately began developing a contingency plan.

By Friday evening a contingency plan had been established that would see BCAS call-takers and radio dispatchers relocated to E-Comm ensuring that all 9-1-1 calls were safely down-stranded to BCAS, and dispatch capability would continue. This was accomplished by reconfiguring four consoles on the E-Comm operations floor for BCAS and providing a fifth console to guarantee the ability to provide “breakout” capability if required by VPD.

At this time, calls normally handled by 9-1-1 centres in Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Squamish would also be re-routed to our own 9-1-1 call takers who would then transfer to BCAS ensuring ANI/ALI (automatic number identification/automatic location identification) was maintained and coverage to areas not normally handled by E-Comm remained accessible.

By late Saturday afternoon, a decision was made to implement a contingency plan and move BCAS into the E-Comm building. BCAS remained at the E-Comm building. BCAS into the E-Comm until Monday evening.

The weekend saw very long hours for many IT, Wireless, Operations and BCAS staff as they worked and cooperation experienced were apparent that in order to repair the damaged cables, a service disruption would likely escalate to BCAS and BCAS into the E-Comm building. BCAS remained at the E-Comm building. BCAS into the E-Comm until Monday evening.

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Message from David Korbin
Board Chair

As the newly appointed Chair of the E-Comms Board of Directors, I'd like to take this opportunity to say what a privilege it is to be part of E-Comm and the emergency services community we serve.

Since its inception, E-Comm has delivered on a number of important mandates including the development and implementation of a Wide-Area Radio System used throughout Greater Vancouver Regional District, the establishment of an integrated dispatch centre serving both police and fire agencies; and the continued operation of a regional 9-1-1 centre which responds to more than 1.2 million calls for help each year.

As Chair came to an end at the October Annual General Meeting, Don has been involved with the Board for five years, having served as both an independent director and chair. I am delighted that Don will remain on as an independent director to help with the transition of the Chair’s responsibility. There is no doubt his contribution, commitment and drive have been instrumental in successes to date.

To all of our employees, customers, and shareholders, I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season. I look forward to working with you over the next year.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our new and returning Board members:

Mayor Don Bell (Mayor of North Vancouver District)
West Vancouver, North Vancouver City/District
Gary Briggs
RCMP
Don Cunningham
Emergency Health Services
BC Ambulance Service
Murray Day
Vancouver Police Board
Rick Dumala
Fire Commissioner, Provincial Government
Don Evans
Independent
Len Garis
Fire Chief, Surrey
Councillor Jon Harris
Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows
Tony Heemskerk
Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Mayor Lois Jackson
Delfa
Mayor Don Kingsbury
(Mayor of City of Coquitlam)
Councillor Kim Craft
Port Moody
Councillor New Westminster
Councillor Richard
Patti Marfleet
City of Vancouver

with the support and assistance of our employees, shareholders and customers I am confident we will continue to make a positive contribution to emergency communications.

E-Comm’s Board of Directors has consistently provided valued insights into the organizations and municipalities they represent, which has greatly aided in the development of the Corporation. The high quality of our Board members is a reflection of the support we have from our shareholders and I am certain this Board will carry on the work of its predecessors.

On that note, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and best wishes to outgoing Board members, John Lynn, Ross Montgomery, and North Vancouver City Mayor Barbara Sharp. Their dedication and service has been commendable. Special mention must be given to Don Evans, whose term as Chair came to an end at the October Annual General Meeting. Don has been involved with the Board for five years, having served as both an independent director and chair. I am delighted that Don will remain on as an independent director to help with the transition of the Chair’s responsibility. There is no doubt his commitment, contribution and drive have been instrumental in successes to date.

To all of our employees, customers, and shareholders, I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season. I look forward to working with you over the next year.

Streamlined E-Comm Dispatch Centre

After a year of intense planning and designing, E-Comms 9-1-1/Dispatch Operations Centre was reconfigured to streamline and enhance public safety dispatch operations.

55 ergonomically correct workstations and consoles were manufactured and installed to withstand 24/7 operations and to maintain the inherent flexibility to reconfigure from one function to another to suit shifting needs.

Each workstation is also equipped with an enclosure for storing CPU’s, power supplies, cabling connections and other necessary equipment.

The most progressive feature of the workstations is the ability to raise and lower the entire component allowing the user to work sitting down or standing up.

But the most challenging aspect of this installation was maintaining service levels, ensuring the 9-1-1/Dispatch Operators were able to provide uninterrupted emergency service to the residents of southwest BC. Michael Millward, Building Services Manager at E-Comm explains, “This wasn’t just a construction, cabling, hardware and software relocation project; we had a live dispatch floor we had to work around. But the cooperation, teamwork and professionalism of everyone involved made a tough job manageable.”

Correction: Director of Operations, Deborah Cherry

The Autumn edition of E-Communique incorrectly reported Deborah’s length of service with the BCAS. Deborah was frontline dispatch for 19 years (seven of those as a Charge Dispatcher) and five years as the Dispatch Superintendent, for a total of 24 years service.

Recent Visitors Have Included...

Chair, Dick Ebersol, NBC Sports and Olympics
TELLUS International
Seoul, Korea
Belgian Police
Versadex User Conference delegates
BlockWatch Captains from Hastings Community Policing Centre
Richmond Crime Watch volunteers

On Thursday, October 23rd, 2003, the Vancouver Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) held a mock exercise involving a gasoline tank fire followed by an interface fire.

The purpose of mock exercises is to ensure the EOC remains in a ready state of response, that all systems in the EOC are functioning properly, and to test response measures of a number of agencies. These exercises occur approximately four times a year.

Another Successful Exercise for the EOC