

# e-COMMUNIQUE

E-Comm Newsletter Winter 2012, No. 34

**E-Comm 9-1-1**  
Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

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**ecom911.ca**  
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Police dispatcher Tammy Baines was part of the team that worked during the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

## E-Comm receives national award for Olympic performance

The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) awarded E-Comm its *Public Safety Excellence in Teamwork* award in November for a gold-medal performance during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games—the busiest two weeks in our emergency communications centre’s history.

The award recognizes the 9-1-1 call-takers, dispatchers, and critical support staff who worked throughout the Games and in particular, two of the most challenging shifts: the night of the Opening Ceremonies and Day One. On both occasions, call-takers and dispatchers coped with huge crowds and multiple violent protests.

“9-1-1 staff may work behind-the-scenes, but they are an integral part of public and responder safety,” says E-Comm President & CEO David Guscott, who saw the events unfold first-hand. Guscott was the VANOC executive vice-president in charge of the Opening

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*E-Comm staff representatives received the Public-Safety Excellence in Teamwork award at the APCO conference in Ottawa in November. L-R: Melissa Johnson, Tammy Baines and Heidi Fritsch.*

Ceremonies at the time. "It was a frightening situation for many, including many innocent bystanders in attendance, and the skill and stamina of E-Comm staff certainly supported the successful efforts to end the violence quickly and peacefully."

**"9-1-1 staff may work behind-the-scenes, but they are an integral part of public and responder safety."**

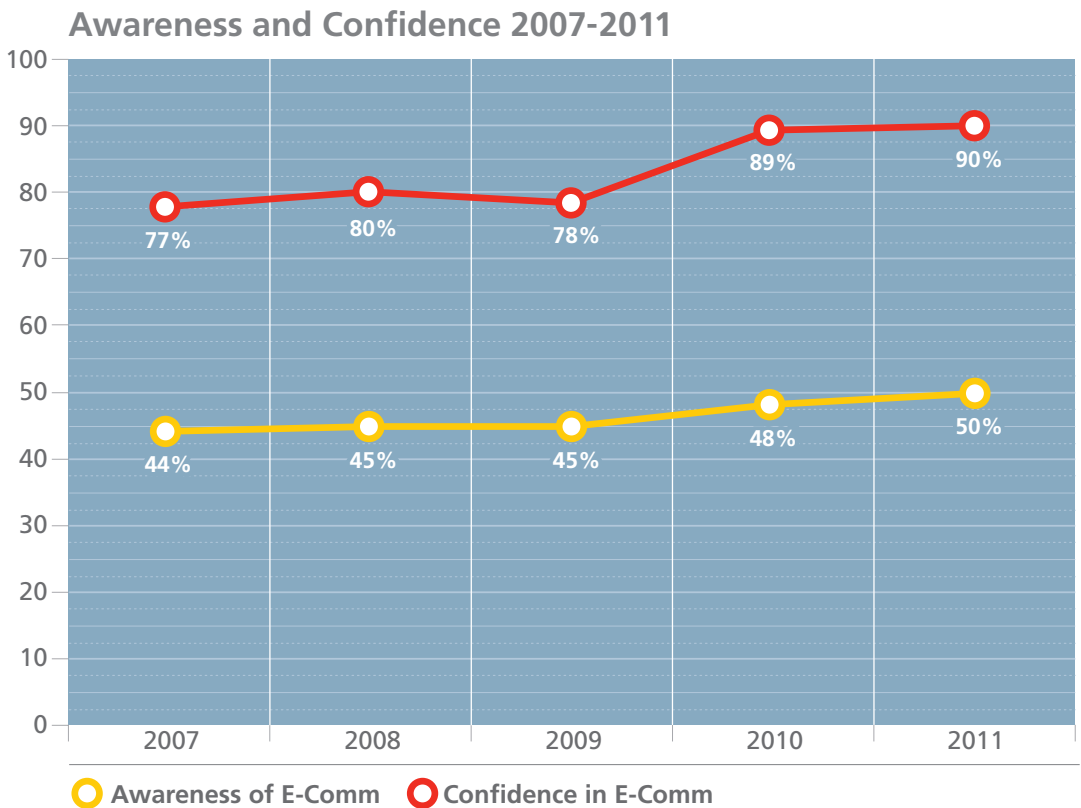
***E-Comm President & CEO  
David Guscott***

E-Comm typically receives thousands of 9-1-1 calls every day. But in February 2010, call volumes increased by 11% (79,000 calls) over the previous year. Calls for police in Vancouver and Richmond, two Olympic host cities, increased by 28%. Radio traffic increased by 40% on opening day.

"The 2010 Winter Games presented one of the biggest challenges and also proudest moments for me, my team, E-Comm, the host cities and the entire country," says E-Comm police dispatcher Tammy Baines, who accepted the award on behalf of E-Comm staff.

E-Comm spent years planning for the Olympics, including providing in-house training for its Operations staff and providing 1,700 additional radios to the thousands of police officers from across Canada deployed for the safety and security of the Games.

# Public confidence in 9-1-1 at all-time high



Public awareness and confidence in E-Comm are both at all-time highs, according to the results of a 2011 Ipsos-Reid public opinion survey. In response to the question, “Prior to this survey had you heard of E-Comm 9-1-1?” 50% of respondents answered yes—up 6% since we began public education outreach in 2007. This is our highest rating.

The November survey polled 527 residents of the Lower Mainland, mainly between the ages of 35 and 54. Of those, 90% answered that they were confident in 9-1-1 services provided by E-Comm based on what they had seen, read or heard.

“A key strategy identified through our recent strategic planning process was the need to continue to increase public awareness and understanding of E-Comm’s role in public safety and to ensure the public remains confident in 9-1-1 service,” says David Guscott, E-Comm’s president & CEO. “These results are very promising and show that we’re moving positively in that direction. They also reflect the dedication of Operations staff in providing quality call-answer service and emergency services in providing effective response.”

# 9-1-1 calls spike after Richmond plane crash



Photo credit: Ric Ernst, PNG.

*Emergency vehicles surround a plane that crashed in Richmond in October.*

When Flight 204 crashed down just shy of the runway at Vancouver International Airport in October, horrified bystanders on adjacent streets helped passengers until emergency crews arrived moments later. The highly visible event generated 194 calls to 9-1-1 in under 20 minutes, and a co-ordinated and effective response led by Richmond Fire-Rescue followed.

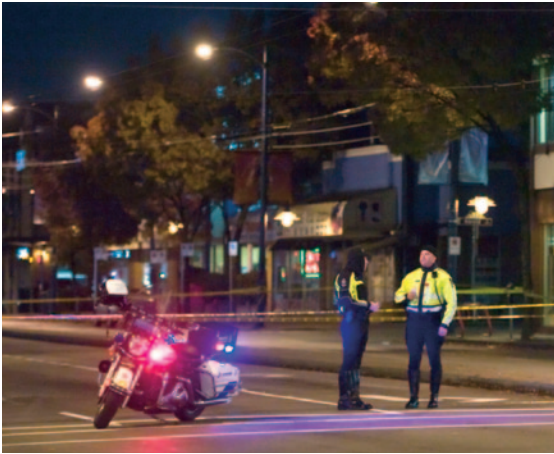
“Our fire and police dispatch teams stayed in control throughout the ordeal as they supported our partner, Richmond Fire-Rescue,” says Kim Singh, operations manager. “Crews arrived on scene quickly, which I’m sure made a grave scenario a lot more hopeful for those who were helping the passengers onboard.”

Because the plane crashed near a fire hall, firefighters were aware of the crash even before the first 9-1-1 call about the event was received by E-Comm. Already en route to the scene, Richmond Fire brought E-Comm fire dispatch up-to-speed on what was happening on the ground. Combined efforts between E-Comm, fire, police and ambulance partners in Richmond and Vancouver, and the good Samaritans who stepped in, all contributed to the seven passengers onboard surviving the wreckage.

“I would like to pass along my commendations to all E-Comm staff for their excellent work throughout this difficult incident,” says Richmond RCMP Sgt. Cam Kowalski.

# 19-hour 9-1-1 call leads to peaceful conclusion

Photo credit: Ward Perrin, PNG.



**“Her professionalism, skill and calm under pressure is a testament to the call-takers who do a difficult job.”**

***Cinda Michael, crisis negotiator coordinator for the Vancouver Police Department’s Emergency Response Section***

An E-Comm call-taker can never predict what kind of challenge will be on the other end of the line when the phone rings, but E-Comm’s comprehensive training prepares call-takers to handle almost anything.

*Vancouver Police closed Kingsway Avenue to traffic at Joyce Street in November due to a police incident in a nearby apartment building.*

And in October, one of our call-takers rose to the occasion and was able to support our partner, Vancouver police, as they negotiated with a heavily armed, distraught male locked in an apartment building. The E-Comm call-taker took the 9-1-1 call shortly before midnight on October 31 and calmly built a rapport with the man on the line, engaging in a six-hour conversation ultimately leading to his surrender to police shortly before 7 p.m. the next day.

“Although calls of this nature aren’t uncommon, calls of this length are rare for both our staff and for police in general,” says E-Comm Team Manager David Monteith. “Our call-taker’s willingness to stay on the line with him as long as she did was exceptional. Her efforts were crucial to the eventual positive outcome of the incident.”

When required, Vancouver police will engage a police negotiation team to help oversee these types of calls, which was the case for this particular event. When the negotiation team arrived at E-Comm, they were able to help coach the call-taker through the portion of the call she managed. Then when they deemed it appropriate, the negotiator made the decision to relieve the call-taker of her duties and take over the call.

“The call-taker’s calm, reassuring and empathetic manner, her openness to being coached by negotiators and ability to verbalize strategies bought us some time and allowed us to keep building on the rapport that she had established with the subject for many hours,” says Cinda Michael, crisis negotiator coordinator for the Vancouver Police Department’s Emergency Response Section. “She did an amazing job. Her professionalism, skill and calm under pressure is a testament to the call-takers who do a difficult job.”



# Technology leaders gather at Ottawa conference



*E-Comm's Vice-President of Technology Services, Mike Webb, presented on the Next Generation Radio Project at the CITIG conference.*



**Lance\_Valcour** Lance Valcour

Rob Darts from @EComm911\_info did a great job presenting on Blue Force Tracking at @CITIG\_Canada's #CITIG5

6 Dec

*E-Comm presenters received some shout-outs on Twitter during the Canadian Interoperability Technology Interest Group conference.*

E-Comm's interoperable radio system—connecting police, fire and ambulance agencies—and our upcoming move to a Next Generation Radio system were touted as models for other jurisdictions at a recent national conference.

The fifth Canadian Public Safety Interoperability Workshop in Ottawa in December, organized by the Canadian Interoperability Technology Interest Group (CITIG), brought together representatives from public safety, industry, academia, and government from across Canada to work together on the future of public safety interoperability.

E-Comm President and CEO David Guscott, Vice-President of Technology Services Mike Webb and Rob Darts, acting manager, service delivery – fire technology and GIS presented at the conference.

Guscott notes that by attending the conference, they were able to hear about the latest developments in interoperability of radio systems and what other parts of the province and country are doing.

"CITIG is an organization that's all about promoting interoperability of radio systems between police, fire and ambulance; its core values and the reason that we exist are completely aligned," Guscott says.

Webb has been involved with CITIG since its inception through his previous role with Emergency Management BC. CITIG formed in 2007 when the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC), and Emergency Medical Services Chiefs of Canada (EMSCC) joined forces with the Canadian Police Research Centre to create the interest group tasked with advancing interoperability of emergency services in Canada.

"Many of the projects and priorities that we're working on here at E-Comm are synergistic with the work happening at a national level through CITIG," Webb says.

# New mascot to raise 9-1-1 awareness



*E-Comm's new mascot, ALI, made his public debut at Vancouver's Chinese New Year parade.*

The newest member of E-Comm's team will be getting out into communities this year to educate the public, especially children, about calling 9-1-1.

"ALI" — named after the database that automatically identifies 9-1-1 callers' locations to call-takers (Automatic Location Indicator)—is a moose character featured in E-Comm's children's materials that teach about calling 9-1-1.

E-Comm will promote ALI's community

appearances through our website and Twitter account to let followers know when and where ALI will be appearing in the community to distribute public education materials. His public debut was at Vancouver's Chinese New Year parade, alongside the Vancouver Police Pipe Band, the Collingwood and Chinese community policing centres, and mascots Cst. Chip and Luke.

"We're very excited to get our new ambassador out into the community to spread our 9-1-1 education messages," says Jody Robertson, E-Comm's director of corporate communications. "We think that this especially is an effective way for our messages to reach children to teach them about calling 9-1-1."

To make a request for the ALI mascot to come to an event in your community, contact [corpcomm@ecomm911.ca](mailto:corpcomm@ecomm911.ca).

# E-Comm in the community

## Movember



E-Comm's 13-member Studly 'Staches team raised more than \$2,000 for the Movember awareness campaign raising money for men's health.

## Holiday food drive

E-Comm staff raised \$625 and donated seven boxes filled with food for the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society (GVFBS) in December. The GVFBS collects and distributes food for up to 25,000 people weekly through 15 food depots and 100+ community agencies.

## Share the Warmth blanket drive

Donations from staff flooded in throughout December for the Share the Warmth blanket drive, providing seven large boxes full of nearly 200 warm blankets, sleeping bags, scarves, socks, toques and gloves to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside residents.

# E-Comm service by the numbers

October - December 2011

## 9-1-1- service levels

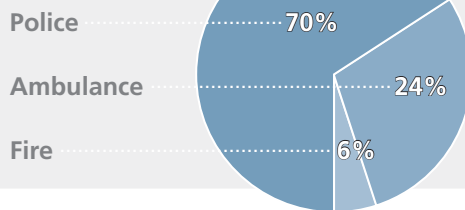
	9-1-1 calls placed to E-Comm	Service level*
October - December	277,394	97%

\* Service Level Target: 95% of all 9-1-1 calls answered in five seconds or less.

## Number of 9-1-1 calls from landlines and cell phones

	Landline Telephones		Cellular Telephones	
October - December	116,735	42%	160,659	58%

## 9-1-1 call directed to police, fire and ambulance



## Technology

9-1-1 uptime: 100%

## System grade of service and availability\*

	System air time (secs)	Transmissions (#)	System availability avg.	System grade of service avg.
2011				
October - December	117,741,131	30,191,226	99.9968%	0.0433%

\*Grade of service represents the ability of the radio system to handle radio traffic volume. Industry Canada sets the standard for the public safety community, which is 3%. This means at the radio system's busiest times, there cannot be more than 3% queuing (responders waiting to speak). The E-Comm radio system is well within this standard.

# E-Comm mission

To provide emergency personnel and the public with exceptional communication services that help save lives and protect property.

## In Memoriam:

This issue is dedicated to the memory of our friend and colleague Dan Rennie, a dedicated E-Comm police dispatcher.

# E-Comm values

Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, Collaboration

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Helping to Save Lives and Protect Property

This newsletter is produced by E-Comm Corporate Communications.  
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