



# **E-Comm** 2020 Annual Report

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## E-Comm Today

As the primary emergency communication services agency for British Columbia, E-Comm is the first point of contact for 9-1-1 callers in 25 regional districts throughout the province, handling nearly two million 9-1-1 calls annually (99 per cent of B.C.'s 9-1-1 call volume). For more than 20 years, the organization has played a pivotal role in keeping British Columbians safe and helping to protect communities. As the first, first responders, E-Comm's staff provide a critical entry point to emergency response by working behind the scenes to connect people with police, fire and ambulance. The organization currently provides dispatch services to 33 police agencies and 40 fire departments in B.C. E-Comm's consolidated, multi-jurisdictional dispatch provides economies of scale, the ability to deliver top-tier technology to smaller communities and increased operational efficiency. Computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems support E-Comm call takers by providing them with swift and easy access to a wide range of information critical to emergency response.

## Technology Services

E-Comm provides a variety of secure, mission-critical technology services that support its own operations and those of its public safety partners, including multi-jurisdictional CAD systems, records management systems and electronic mapping services. E-Comm's in-house Technology Services team has the depth and breadth of experience to support a diverse range of software, systems and platforms to ensure continuity of service 24/7.

## Wide-Area Radio Network

E-Comm owns and operates the largest multi-jurisdictional radio network of its kind in British Columbia. The system is highly resilient with multiple layers of redundancy to survive natural disasters of various kinds. As of September 15, 2021 in the Lower Mainland, BC Emergency Health Services, all police agencies and 17 fire departments in Metro Vancouver and Abbotsford use E-Comm's radio network to communicate their essential messages.

## Vision

Safer communities in British Columbia through excellence in public safety communications.

## Mission

Deliver exceptional emergency communications to the public and first responders that help save lives and protect property.

## Values

Our values guide how we carry out our work. Developed and defined by our staff, we are proud of our values: Respect, Integrity, Collaboration, Accountability and Service.

# Leadership Message

## Remaining Resilient in 2020

As British Columbia remains in the pandemic era, it is important to recognize the enormous contributions of E-Comm's staff in helping to keep British Columbians safe in 2020. Our strategic plan, (a)SPIRE, guides our activities and investments over several years to 2025, but in 2020, we had to demonstrate our flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in B.C., we acted quickly to adjust our strategic initiatives as well as our daily service delivery practices. Our primary focus became keeping our staff safe while maintaining our commitment to provide emergency communications services for the public, our partners and shareholders. Our call takers and dispatchers work around the clock to deliver these services to the citizens of our province. They cannot stop because there is a pandemic. As essential service providers, they have to show up for work to respond to more than 5,000 9-1-1 emergency calls each day.

We implemented new COVID-19 measures rapidly to help make our worksites as safe as possible for our staff who must be onsite to answer emergency and non-emergency calls, provide dispatch services to our 73 police and fire agency partners and offer technological support for our own operations and those of our public safety partners. To reduce the number of people in our locations, staff who could work from home, did—many for the first time in the history of our organization. We split up our call-taking teams in the Lower Mainland and transformed our training centre into another full-time emergency communications centre.

Our Technology department stepped up to ensure off-site staff were fully connected to continue their duties. Virtual meetings became the norm. From hiring and training staff to procurement, all E-Comm departments were creative and implemented new ways to perform their daily activities under pandemic conditions.

Externally, we reached out to the public through our social media channels to continue our commitment to educate the community about the correct use of 9-1-1. However, as the pandemic continued, many callers contacted 9-1-1 in search of COVID-19 information. Our goal was to divert these general calls away from 9-1-1 to help keep emergency lines available for those in urgent need of assistance from police officers, firefighters or ambulance paramedics.

We worked with public health authorities to create safety plans at each of our locations. Daily screening and health checks, physical distancing, physical barriers, directional signage, mask wearing, increased cleaning and sanitizing stations became part of the daily routine at E-Comm. As we implemented each new measure, in a constantly changing environment, the strategic plan pillar we prioritized throughout 2020 was People. Our nearly 700-strong public safety team remained dedicated and flexible during challenging daily circumstances. We are impressed with how the entire E-Comm team embraced creative solutions and new safety protocols. Despite these stressful and uncertain times, one thing has remained the same: our steadfast commitment to deliver vital emergency communications services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We want to express our heartfelt thank you to the people of E-Comm for their resiliency and commitment to public safety in 2020.

As we reset for the future in a post-pandemic world, E-Comm will continue to adapt to help protect the lives and property of British Columbians.

**Doug Campbell,**  
Board Chair

**Oliver Grüter-Andrew,**  
President and CEO

*September 2021*

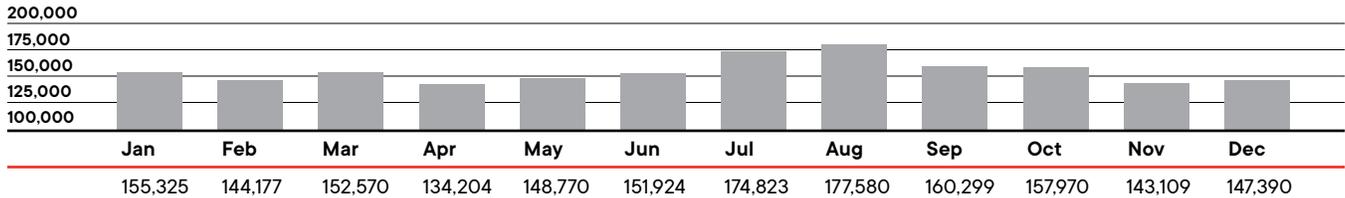


# 2020 Call Volumes and Radio Network

In 2020, 1,848,141 calls were placed to the TELUS 9-1-1 network, and 98 per cent of the calls received at E-Comm were answered within 5 seconds, surpassing our annual contracted service level target of 95 per cent.

The availability of 9-1-1 service was 100 per cent.

## Number of 9-1-1 Calls per Month

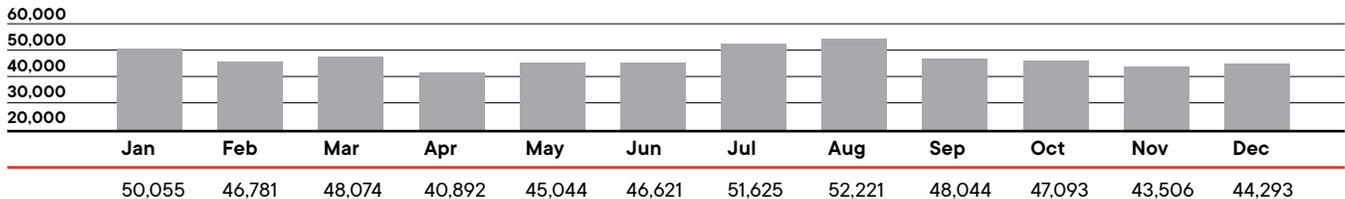


9-1-1 call volumes for April to June 2020 were reduced during the province-wide COVID-19 public health orders and restrictions.

## Police and Fire Emergency Calls

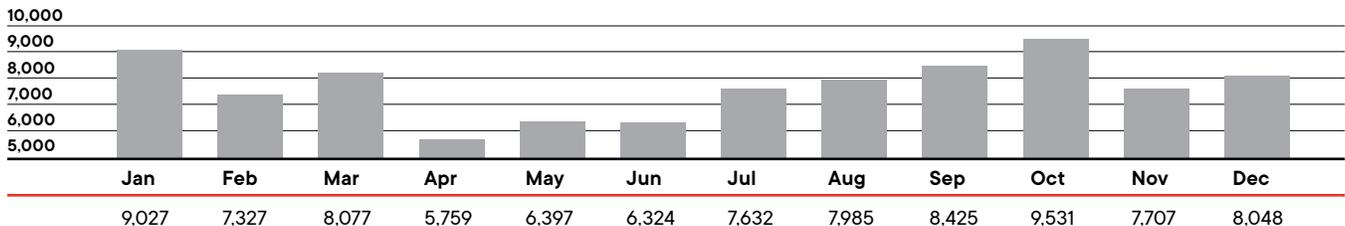
In 2020, E-Comm staff managed 564,249 police emergency calls and 92,239 fire emergency calls on behalf of the agencies for which we provide dispatch service.

### Police Emergency Calls by Month



86 per cent of police emergency calls were answered in less than 10 seconds.

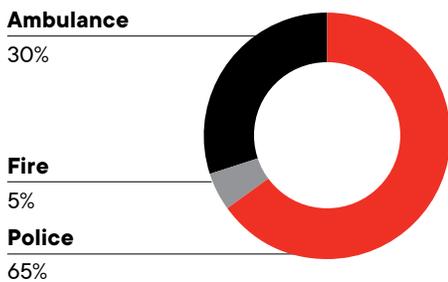
### Fire Emergency Calls by Month



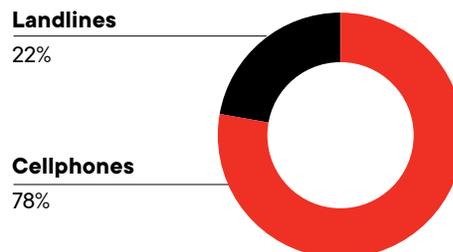
92 per cent of fire emergency calls were answered in less than 15 seconds.

Service levels are for the total volume of calls managed by our two emergency communications centres (Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island).

### 9-1-1 Calls for Police, Fire and Ambulance



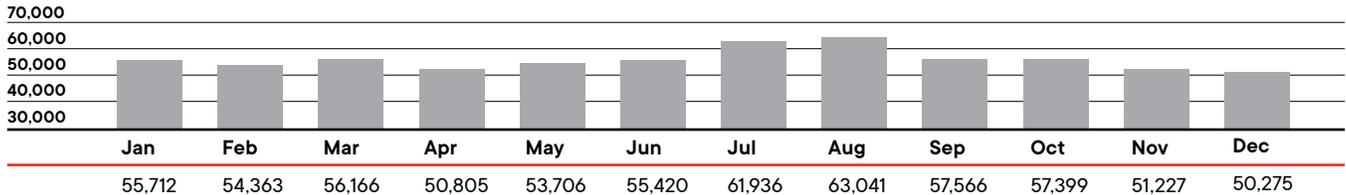
### 9-1-1 Calls from Landlines and Cellphones



## Non-Emergency Services

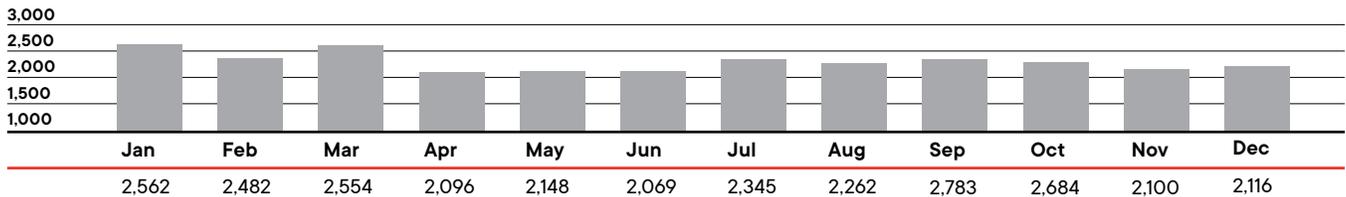
In 2020, E-Comm staff managed 667,616 police non-emergency calls and 28,201 fire non-emergency calls on behalf of partner agencies. These are calls placed to 10-digit non-emergency lines.

### Police Non-Emergency Calls to E-Comm by Month



70 per cent of police non-emergency calls were answered in less than three minutes.

### Fire Non-Emergency Calls to E-Comm by Month

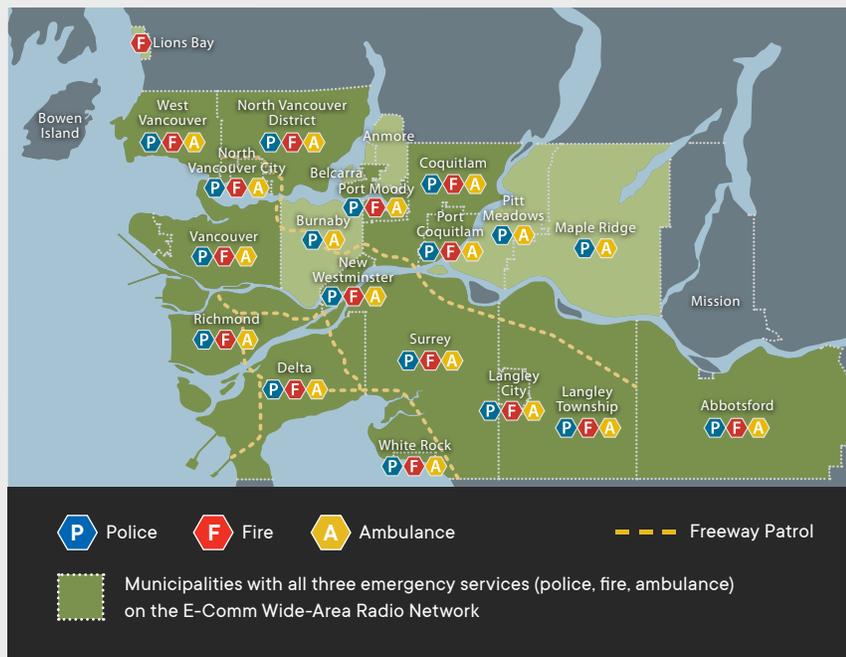


100 per cent of fire non-emergency calls were answered in less than three minutes.

Service levels are for the total volume of calls managed by our two emergency communications centres (Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island).

## E-Comm Wide-Area Radio Network

E-Comm owns and operates the radio network used by more than 30 police agencies and other ambulance and fire personnel across Metro Vancouver and parts of the Fraser Valley.



### Radio Network Statistics in 2020

- Network availability: 100%
- Total number of radio transmissions: 53,695,414
- Total airtime: 335,334,122 seconds
- Total number of radios available to be used on the network: Approximately 10,000

Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service began communicating on the E-Comm Wide-Area Radio Network on May 27, 2020.

# 2020 Financial Highlights

## Statement of Operations and Net Assets

	2020	2019
<b>Revenue</b>	79,793,667	75,473,836
<b>Direct operating expenses</b>	69,933,948	66,440,639
	9,859,719	9,033,197
<b>Other expenses</b>		
Amortization and other	6,380,826	6,341,448
Interest expenses	4,421,759	4,151,638
	10,802,585	10,493,086
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(942,866)	(1,459,889)
<b>Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year</b>	522,257	1,982,146
<b>Unrestricted net assets (deficit), end of year</b>	(420,609)	522,257

	2020	2019
In-period operating surplus (deficit)	(942,866)	(892,448)
Planned draws from surplus	—	(567,441)
Deficiency of revenues over expenses	(942,866)	(1,459,889)

Similar to our partner agencies and many other organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on our 2020 financial results. E-Comm ended the year with a deficiency of revenue over expenses of \$943K due wholly to a net deficit in operations. This has eradicated E-Comm's accumulated surplus, resulting in a net deficit (accumulated) of \$421K.

Pandemic-related direct operating expenditures were \$482K in 2020. Furthermore, we experienced additional salary cost impacts related to COVID-19, such as sick entitlements. The impact of COVID-19 on our organization for this fiscal year and into the future remains uncertain.

E-Comm saw no growth in the dispatch services base in 2020. Dispatch operations salaries (overtime) are the main contributing factor to the net deficit. Pre-pandemic, we started 2020 anticipating increased revenues from police dispatch agencies to account for additional operational resources required to better meet service levels, including ramping up hiring of staff at the start of the fiscal year so we could have higher staffing levels for the peak summer periods. Salary costs were much higher than planned, especially for overtime to address operationally required backfill and skill-set shortages.

E-Comm's Wide-Area Radio Network members saw a shared radio levy decrease in 2020 due to the addition of new members—Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service and Canada Border Services Agency (via the RCMP) and a decrease in expenditures. At year-end, management reconciled the 2020 radio levies, adjusting the levies based on actual 2020 capital and operating expenditures. Actual expenditures were lower than budgeted resulting in levy rebates to most members due to a combination of factors, including: increased revenue from radio contracts and decreased operating expenses, mainly in salaries (timing of hiring) and delays in facilities-related projects. This resulted in an average 5.7 per cent decrease in the radio levy to radio system members. The cumulative year-to-date reserve balance at December 31, 2020 is \$6.7M.

The dispatch levy increase for 2021 varies between 2.1 per cent and 5.5 per cent for Vancouver Island (VI) and Lower Mainland (LMD) respectively; VI is lower due to one-time funding in-period increases in 2020. In 2021, dispatch operations financial challenges, especially overtime, continue and are further exacerbated by the arbitration award of the new collective agreement which provides for an additional adjustment (beyond base rate) of 1.5 per cent in each of 2021 and 2022 for the vast majority of operations emergency communications staff. E-Comm continues to focus on the steps necessary to get our emergency operations division back on a sustainable path—financially, operationally and organizationally. Discussions continue with our partner agencies to ensure we align funding with growth in volume and the nature of the calls and activities, which results in a need for increased resourcing to support dispatch service delivery and related service level targets.

The total radio levy amount increases in 2021 is 3.0 per cent, which is aligned with the prior year Strategic Financial Plan (SFP) forecast. However, actual average agency shared levy increases are 2.4 per cent due to the continued deployment of radios for TransLink (Coast Mountain Bus Company). Radio levies continue to provide a sustainable means of funding for technology evolution of this mission critical asset.

E-Comm's radio, technology and contracted services continue to demonstrate the financial and operational benefits realized with consolidation, optimization and economies of scale.

While growth has been a significant achievement, we recognize that investment in human resources and innovation projects as well as technology is required as the organization continues to evolve to meet the expectations and needs of our public safety partners.

Full copies of E-Comm's 2020 Audited Financial Statements, including the Auditor's Report to the Shareholders and Notes to the Financial Statements are available at [ecomm911.ca](http://ecomm911.ca).

# Board of Directors

A 20-member Board of Directors provides governance to E-Comm and is responsible for overseeing the company's strategic direction, finances and operating results. Management is accountable to the Board of Directors for the day-to-day operations and administration of the company. This is a list of E-Comm Board members in 2020.

## Independent Directors

**Doug Campbell** Board Chair

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**Barry Forbes**

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**Nancy Kotani**

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**Denise Nawata**

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### Director

### Nominee of:

**Aniz Alani** City of Abbotsford

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**Lois Karr** RCMP

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**Joe Keithley** Cities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Village of Belcarra

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**Melanie Kerr** City of Delta/Delta Police Board

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**Warren Lemcke** Vancouver Police Board

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**Neil Lilley** BC Emergency Health Services

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**Gayle Martin** Cities of Langley, Surrey and White Rock, Township of Langley

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**Jen McCutcheon** Metro Vancouver and TransLink

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**Bill McNulty** City of Richmond

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**Paul Mochrie** City of Vancouver

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**Mike Morden** Cities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows

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**Tara Richards** Provincial Government

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**Mark Sieben** Provincial Government

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**Richard Walton** City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, Village of Lions Bay

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**Terry Waterhouse** Cities of Surrey, Langley and White Rock, Township of Langley

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**Mike Welte** Independent Police Boards (Abbotsford, New Westminster, Port Moody, Transit Police, West Vancouver)

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A second board seat, nominated by the Cities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and Village of Belcarra, is to be filled later.

## Executive Leadership Team

**Oliver Grüter-Andrew** President & CEO

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**Beatrix Nicolato** Vice-President & Chief Financial Officer

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**Michael Webb** Chief Innovation Officer

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**Sandra MacKay** Vice-President, Legal & Governance

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**Stephen Thatcher** Vice-President, Operations

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**Tony Gilligan** Vice-President of Technology Services

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**Suzanne Halliday** Executive Director, Data, Analytics and Decision Support

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**Tracy Lim** Executive Director, Emergency Communications Centres

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**Christian Codrington** Interim Executive Lead of Human Resources

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**Jasmine Bradley** Executive Director, Communications and Public Affairs

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## The Numbers in 2020

- 1.84+ million Calls to 9-1-1
- Average of 5,000 9-1-1 calls per day
- 98 per cent of 9-1-1 calls answered within five seconds
- 564,249 police emergency calls
- 92,239 fire emergency calls
- 667,616 police non-emergency calls
- 28,201 fire non-emergency calls
- 53.6 million transmissions on the E-Comm radio system
- 91 per cent public confidence in E-Comm services

*Police and Fire emergency and non-emergency call volumes noted above are for the agencies for which E-Comm provides dispatch.*

### Follow us



[ecomm911.ca](http://ecomm911.ca)