

What is E-Comm?

E-Comm is the regional emergency communications centre for southwest British Columbia. Our full name is Emergency Communications for Southwest British Columbia Incorporated.

Which areas does E-Comm provide service for?

E-Comm provides 9-1-1 service for Metro Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast, and Whistler/Howe Sound. E-Comm also provides emergency dispatch services for a number of police and fire departments in those areas.

How is 9-1-1 funded?

The 9-1-1 service is contracted to E-Comm by Metro Vancouver which collects for this service from each municipality in this region through property taxes.

How many 9-1-1 calls are received daily?

Thousands of calls are placed to 9-1-1 each day. Call volumes are heaviest on Friday and Saturday nights. On average, the number of calls placed to 9-1-1 every year tops one million.

How does 9-1-1 work?

When a caller dials 9-1-1, the E-Comm call-taker asks, “do you need police, fire or ambulance?” The call-taker will also confirm for which municipality emergency response is required. E-Comm’s job is to then connect the caller as quickly as possible to the agency the caller has requested. The E-Comm call-taker will remain on the line with the caller until the agency answers. The entire process usually takes around 25–30 seconds.

What if a caller doesn’t know what service they need?

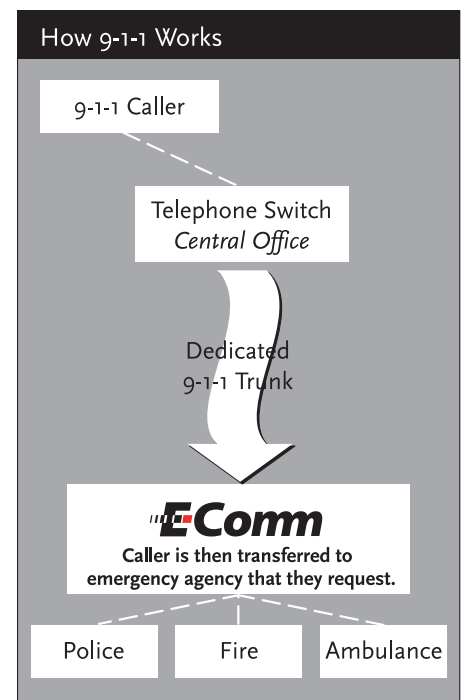
If a caller is unsure of what service they need, the E-Comm 9-1-1 call-taker is trained to ask a few quick questions to help determine which agency is required and will connect the caller accordingly. Once connected to the agency, their call-taker can, at anytime, also contact other agencies to assist with response. For example, if the BC Ambulance Service receives a call where police presence is required, they will contact the appropriate department/ detachment for assistance.

What is the difference between a call-taker and dispatcher?

In short, a call-taker is the person who normally speaks with the person who has dialled 9-1-1 and a dispatcher is the person who speaks with the emergency personnel in the field. Sometimes the dispatcher will also speak to the caller as well. The call-taker and dispatcher work together, sharing information through computer and radio systems, which allow for the instant and seamless sharing of information.

Do E-Comm call-takers/dispatchers see my phone number and address if I dial 9-1-1?

If you dial 9-1-1 from a residential or business phone the computer system will display the name, phone number and address associated with the phone that you have dialled from. The call-taker will confirm the location information with you. This way, if you are disconnected at any time, the call-taker can call you back. In the case of a business, the main number is displayed not direct lines or locals.



If you dial 9-1-1 from a cell phone, the call-taker will receive your phone number but they do not receive your name or location information. This is why it is so important that you know your location at all times and to provide your location as soon as you are asked. If you have not communicated this information and your call is disconnected, we have very limited means of knowing where to send help.

Does E-Comm receive a lot of unnecessary 9-1-1 calls?

E-Comm receives hundreds of accidental 9-1-1 calls each day, due in large part to people programming 9-1-1 into their phones and then leaving cell phones in positions where keys are accidentally pressed. Never program 9-1-1 into any phone, and stow your phones carefully.

It is most important for callers to know that 9-1-1 is for emergencies only—it is not an information line. During a major disaster or event, residents should use their televisions and radios, not 9-1-1, to get up-to-date information.

9-1-1 is designed for individual emergencies and in the event of a major disaster, the reality is that the telephone system may fail and therefore access to 9-1-1 will be lost. British Columbians should prepare themselves for this by having a preparedness plan. Visit www.pep.bc.ca for more information.

What happens if I dial 9-1-1 accidentally?

The best thing you can do is just tell us. If you hang up, then our call-takers must now take the time to call you back to confirm you are okay. If you dial us by mistake, you will not be charged a fee, so there is no need to be concerned.

What if English is my second language?

E-Comm has access to a 24-hour interpretation service that we can connect to in less than a minute. Interpretation service is available in more than 170 languages. If you have friends or family members whose first language is not English, the most helpful thing you can do is teach them the English word for the language they do speak (e.g. learn to say “Cantonese”) to help speed up the process. Learning how to say “police, fire, ambulance” is also helpful.

Special Services

E-Comm also provides 9-1-1 call response to members of the deaf and hard of hearing community who use TeleTypewriters (TTY) to access police, fire and ambulance. TTY units allow deaf and hard of hearing callers to communicate directly with 9-1-1 call-takers through instant messaging.

Tips for using 9-1-1

- **Use 9-1-1 in emergency situations that require police, fire or ambulance.**
- **Be prepared to answer questions. Listen carefully; speak clearly and try to remain calm.**
- **You will be asked questions to determine the nature of your emergency. Our call-takers are experienced “question askers” and their persistence is based on a need to provide accurate and specific information to the attending emergency responders.**
- **Know your location at all times. This is particularly important if you are calling from a cell phone. You should know what city you are in, building or home address, cross streets etc.**
- **Don’t program 9-1-1 into speed dial. It takes a split second to dial 9-1-1 and when it’s pre-programmed you can dial 9-1-1 accidentally.**
- **If you dial 9-1-1 accidentally, stay on the line and tell us. If you hang up we don’t know if you are okay.**
- **Hundreds of cell phone users dial 9-1-1 by accident each day, tying up emergency lines. Don’t place your cell phone in a position where keys can be accidentally pressed.**

For more information visit www.ecomm911.ca