

Newsletter

December 2007

Connecting emergency services in the Capital Region



Chair's Message

The past two months have been very important for the future of CREST. In addition to making significant progress towards enhancing radio coverage, we received positive feedback on

the process used to make the improvement decisions, and work has begun to improve our administrative operations.

In a series of meetings last month, CREST reported out on changes being made to improve the performance of the Capital Region's emergency radio system for the 36 organizations and 1800 emergency service providers who rely on it.

By making these improvements, we will achieve 97% reliability within most areas, have in-building coverage and have a system that is compatible with moving towards an open standard.

To address CREST's administrative operations, new computer and accounting systems have been installed, and General Manager Gord Horth is in the process of recruiting additional technical support.

The results of a Fairness Audit concludes that our technical improvement consultation process allowed all users to provide input and that the board of directors made decisions based on that input.

I'm pleased to provide you with the following update.

Hy Freedman
Chair of the Board

CREST Improvements

- Five new sites (one transmitter and four repeaters) in the core by March 2008.
- Fifteen to 20 new sites around the Capital Region by June 2008.
- In-vehicle transmitters in fire vehicles for on-site reception.
- Design work to boost overall signal strength that will increase the system's geographic coverage and building penetration.
- New radio antennas for police radios worn on the hip.

Prepared for Winter Storms

As we head into the winter months, storms are known to cause power outages to tower sites. All CREST sites have back-up battery power to cope with any initial loss of power. In addition, seven of the eight existing sites have generators to deal with longer power outages.

Although extreme weather caused significant power and transportation problems on the south coast last year, the CREST system continued to provide reliable service throughout the region. So, although, your home or office may be without power, CREST will be available through rain, sleet or snow.

Capital Region Emergency Service Telecommunications

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In-Vehicle Repeaters Helping Fire Departments

As a result of a pilot project with the City of Victoria and Metchosin earlier this year, fire departments throughout the region are being supplied with in-vehicle repeaters. Feedback from the pilot says that the repeaters, “improved our ability to communicate within buildings” and are “a solution that will help us”.

Although not a solution for police, the repeaters work well for supporting the on-site command approach used by fire departments while on the scene of a fire.

Metchosin Mayor John Ranns says, “The solution is a low cost, sensible one”. Their initial trials show seamless switching between simplex and the CREST trunk system.



Esquimalt’s new front-line fire truck, shown here, is being mounted with an in-vehicle repeater provided and supported by CREST.

Upcoming Events

Event	Coordinates
Users’ Meeting	Wednesday, December 12 th 10:00 a.m., CoV Ante-chamber
Board of Directors	Wednesday, December 12 th 3:30 p.m., CRD Boardroom
Shareholders	Thursday, January 10 th 3:30 p.m., Location TBA

Quick Facts about CREST

Month	Total Calls	Total Air time (hours)	Immediate System Access	Average delayed access wait time (seconds)
July	740,087	1018:57:19	99.79%	2.25
Aug.	709,409	979:30:07	99.87%	1.85
Sept.	678,493	938:18:24	99.87%	2.11
Oct.	705,653	965:00:49	99.77%	2.32

Audit Says Consultation and Decision-Making Fair

A fairness advisor, hired to audit the process used to review the CREST system, has concluded that the board made its July 4th decision on technical improvements based on information drawn from a “fulsome” consultation process.

Joan Young, a fairness advisor with the local legal office of Heenan Blaikie, was hired to provide independent assurance on the fairness and appropriateness of the review process for the CREST system’s technical improvements.

In the findings of her report, Young says that:

- CREST staff followed procedures adopted by the Board, and fairly applied the review criteria,
- CREST staff exercised judgement and made interpretations in a fair and impartial manner,
- The recommendations for enhancements reflect the general concerns of the sub-committees, and
- The decision made by the Board was based on information obtained after a fulsome consultative process that allowed user groups to comment before decisions were made.

For more information, or to read the full report, visit the reports & publications section of our website at www.crest.ca.