

Newsletter

April 2008

Connecting emergency services in the Capital Region



Message from the Chair



I am pleased to report that work is proceeding to have five new transmitters in the urban core this spring, and another 16 throughout the region shortly after. Site improvements, leasing and equipment purchase is underway.

A lengthy approval process for obtaining additional radio frequencies threatened our timelines. However, Industry Canada, our users and board have agreed to reassign less-used frequencies to the new downtown site allowing us to move forward as planned.

Public safety standards will be monitored and maintained at the sites where frequencies are reallocated. And, staff will continue to work with Industry Canada to secure the additional frequencies needed.

To fund the improvements, the CREST board is working on a 5-year financial plan that will be shared with shareholders.

To help reduce costs, staff have continued to identify and implement savings for shareholders. Dropping software subscription fees and changing microwave support services have saved \$215,000 since 2006.

We have also invested in making our major tower sites more self-sufficient by adding generators and back-up batteries for use during a power outage. Soon, all our transmit sites will have generator backup and enhanced reliability for the 1800 emergency service providers who rely on CREST.

Hy Freedman,
Chair of the Board

Improvement Plan Gets Gold Star

RCC Consultants, the firm that did the technical assessment of the CREST system in early 2007, has completed a third-party review of the design plan for system improvements. They have confirmed that the design as proposed will boost overall signal strength, thus increasing the system's geographic coverage and building penetration.

RCC's review shows that performance will be better than predicted by Motorola. User agencies have received copies of RCC's coverage maps.

The CREST board requested third-party verification of the improvement design plan before entering into a new contract with Motorola.

Service Improvement

Users in the urban core should be experiencing better audio quality and coverage as a result of enhancements made to a main transmitter in the area. Currently a noisy site, a new antenna and mast is now separating the CREST transmitter from other transmitters at the site.

Quick Facts about CREST

Month	Total Calls	Total Air time (hours)	Immediate System Access	Average delayed access wait time (seconds)
Nov.	570,726	786:29:36	99.90%	1.89
Dec.	639,844	882:51:14	99.92%	1.92
Jan.	Data not available due to a software upgrade			
Feb.	612,123	841:22:31	99.83%	2.47

Capital Region Emergency Service Telecommunications

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New Procedures on FAP Channels Leading to Better Incident Coordination

While the CREST radio system provides the ability to communicate among emergency agencies, a new Combined Events program for fire, ambulance and police (FAP), provides the policy and procedure for using that capability. Where in the past, emergency service providers have been called upon to respond to the same incidents, they haven't had the procedures needed to communicate before getting there.

The FAP channels and Combined Events procedure are a new North American standard for multi-agency responses that came about as a result of incidences such as the Columbine massacre. They allow responding crews to talk to one another, communicate information related to the call, provide alerts on safety issues, identify resource requirements and more.

Rick Atkinson, Victoria's District Supervisor for the BC Ambulance Service says the Combined Events procedure is "a great fit with the CREST system. CREST offers interoperability through the FAP channels, and the new procedure guides how we use the system."

Although different than the command functions within a department, crews will be updated while enroute to a call using the new procedure on the FAP channels.

Currently being piloted on the Peninsula, Sidney Fire Chief Dan Holder says, "The new procedure gives us the ability to communicate with other responding agencies at the scene of an incident and prior to our arrival. Although we haven't used it a lot and need more time to fully evaluate it and have all agencies get familiar with it, so far it looks positive and we're anticipating more opportunities to use it."

The new procedure is being phased in by zone. Discussions are currently underway to have it

move into the urban core with the western and pacific zones to follow.

The BC Ambulance Service has been the main driver behind adopting the standard. "By encouraging these kinds of procedures we will get better use out of the CREST system," says Atkinson. "It's our hope that the users of CREST will embrace the new procedure as it has been in jurisdictions across the continent."



Upcoming Events

Event	Coordinates
Police Service Committee	Tuesday, April 8 th , 9:00 a.m., Saanich Police Dept., Kirby Room
Board of Directors	Wednesday, April 16 th 3:30 p.m., CRD Boardroom
Board of Directors	Wednesday, May 21 st 1:30 p.m., CRD Boardroom
Annual General Meeting	Wednesday, May 21 st 3:30 p.m., CRD Boardroom