



# **E-Comm 9-1-1**

**2021 Annual Report**

# CORPORATE OVERVIEW

## ABOUT E-COMM

### Who we are Today

E-Comm was established in 1997 under the provincial Emergency Communications Corporations Act. As the primary emergency communication services agency for British Columbia, E-Comm has played a pivotal role in keeping British Columbians safe and helping to protect communities for more than 20 years. 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 and maintaining the technology used by first responders.

### 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.

## WHAT WE DO

### 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. Currently, 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.

### 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 computer-aided dispatch 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.

### 9-1-1 Call-Answer, Police and Fire Dispatch Services

In 2021, E-Comm answered more than 2 million 9-1-1 calls on behalf of 25 regional districts throughout British Columbia. 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 the ability to deliver top-tier technology to smaller communities and enhanced mutual-aid possibilities which greatly enhance responder and public safety.

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*This Annual Report was published on June 23, 2022.*



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



It would be an understatement to say that the strain felt by all emergency services in 2021 was extraordinary. Through the COVID-19 and the opioid health crises, extreme heat, forest fires and major flooding events, all emergency responders were stretched to the maximum in 2021, including E-Comm staff. As the *first* first responders, our staff set aside the personal impacts of these critical events to be there for British Columbians in need of help. From Operations, to Technology, to Corporate Services, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank everyone at E-Comm who came to work day after day, around the clock, providing the best services they could under extreme circumstances.

There is little doubt that last year's extraordinary events created operational challenges everywhere. On top of these, E-Comm had already been experiencing ongoing challenges related to police communication services for some time, particularly for non-emergency call-taking.

Delivering reliable, continuous, high-quality services that meet the needs of first responders and public safety is one of E-Comm's key commitments outlined in [\(a\)SPIRE—E-Comm's 2025 Strategic Plan](#). In support of this commitment, the organization, with the Board's involvement, conducted a fulsome review of our police communication operations to identify ways to return

our current service level performance to the high standards we pride ourselves on.

This *Operations Review*, completed in mid-2021, confirmed a need for additional funding and resourcing, as well as significant opportunities to change the way we deliver our services. We are working closely with our partner agencies to explore what this new way of offering services will be. I have every confidence in E-Comm's leadership team to determine the innovative solutions needed to address our current challenges, and to best position the organization to respond to the public's evolving emergency communications needs.

Further to the operational changes under review, we are also evaluating the governance structure of the organization to ensure it continues to meet the public's, first responders' and E-Comm's current and future requirements.

E-Comm's Board of Directors provides oversight to the organization's strategic planning and direction, financials and operating results. As a great first step, E-Comm added a new board seat for representation from the southern Vancouver Island region. This was a long time coming and helps to ensure the police agencies for which E-Comm provides call-taking and dispatch services on Vancouver Island have appropriate representation in discussions about the future of the organization. This is one step of many required to modernize our existing governance structure. More to come on that over the next year.

Our world has changed dramatically since the beginning of the pandemic. Major social justice movements like Defund the Police and Black Lives Matter, and attention to the important issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, have reaffirmed the need to relook at how racialized and marginalized members of our society are supported, especially during times of crisis. In 2020, the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act was appointed to make recommendations on the modernization of policing across the province, particularly as it pertains to increasingly complex concerns like mental health and wellness and evaluating the scope of systemic racism within B.C.'s police agencies. Although E-Comm has embarked upon our journey to listen and learn around Truth and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, more efforts need to be made in these areas. This remains a large and important space of opportunity for the organization. And the time to start this work is now. E-Comm's Board of Directors and Leadership Team are committed to taking the necessary actions to ensure our organization remains inclusive and provides equitable access to our services for everyone.

Emergency services in British Columbia are facing significant challenges in 2022 and beyond. Although we may not know yet what the bumps in the road will be, rest assured that as an organization, E-Comm is ready to shift and respond so we can best support our public safety partners and deliver vital emergency communications services to the public.

**Doug Campbell**, Board Chair



# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



This past year brought with it the highest call volume since E-Comm answered its first 9-1-1 call in 1999—more than 2 million calls. This represents a 12 per cent increase over call volumes in 2020, with 9 out of 10 of the busiest days in E-comm's history taking place in 2021.

It is within this context I want to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of our staff. They showed up 24/7 to ensure British Columbians received the help they need from first responders, and continued to offer help during a time when stress and demands remained high in both their personal and professional lives.

Whether answering someone's call for help, dispatching first responders to the scene or supporting the organization in other ways, working in emergency communications is a challenging job under normal circumstances. On our busiest day, we received nearly 8,000 9-1-1 calls, or the equivalent of one call every 12 seconds. It is not surprising then that this past year took a toll on our staff and, in response, E-Comm has used additional funding received to improve the professional support resources available for our employees. We have more to do and are continuing to explore other ways to support our staff's health and wellness.

The volume of calls we received in 2021 impacted our ability to respond as quickly as we have in the past. Wait times for callers on emergency lines hit levels that are unacceptable to us.

Our standard is to answer 95 per cent of 9-1-1 calls within five seconds. In 2021, we were only able to hit this measure 92 per cent of the time.

When unforeseen circumstances the province experienced last summer continued into the fall, E-Comm made tough decisions on policy and operational changes to allow for immediate improvements.

Despite these actions, the higher level of demand and strain has not disappeared completely. Instead, call volumes continue to increase and are predicted to rise even higher this summer with COVID-19-related restrictions now lifted. We know the capacity of all emergency first responders will be stretched thin, including E-Comm's first responders.

A full review of our existing service delivery model that was conducted in 2021, particularly in police communications, confirmed a significant need for both increased funding and resourcing. It also pointed out that for E-Comm to meet the demands being placed on our organization, we need to evolve our operational process and procedure, and the way we provide services to our partners and the public. We are currently working with our partners on a transformation plan to ensure E-Comm can continue to serve the needs of the public and first responders.

While we experienced many challenges in 2021, we also had our share of success. The transfer of a Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) voice call between E-Comm's Lower Mainland emergency communications centre and Calgary 9-1-1 took place in April. This testing was the first step of many taken last year to validate the technology before building out the new system, which starts in 2022. The enhanced NG9-1-1 network will not only allow for improved services in terms of technology, but also offers numerous opportunities to evaluate call processes and to provide more equitable access to 9-1-1 services across British Columbia. As E-Comm prepares for this provincial transition, we are working closely with all levels of government to ensure this modernized 9-1-1 system will meet the growing needs of emergency communications, both now and into the future.

The Wide-Area Radio Network continues to be one of many mission-critical tools that sets our organization apart, as first responders rely on their radios for both their own safety and the safety of the public when responding to critical situations. We welcomed Pitt Meadows Fire & Rescue Services as users of this technology last fall—growing our total number of first responder radio partners to more than three dozen agencies.

One of our first municipal users also joined E-Comm's radio system in 2021. The Vancouver Park Rangers often work closely with police, fire or ambulance to resolve concerns within Vancouver's expansive park and recreation network. As contract users of our radio system, the Park Rangers can now communicate within their own teams and directly with first response agencies using the radio network's interoperability. These strong communications options during emergent events play a critical role in keeping our parks safe for all community members.

I would like to close as I opened—calling out the hard work and dedication of all E-Comm staff throughout a very challenging year. Our people have a direct relationship with both first responders and the public—they are the link that ensures the right resources respond to emergencies experienced by British Columbians. Through all of E-Comm's challenges and accomplishments in 2021, the resilience of our employees has been remarkable.

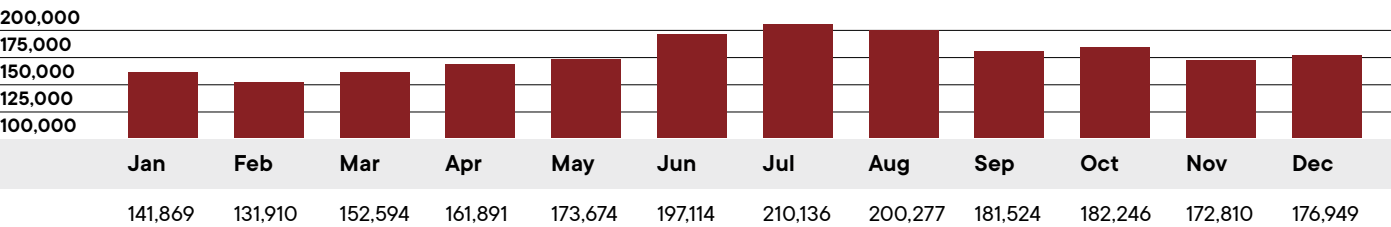
**Oliver Grüter-Andrew**, President & CEO

# CALL VOLUMES AND SERVICE LEVELS

Unprecedented strain on British Columbia's emergency response services in 2021 severely impacted E-Comm's ability to meet service level targets. In 2021, 2,082,994 calls were placed to 9-1-1, with 92 per cent of them answered within target of five seconds or less.

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

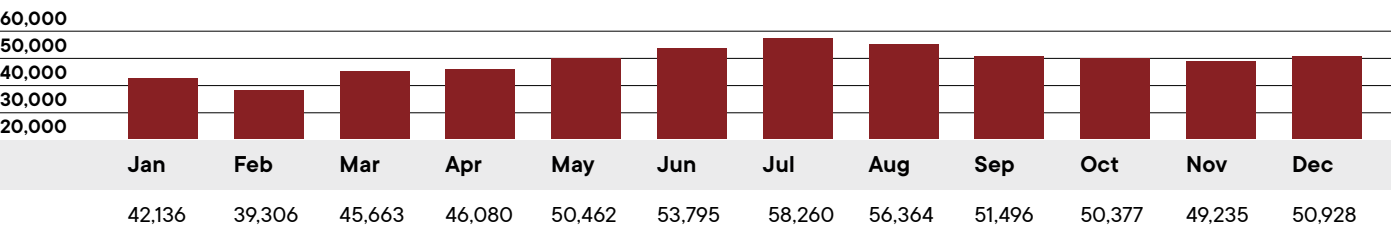
## NUMBER OF 9-1-1 CALLS PER MONTH



## POLICE AND FIRE EMERGENCY CALLS

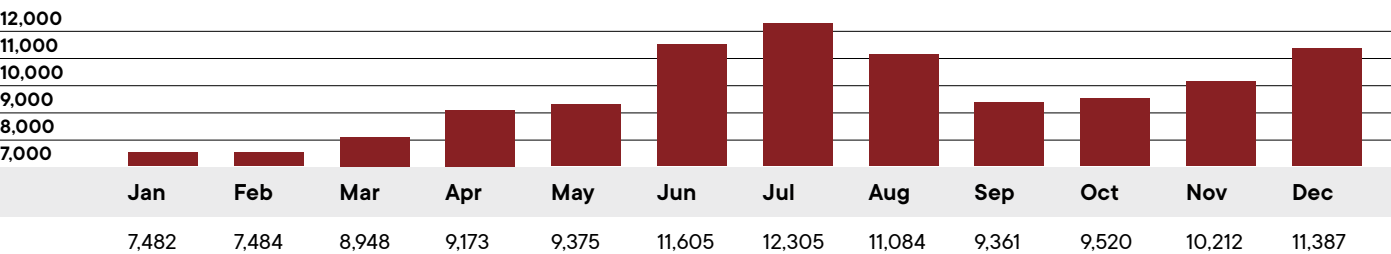
In 2021, E-Comm staff managed 594,102 police emergency calls and 117,936 fire emergency calls on behalf of the agencies for which we provide dispatch service.

### Police Emergency Calls by Month



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

### Fire Emergency Calls by Month



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

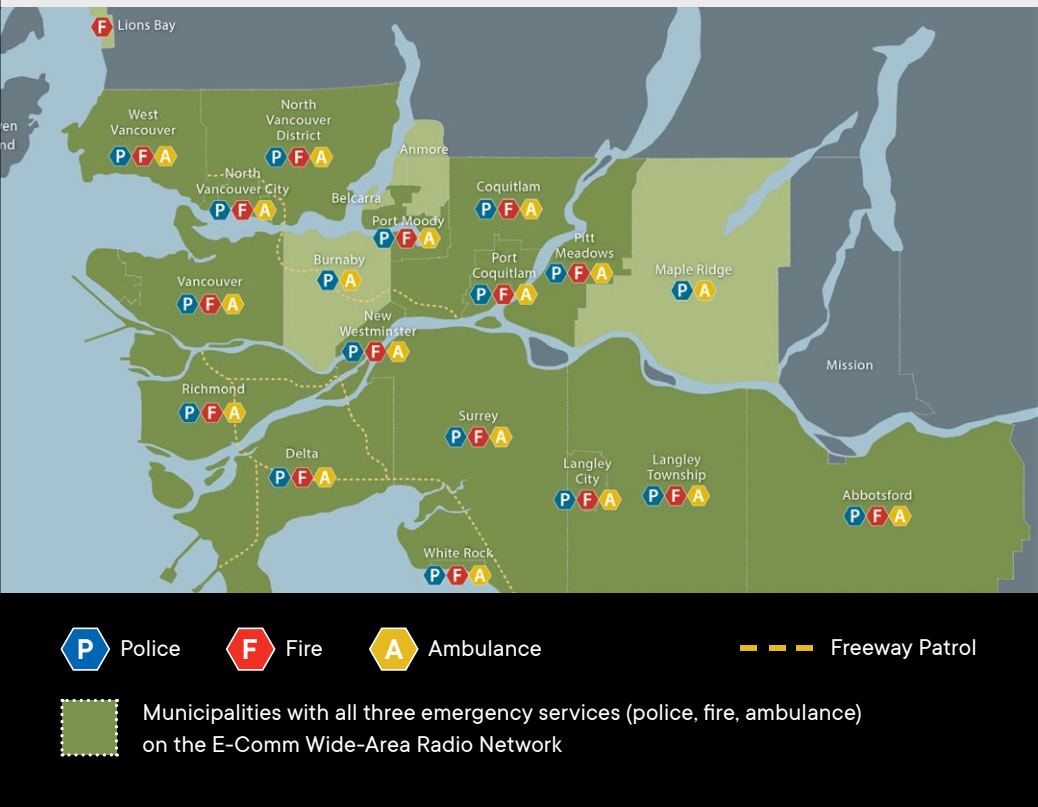
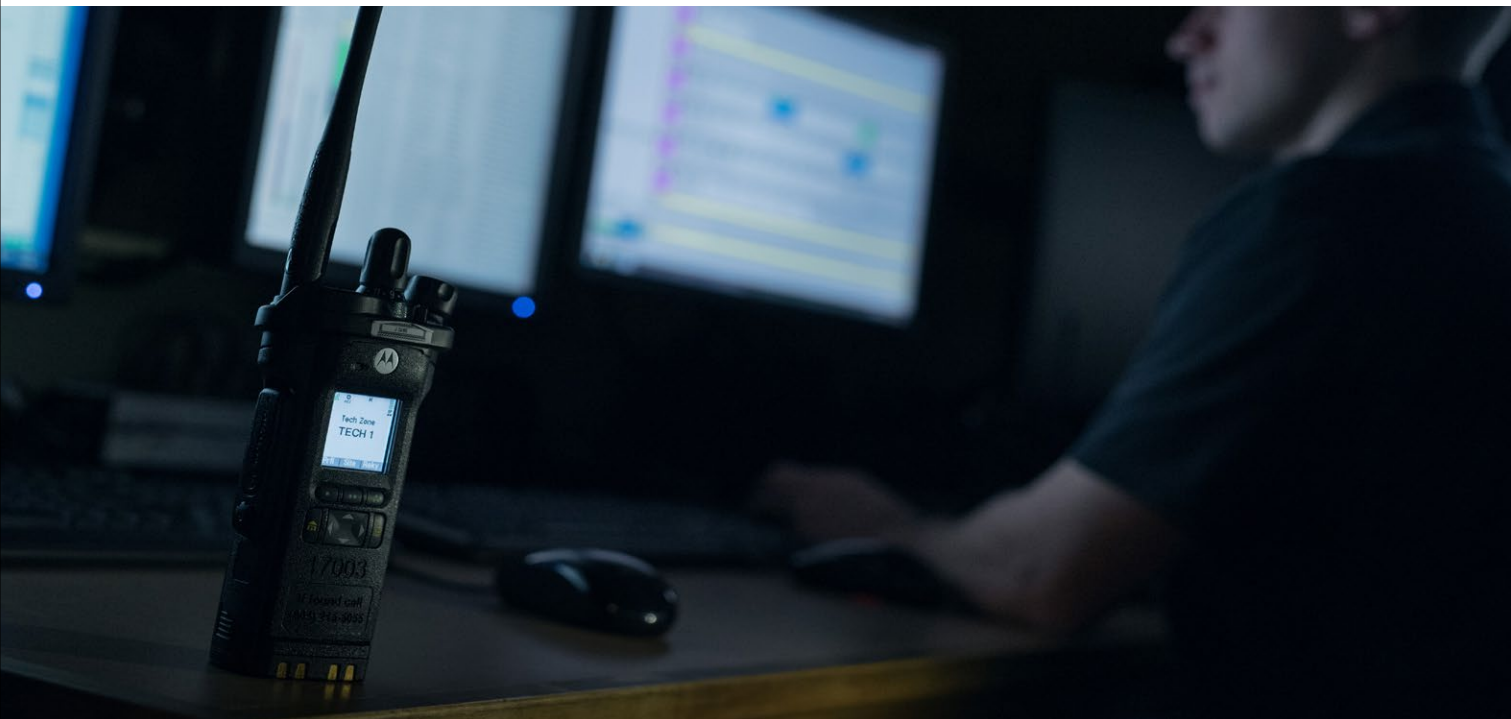
## 9-1-1 CALLS FOR POLICE, FIRE AND AMBULANCE



## 9-1-1 CALLS FROM LANDLINES AND CELLPHONES



# RADIO STATISTICS



**100%**  
Network availability

**53,996,361**  
Total number of radio transmissions

**336,632,692**  
Total seconds of airtime

**Nearly 13,000**  
Total number of radios available  
to be used on the network

**September 14, 2021**  
Pitt Meadows Fire & Rescue Services  
began communicating on the  
E-Comm Wide-Area Radio Network

# 2021 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Statement of Operations and Net Assets

	2021	2020
<b>Revenue</b>	83,497,346	79,793,667
<b>Direct operating expenses</b>	75,151,182	69,933,948
	8,346,164	9,859,719
<b>Other expenses</b>		
Amortization and other	6,307,013	6,380,826
Interest expenses	4,298,621	4,421,759
	10,605,634	10,802,585
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(2,259,470)	(942,866)
<b>Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year</b>	(420,609)	522,257
<b>Unrestricted net assets (deficit), end of year</b>	(2,680,079)	(420,609)

E-Comm ended the year with a deficiency of revenue over expenses of \$2.3M. This further adds to the organization's net deficit, increasing it to \$2.7 million. This net deficit is wholly attributable to Dispatch Operations.

Similar to our partner agencies and many other organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact on our 2021 financial results. Pandemic-related direct operating expenditures were \$217K in 2021. Furthermore, we experienced additional salary cost impacts related to COVID-19, such as sick entitlements.

E-Comm again saw no growth in the dispatch services base in 2021. Dispatch operations salaries (overtime) continue to be the main contributing factor to the net deficit. Funding remains a challenge as the revenues received in dispatch do not cover the costs incurred. In addition, we have not been able to hire up to funded staffing levels, further exacerbated by higher attrition, which in turn increases overtime required to address operationally required backfill and skill-set shortages. Management continue to focus on strategies to address recruitment, training, mentoring and retention.

E-Comm's Wide-Area Radio Network members again saw a shared radio levy decrease in 2021. Actual expenditures were lower than budgeted resulting in levy rebates to most members due to a combination of factors, including: decreased operating expenses, mainly in radio salaries (timing of hiring), reduced capital expenditures in facilities and projects due to supply chain and other delays. This has resulted in an average radio levy decrease of 4.4 per cent to radio members and an accumulated 2021 year-end radio reserve balance of \$7.7M.

The dispatch levy increases for 2022 are materially higher than past years with average increases as follows: 20.0 per cent for Lower Mainland (LMD) police dispatch; 21.0 per cent for LMD fire dispatch, 13.6 per cent for 9-1-1 call answer; and 10.9 per cent for Vancouver Island (VI) police dispatch. E-Comm is focused on the steps necessary to get our emergency operations division back on a sustainable path—financially, operationally and organizationally. Discussions are ongoing 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 aggregated radio levy amount increases in 2021 is 4.5 per cent. 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 past growth has been a significant achievement, we recognize that investment in human resources and innovation projects as well as technology is required for the organization to evolve to meet the current expectations and future needs of our public safety partners.

Full copies of E-Comm's 2021 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).

<sup>1</sup>Adjusted for new agency participation; actual shared levy increases will vary by agency based on their specific metrics, such as actual number of radios.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A 22-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 2021.

## Independent Directors

<b>Doug Campbell</b>	Board Chair
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<b>Barry Forbes</b>
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<b>Nancy Kotani</b>
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<b>Denise Nawata</b>
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Director	Nominee of:
<b>Aniz Alani</b>	City of Abbotsford
<b>Lois Karr</b>	RCMP
<b>Joe Keithley</b>	Cities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Village of Belcarra (Seat 1 of 2)
<b>Melanie Kerr</b>	City of Delta/Delta Police Board
<b>Warren Lemcke</b>	Vancouver Police Board
<b>Nancy McCurrach</b>	Cities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Village of Belcarra (Seat 2 of 2)
<b>Jen McCutcheon</b>	Metro Vancouver and TransLink
<b>Nicole MacDonald</b>	Cities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows
<b>Mary Sue Maloughney</b>	Provincial Government
<b>Bill McNulty</b>	City of Richmond
<b>Paul Mochrie</b>	City of Vancouver
<b>Doug Scott</b>	Provincial Government
<b>Richard Walton</b>	City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, Village of Lions Bay
<b>Wilson Wan</b>	BC Emergency Health Services
<b>Terry Waterhouse</b>	Cities of Surrey, Langley and White Rock, Township of Langley (Seat 1 of 2)
<b>Colin Watson</b>	Capital Regional District and E-Comm's Southern Vancouver Island police agency partners
<b>Mike Welte</b>	Independent Police Boards (Abbotsford, New Westminster, Port Moody, Transit Police, West Vancouver)
<b>Ed Wolfe</b>	Cities of Langley, Surrey and White Rock, Township of Langley (Seat 2 of 2)

## Executive Leadership Team

<b>Oliver Grüter-Andrew</b>	President & CEO
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<b>Beatrix Nicolato</b>	Senior Executive Advisor
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<b>Al Horsman</b>	Interim Vice-President & Chief Financial Officer
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<b>Greg Conner</b>	Vice-President, People and Culture
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<b>Sarah Sidhu</b>	Vice-President, Legal and Governance
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<b>Stephen Thatcher</b>	Vice-President, Operations
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<b>Tony Gilligan</b>	Vice-President of Technology Services
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<b>Nancy Blair</b>	Chief Transformation Officer
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<b>Jasmine Bradley</b>	Executive Director, Communications and Public Affairs
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<b>Suzanne Halliday</b>	Executive Director, Data, Analytics and Decision Support
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<b>Tracy Lim</b>	Executive Director, Emergency Communications Centres
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## 2021 AT A GLANCE

- 2.08+ million calls to 9-1-1
- Average of 5,700 9-1-1 calls per day
- 92 per cent of 9-1-1 calls answered within five seconds
- 594,102 police emergency and 665,463 non-emergency calls
- 117,936 fire emergency and 29,073 non-emergency calls
- 53.9 million transmissions on the E-Comm radio system
- 75 per cent public confidence in E-Comm services

*Police and fire emergency and non-emergency call volumes noted above are for the 73 agencies for which E-Comm provides dispatch services.*