

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Text with 9-1-1 now available for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech-Impaired

Chilliwack, BC – Getting emergency services in the Fraser Valley just became a lot easier for those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Speech Impaired (DHHSI). The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), in partnership with E-Comm and the BC Chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA-BC) launched a new Text with 9-1-1 service in observance of National Access Awareness Week and Speech and Hearing Awareness Month.

"The BC Provincial Chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association congratulates the Fraser Valley Regional District on enhancing the 9-1-1 service to include Text with 9-1-1 for people who are hard of hearing, deaf or speech impaired," said Dr. Marilyn O. Dahl, President of the CHHA-BC. "This will have a powerful and potentially life-saving impact on the safety of the DHHSI community within the FVRD."

Before using text with 9-1-1, or T9-1-1, eligible residents must register with their cellphone service provider. When a 9-1-1 call-taker receives a call from a DHHSI person who has pre-registered for the service, an alert will trigger at the 9-1-1 centre to indicate there is a DHHSI caller on the line. The 9-1-1 call-taker will then launch the special messaging system, allowing them to communicate with the caller via text, enabling them to get the emergency service they need.

"The T9-1-1 service is one way we can improve inclusivity for DHHSI residents and their families," said FVRD Board Chair Jason Lum. "We are glad that our emergency service agencies and E-Comm are able to provide this service to our communities, bringing the best technology has to offer to ensure equal access."

Text with 9-1-1 is only available for the DHHSI community. Voice calling remains the only way to communicate with 9-1-1 services for a person who is not Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Speech Impaired.

Tips for T9-1-1 users:

- You must register for the service. Contact your cellphone service provider to ensure your device meets the T9-1-1 requirements.
- Your cellphone service provider will confirm your T9-1-1 registration. Do not call T9-1-1 to test the service.
- Text messages should be brief and concise and avoid slang and abbreviations.
- Text messages sent directly to the digits "9-1-1" do not reach emergency services. Registered users simply dial 9-1-1 and then E-Comm will initiate a text session with the caller.

E-Comm is the largest 9-1-1- call centre in British Columbia and is currently responsible for 89 percent of the province's 9-1-1- call volume. The company also provides dispatch services to 35 police and fire departments and operates the largest emergency radio system in the province.



<<PHOTO CAPTION>> CHHA-BC staff member Stephanie Bryant participates in a test call with the FVRD's new T9-1-1 service.

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