



FOR RELEASE
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Yukon's Emergency Response Centre to host new 9-1-1 call centre

WHITEHORSE—The Government of Yukon has allocated more than \$1 million in 2015/16, pending legislative approval, to lay the groundwork for expanding emergency 9-1-1 service to all Yukon communities.

"The Government of Yukon is investing \$334,000 to move the current 9-1-1 call centre to our new Emergency Response Centre – a modern facility designed for the purpose – and to outfit it with the necessary communications and support equipment," Minister of Justice Brad Cathers said. "We're also investing \$733,000 this year to support hiring and training additional 9-1-1 call centre staff."

The move to the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) is expected to be completed this fall.

"We are making a substantial commitment this year to expand Basic 9-1-1 service to rural communities by July 2016," Minister of Community Services Currie Dixon said. "We've continued to work with our partners – Northwestel, the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, the Association of Yukon Communities and the RCMP – to make progress on expanding 9-1-1 and this move is another important step."

The RCMP operates the territory's 9-1-1 call centre on behalf of the Yukon government. During the transition to the new ERC site, current 9-1-1 services will not be impacted.

"The current integration of RCMP dispatch and the 9-1-1 Public Service Answering Point improves community safety through dissemination of real-time information and the coordination of medical, fire and police responders," said Chief Superintendent Peter Clark, Commanding Officer of RCMP Yukon. "The RCMP continues to collaborate with Government of Yukon and stakeholders and looks forward to expanding the 9-1-1 service to all Yukon communities. Relocating our current call centre to the Emergency Response Centre and growing the number of dispatchers allows us to keep in step with the planned expansion of the 9-1-1 service."

Expansion of emergency 9-1-1 telephone service to rural Yukon communities has also been a priority of the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs and the Association of Yukon Communities.

"The Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs is very pleased to see continued progress in expanding lifesaving 9-1-1 service to all Yukon communities," association president Jim Regimbal said. "We know it'll take some time to get the system up and running so, for now, we urge all Yukoners to make sure that they know their local emergency numbers."

Association of Yukon Communities president Wayne Potoroka added: "Effective local emergency response services are essential to rural Yukon's local governments. The expansion of 9-1-1 will benefit local residents, travellers and visitors to our communities because they'll have one number to dial for help."

Currently, 9-1-1 service is only available within an 80 kilometre radius around Whitehorse. The Yukon government has committed to expanding basic emergency 9-1-1 service to communities across the territory by July 2016.

See backgrounder below.

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Backgrounder

- The Whitehorse Emergency Response Center (ERC) was designed and built to meet RCMP specifications for a 9-1-1 emergency call centre.
- The RCMP run the 9-1-1 emergency call centre under contract to the Government of Yukon. With the government's plans to expand 9-1-1 call service to communities across the territory by July 2016, now is the opportune time to move the call centre from its current location in downtown Whitehorse.
- The new call centre will be equipped with the latest telecommunications equipment needed to run the planned expanded 9-1-1 system; by moving to the ERC the Yukon government will continue the work to integrate emergency response services across the territory.
- In December 2014 the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) approved a unique, interim emergency call service for rural Yukon – similar to what Yukon government had proposed – but with unexpected conditions attached.
- For example, the CRTC required that calls not answered by community emergency responders would be automatically transferred either to a live person at the RCMP or to the 9-1-1 call centre in Whitehorse. This is very similar to how Basic 9-1-1 will function.
- This condition raised unexpected challenges. After careful analysis and discussion with Northwestel and our partners, the Yukon government has decided to focus its resources on implementing Basic 9-1-1 as quickly as possible – by July 2016 – and will not be implementing the interim solution as defined by the CRTC.
- The current seven-digit emergency numbers in Yukon communities continue to work. We urge Yukoners living in rural Yukon to make sure that they know their local numbers in an emergency situation. Emergency response services in rural communities – now, and when Basic 9-1-1 is in place – will continue to be delivered by municipal and volunteer fire departments, volunteer emergency medical services, community nursing stations and the RCMP.
- Callers in the Whitehorse 9-1-1 service area will be unaffected by this process and will continue to access 9-1-1 as they do now. The Whitehorse call area encompasses an area 80 km from the centre of Whitehorse and includes the rural communities of Mendenhall, Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne and Fox Lake.