



## Telecom Decision CRTC 2013-22

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Ottawa, 24 January 2013

### **CISC Emergency Services Working Group – Consensus report regarding Text Messaging with 9-1-1 trial and service implementation**

File numbers: 8621-C12-01/08 and 8665-C12-200807943

*Emergency telecommunications services, including 9-1-1, are critical to the health and safety of Canadians. The Commission considers that an effective 9-1-1 system that meets the needs of citizens is an important part of ensuring that Canadians have access to a world-class communication system. Accordingly, the Commission is continuously looking for ways to improve access to emergency telecommunications services.*

*Subsequent to a successful trial of a Text Messaging with 9-1-1 service in Montréal, Peel Region, Toronto, and Vancouver, the Commission decides that the service would improve access to 9-1-1 for hearing- or speech-impaired persons, and that the service is to be implemented nationwide as expeditiously as possible. This Text Messaging with 9-1-1 service will be reserved for the exclusive use of hearing- or speech-impaired persons who will have pre-registered for the service with their wireless carrier.*

*The Commission therefore directs wireless carriers and incumbent local exchange carriers to make the changes in their networks, systems, and processes required to support the provision of Text Messaging with 9-1-1 service for hearing- or speech-impaired persons within 12 months of the date of this decision. The Commission also requests the development of a service communications plan and education program that can be used to inform subscribers and the general public of the Text Messaging 9-1-1 service.*

#### **Background**

1. Emergency telecommunications services, including 9-1-1, are critical to the health and safety of Canadians. The Commission considers that an effective 9-1-1 system that meets the needs of citizens is an important part of ensuring that Canadians have access to a world-class communication system. Accordingly, the Commission is continuously looking for ways to improve access to emergency telecommunications services.
2. In Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2009-430, the Commission determined that the current means by which hearing- or speech-impaired persons access 9-1-1 services has certain limitations that can affect their ability to communicate clearly, quickly, or directly with 9-1-1 operators. The Commission noted that access to emergency services by hearing- or speech-impaired Canadians could be improved if they were able to communicate with 9-1-1 operators using text messaging.

3. The Commission therefore requested that the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG)<sup>1</sup> conduct an investigation and evaluation of the benefits, uses, and limitations of access to 9-1-1 services by hearing- or speech-impaired persons via various forms of text messaging, including Short Message Service (SMS).
4. In Telecom Decision 2010-224, the Commission approved the CISC ESWG consensus report<sup>2</sup> recommending a solution referred to as “SMS T9-1-1 via silent wireless voice call” (T9-1-1 service), which
  - provides direct access to 9-1-1 service for deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired Canadians;
  - supports the automatic routing of 9-1-1 calls to the appropriate public safety answering point (PSAP), even when roaming within Canada;
  - enables the automatic provision of the 9-1-1 caller’s contact and location information to the PSAP; and
  - uses existing network infrastructure, and therefore could be implemented in a short time frame.
5. The approved T9-1-1 service would only be provided to hearing- or speech-impaired persons who have pre-registered for it with their wireless carrier. Once registered, they would be able to call 9-1-1 in the traditional way by dialing the digits “911” on their cellphones. At this point, the 9-1-1 call would be flagged as coming from a pre-registered person with a hearing or speech impairment. Upon receiving a flagged 9-1-1 call, the 9-1-1 operator would respond by sending an SMS text message to the caller, and the caller and 9-1-1 operator would continue to communicate back and forth via text messages.
6. In the long term, the ESWG considered that next generation 9-1-1 technologies will enable the general public to communicate with PSAPs using various means, including the capability to send text messages directly to 9-1-1. These technologies are currently in development, and their implementation will be dependent on the availability and deployment of next generation 9-1-1 networks and platforms.
7. Given the above, the Commission requested the CISC ESWG to
  - conduct a technical trial of the T9-1-1 service,
  - file a final report on the outcome of the trial, and
  - make recommendations on any further actions necessary to implement the service.

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<sup>1</sup> CISC ESWG participants include wireless carriers, 9-1-1 service providers, public safety answering point organizations, representatives of hearing- and speech-impaired persons, and other interested parties.

<sup>2</sup> *Text Messaging to 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) Service*, 21 January 2010 (ESRE0051)

## Report

8. On 24 October 2012, the CISC ESWG submitted the following consensus report to the Commission for approval:
  - *Text to 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) via silent voice call to 9-1-1 Trial Results*, 3 October 2012, ESRE0061 (the Report)
9. This Report can be found under the “Reports” section of the ESWG page, which is available under the CISC section of the Commission’s website at [www.crtc.gc.ca](http://www.crtc.gc.ca).
10. In the Report, the ESWG concluded that the T9-1-1 trial, which took place in Montréal, Peel Region, Toronto, and Vancouver, was a success and that a T9-1-1 service would improve access to 9-1-1 for hearing- or speech-impaired persons. As a result, the ESWG, by consensus, recommended the implementation of a T9-1-1 service across Canada by all wireless service providers (including resellers), incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs), and PSAPs.
11. The Report also provided estimated implementation time frames for the various stakeholders to support the provision of a T9-1-1 service, which varied from 7 to 29 months from the date of Commission approval.

## Commission’s analysis and determinations

12. The Commission notes that access to emergency telecommunications services, including 9-1-1, is critical to the health and safety of all Canadians. The Commission has also identified that there are significant access limitations to 9-1-1 services for hearing- or speech-impaired Canadians. The Commission further notes that there is consensus among 9-1-1 service stakeholders that it would be in the public interest to implement a T9-1-1 service. Consequently, the Commission is of the view that a T9-1-1 service should be implemented as soon as reasonably possible.
13. After reviewing the estimated implementation time frames provided in the Report, the Commission considers that 12 months is sufficient for both wireless carriers and ILECs to make the changes required in their networks, systems, and processes to support the provision of T9-1-1. The Commission notes that wireless carriers and MTS Inc. (MTS) proposed longer time frames. However, the Commission considers that there was insufficient justification for their proposed time frames of more than 12 months because, in its view, the activities that wireless carriers and MTS are requesting additional time for can be completed within the 12-month period, if treated as a high priority.
14. The Commission therefore **approves** the recommendations in the Report and directs all wireless carriers and ILECs to make the changes required to support the provision of T9-1-1 service within 12 months of the date of this decision.

15. The Commission notes that the implementation of T9-1-1 service in particular areas across the country is dependent on the ability of the PSAP that serves that area to be ready to support T9-1-1 service. The Commission therefore encourages municipal and provincial governments to expeditiously make the changes required in the PSAPs' systems in order to support provisioning of T9-1-1 service in the areas served by their PSAPs, the most critical change being the conversion of the PSAPs' existing 9-1-1 data connections with ILECs to Internet Protocol-based connections.
16. The Commission expects that when all T9-1-1 stakeholders (wireless carriers, ILECs, and PSAPs) are ready to support the T9-1-1 service in a particular area, the service will immediately be made available to hearing- or speech-impaired persons in that area.
17. The Commission also requests the ESWG to coordinate stakeholders' activities to develop a detailed T9-1-1 service rollout schedule and submit it to the Commission for information purposes within three months of the date of this decision.
18. The Commission notes that, due to the nature of the T9-1-1 service, hearing- or speech-impaired persons will need to understand how to pre-register and access the service, as well as its restrictions and limitations. Moreover, the general public will need to be informed about the fact that the service is reserved for pre-registered hearing- or speech-impaired persons. The Commission therefore requests that the ESWG, in conjunction with all involved stakeholders, develop a T9-1-1 service communications plan and education program that can be used to inform subscribers and the general public of the T9-1-1 service.

Secretary General

### **Related documents**

- *CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee – Improving access to emergency services for people with hearing and speech disabilities*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2010-224, 21 April 2010
- *Accessibility of telecommunications and broadcasting services*, Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2009-430, 21 July 2009, as amended by Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2009-430-1, 17 December 2009