



For immediate release

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Abandoned emergency calls are costly

As National Public Safety Telecommunications Week approaches, the North Island 9-1-1 Corporation is reminding everyone of problems caused by abandoned calls to the emergency line.

In 2012, there were 69,244 9-1-1 calls taken at the operational communication centre (OCC) based in Courtenay, with 6,976 of those calls being abandoned, which means that after the call was made – either purposefully or by accident – the caller hung up. Of these 6,796 calls, 4628 calls were from cell phones and 837 were from residential land lines. In the first two months of 2013, the OCC has taken over 9,000 calls, and 818 of those were abandoned – 521 of them coming from cell phones.

Operators are required to call back these dropped calls to determine whether they are real emergencies. If the operator can't contact anyone, a police officer is dispatched to physically verify. Determining the location of a cell phone dropped or abandoned call requires even more effort. It means contacting the cell service provider to obtain subscriber information, obtaining their GPS coordinates and then dispatching police to the location.

“Sadly, there has been an increasing trend in unintended emergency calls that, in turn, remove valuable time and resources from attending true emergency cases,” said Stephanie Bremer, acting manager of the OCC. “We are asking the public to please stay on the line if you accidentally call 9-1-1. Just tell the operator there is no emergency. Also, pick up the phone when you receive a call back after accidentally dialling the emergency line. Everyone will appreciate your help.”

Other useful tips to eliminate accidental dialing 9-1-1 include:

- Remove mobile phones from pockets while you are in a car, to avoid “pocket dialling”
- Locking your mobile phone when not in use, to also avoid “pocket dialling”
- Removing 9-1-1 from programmed speed dials, whether on your mobile phone or land line

National Public Safety Telecommunications Week is designed to heighten awareness of those who respond to emergency calls and who dispatch emergency professionals and equipment during times of crisis.

The North Island 9-1-1 Corporation was established in 1995 and manages the provision of 9-1-1 to the regional districts of the Comox Valley, Strathcona, Mt. Waddington, Powell River, Alberni-Clayoquot and a portion of the Nanaimo Regional District.

Useful information on emergency calling can be found at www.ni911.ca.

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