Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes

# Telecom Decision CRTC 2008-37

Ottawa, 2 May 2008

## Enhanced community notification service

Reference: 8665-C12-200507212 and 8665-S62-200405888

*In this Decision, the Commission approves the recommendations of the Emergency Services Working Group to facilitate the implementation of enhanced community notification service.*

## Introduction

1. In Telecom Decision 2007-13, the Commission requested the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) to establish a set of standard guidelines, security procedures, processes and practices for enhanced community notification service (CNS).[1] The Commission also requested CISC to identify any operational issues associated with the implementation of the service.

2. The Commission requested CISC to submit to the Commission, within 12 months of the date of the Decision, a report identifying proposed security, privacy and accountability standards; any issues with establishing such standards; the viable solutions for any issues; and any recommendations with supporting rationale to improve the security, privacy and accountability of enhanced CNS. The Commission also requested CISC to identify the operational issues, and provide viable solutions and recommendations with supporting rationale, that would improve enhanced CNS implementation.

3. The CISC Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG)[2] submitted consensus report ESRE045b to the Commission entitled *Report on the use of E9-1-1 information for the purpose of providing an enhanced community notification service (ECNS)*, 4 March 2008 (the Report).

4. The Report is available on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca.

5. In the Report, the ESWG made recommendations with regard to several issues, including the following:

    - Incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) should be responsible to develop a standard agreement that would be used by each jurisdiction having primary authority for 9-1-1 services to contract for enhanced CNS services from the applicable ILEC;

[1] Enhanced community notification service provides public authorities responsible for the provision of critical emergency services with access to enhanced 9-1-1 database information for the purpose of providing telephony-based emergency public alerts.
[2] The ESWG formed an ad-hoc working group, the Enhanced CNS Committee, to deal with this particular issue.

- Best practices, including the use of encryption, firewalls, and transaction/audit trails, should be used to ensure that confidential consumer information is protected at all times and is only available for authorized enhanced CNS users;

- Implementation of enhanced CNS should include, and be funded by public authorities to include, a continual public education program that would not be limited to billing inserts but would include other notification methods such as on-line billing, campaigns through community events, print and broadcast media;

- The public education program should inform the public of any limitations of enhanced CNS and ensure that vulnerable people such as the elderly, those with disabilities and those with language, literacy, cultural, or other impediments are adequately informed; and

- Because each of the ILEC's 9-1-1 databases, data interfaces, and network congestion concerns are different, the design, delivery, and operation of enhanced CNS could be different from ILEC to ILEC. The specifics of enhanced CNS should be identified by each ILEC in its respective tariffs.

6. The ESWG also indicated in the Report that there remained unresolved issues with no viable technical solutions at this time. Among these unresolved issues, the ESWG indicated that enhanced CNS could not support the addition of wireless service subscribers and nomadic Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service subscribers into the 9-1-1 database, nor was there a way to identify subscribers who are deaf or hard of hearing in the E9-1-1 database across all ILECs.

## Commission's analysis and determinations

7. The Commission notes that the ESWG indicated that as a result of the lack of any viable technical solutions, CNS could not support the addition of wireless service subscribers and nomadic VoIP service subscribers into the E9-1-1 database, nor was there a way to identify subscribers who are deaf or hard of hearing in the E9-1-1 database across all ILECs.

8. As a result, the Commission notes that it is important that public authorities find and use other means of providing emergency public alerts to the deaf or hard of hearing, and wireless and nomadic VoIP subscribers. The Commission notes that it has also approved the use of a broadcasting emergency alert service that would complement enhanced CNS. This broadcasting emergency alert service provides audio alerts on radio, and audio and visual emergency alerts on television. The visual emergency alerts on television provide a text alert that enables persons who are deaf or hard of hearing to receive emergency alert notification.

9. The Commission further notes that Industry Canada is working with the wireless industry to investigate and test the provision of national emergency alerts to wireless subscribers using wireless text message technology. The Commission notes that the Federal Communications Commission in the United States recently approved a similar national emergency wireless text message alert system.

10. According to the Report, young persons who are deaf or hard of hearing currently rely more on wireless text message technology than on wireline voice telephony. Consequently, by using wireless text messages to provide emergency public alerts, a public authority would also be in a better position to serve persons who are deaf or hard of hearing in the future.

11. The Commission considers that public authorities also have the option of creating databases of wireless and nomadic VoIP subscribers, as well as subscribers who are deaf or hard of hearing, for their use when carrying out emergency public alerts. For instance, the Commission notes that in some jurisdictions in the United States, public authorities have set up such databases by asking the public to voluntarily register their wireless telephone number(s) and email address(es) for inclusion into a public alert database. This information is registered into the database using an online or a telephone-based sign up process.

12. The Commission notes that the technical limitations identified in the Report do not impede the use of the existing E9-1-1 database for the purpose of providing enhanced CNS. The Commission considers that as viable solutions to address the unresolved issues identified in the Report become available in the future, the Commission will, at that time, request the ESWG to investigate how these solutions could be incorporated into enhanced CNS.

13. Consequently, the Commission considers that the benefits of implementing enhanced CNS are still in the public interest. Accordingly, the Commission **approves** the recommendations in the Report and determines that enhanced CNS should be made available as soon as possible.

Secretary General

## Related document

- *Use of E9-1-1 information for the purpose of providing an enhanced community notification service*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2007-13, 28 February 2007