



## Telecom Decision CRTC 2010-224

Ottawa, 21 April 2010

### **CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee – Improving access to emergency services for people with hearing and speech disabilities**

File number: 8665-C12-200807943

1. In *Accessibility of telecommunications and broadcasting services*, Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2009-430, 21 July 2009, the Commission requested that the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG) conduct an investigation and evaluation of the benefits, uses, and limitations of access to 9-1-1 services by people with hearing or speech disabilities via various forms of text messaging, including short message service (SMS), Instant Messaging (IM), Real-Time Text (RTT), and Internet Protocol (IP) Relay, and file a report by 21 January 2010.
2. On 21 January 2010, the CISC ESWG submitted the following consensus report to the Commission for approval:
  - *Text Messaging to 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) Service*, 21 January 2010 (ESRE0051)

The consensus report is available on the Commission's website at [www.crtc.gc.ca](http://www.crtc.gc.ca).

3. In the report, the CISC ESWG concluded that text messaging to 9-1-1 (T9-1-1) via SMS, IM, RTT, and IP Relay technology are not viable solutions at this time for people with hearing or speech disabilities to access 9-1-1 call centres, commonly known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), for the following reasons:
  - SMS, IM, RTT, and IP Relay do not support automatic routing to the appropriate PSAP or the automatic provision of caller location information to the PSAP; and
  - IM and RTT do not provide automatic subscriber identification information, such as a telephone number, which is provided automatically with SMS.
4. In addition, the CISC ESWG considered that, in the long term, next-generation 9-1-1 standards and technologies that are currently in development could enable users to access PSAPs via multiple methods of texting to 9-1-1. The implementation of these capabilities will depend on the maturation level of IP networking and next-generation 9-1-1 networks and platforms. The CISC ESWG indicated that it would monitor these technologies and make recommendations on them when they meet enhanced 9-1-1 service criteria.

5. In the short term, the CISC ESWG proposed further investigation of a potential work-around solution referred to as "SMS T9-1-1 via silent wireless voice call." With this solution, when a pre-registered person with a hearing or speech disability initiates contact with a PSAP by dialing 9-1-1 on a cellphone, that person's contact and location information would automatically be transmitted in the same way it is for other cellphone users, but the 9-1-1 call would be flagged as coming from a person with a hearing or speech disability. Upon receiving a flagged 9-1-1 call, the 9-1-1 operator would respond by sending an SMS text message to the caller, thus enabling the caller to text back and forth with the operator. However, this solution would not enable people to initiate a 9-1-1 call via text message or to text directly to 9-1-1, and would require PSAPs to change their call handling procedures.
6. The CISC ESWG proposed to undertake a technical trial of the SMS T9-1-1 via silent wireless voice call solution by conducting various activities identified in the report. The CISC ESWG expects to take 12 to 18 months to implement and operate the trial.
7. The CISC ESWG recommended this technical trial on the basis that the SMS T9-1-1 via silent wireless voice call solution
  - supports the automatic routing of 9-1-1 calls to the appropriate PSAP;
  - enables the automatic provision of the 9-1-1 caller's contact and location information to the PSAP; and
  - uses existing network infrastructure, which would reduce implementation time.
8. The Commission has reviewed and **approves** the recommendations in the above-noted consensus report. The Commission requests that the CISC ESWG
  - immediately begin the activities required to implement the technical trial of the solution recommended in the report, including completing the investigation into the various technical specifications, along with wireless carriers, 9-1-1 service providers, and the public safety community;
  - file a status report with the Commission, every six months from the date of this decision, outlining the progress of activities undertaken to implement the technical trial and identifying the remaining activities and time frames required to complete the trial; and
  - file a final report on the outcome of the trial, including any further actions that would be required to implement the service.

9. After the CISC ESWG has made recommendations based on the information generated by the trial and on the related technical specifications, the Commission will determine what further process, if any, is required regarding policy issues. This could include how registration for use of the service would be carried out and proposed methods of funding.

Secretary General

*This document is available in alternative format upon request, and may also be examined in PDF format or in HTML at the following Internet site:*  
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca>.