

MR. KIERON TESTART
CHAIR
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

9-1-1 Program Implementation

Thank you for your April 27, 2018 letter in response to the March 15, 2018 presentation on implementation of a 9-1-1 emergency service program in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Feedback received from the Standing Committee on Government Operations (SCOGO) during the presentation was valuable in helping to shape the GNWT's Implementation Plan for the NWT 9-1-1 (see attached). In response to SCOGO's comments, Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and Health and Social Services (HSS) offer the following clarification.

1. Co-Location with Med-Response

The GNWT welcomes SCOGO's support for the co-location model, which offers optimum service quality for residents. While the model will involve a shared workspace, Med-Response does not provide services direct to the public and therefore does not utilize interpretation services.

Similar to other GNWT services and 9-1-1 programs across Canada, NWT 9-1-1 will incorporate a high quality, real-time language service which provides over-the-phone interpretation. This easy to use approach will connect 9-1-1 staff and callers with an interpreter within seconds. The procedure is also customizable to help streamline call flow, improve efficiency, and to meet specific business needs for the 9-1-1 service.

Regarding staffing numbers, Med-Response has five (5) full time equivalent (FTE) Emergency Medical Dispatchers, four (4) FTE Emergency Medical Coordinators (Nursing), one (1) supervisor and .26 relief FTEs. 9-1-1 will require six (6) Telecommunicators, one (1) Systems Administrator and one (1) 9-1-1 Program Manager which is currently on strength to help implement the system. Implementation of 9-1-1 will not require incremental staff resources for Med-Response.

2. Updated Community Mapping and Civic Addressing

Community addressing is not mandatory for implementation of NWT 9-1-1, although it greatly enhances system effectiveness in helping deploy emergency services to the correct location when needed. MACA is assisting communities to implement civic addressing plans, which may be combined with development of a broader community plan. A bylaw template will be published to help communities formally adopt an addressing plan. A webinar will be delivered in spring 2018 to facilitate engagement with community governments, and a guide book will be distributed to help community governments understand the process of developing an addressing plan. Presently, ten (10) communities administer civic addressing bylaws; nine (9) communities are at various stages of implementing an addressing plan; and the remainder have not yet made it a priority. Those choosing to implement an addressing plan may do so using capital and operations and maintenance funding provided annually by MACA.

Regarding proper identification for locations, NWT 9-1-1 Telecommunicators do not dispatch emergency services to the location of a caller. Rather, caller information is conveyed to local first responders who are familiar with colloquial names commonly used in their community. To the extent possible however, all location and GPS location identifiers, including colloquial names, will be programmed in the computer-aided dispatch software used by 9-1-1 staff. Given the importance of location identification to next-generation 9-1-1, preparations have commenced to develop a robust call location database for the NWT.

3. Full 9-1-1 Coverage Across the Northwest Territories

The GNWT shares Committee's concerns regarding the lack of cell phone coverage on territorial highways. An important partner for 9-1-1 implementation is NorthwesTel which is the incumbent telephone company in the NWT. The GNWT will take full advantage of this opportunity to explore options and opportunities to enhance cellular connectivity in remote areas in the NWT. All NWT communities currently receive land or cell phone coverage adequate for basic 9-1-1 service. Further, cellular phone coverage is typically available within approximately 20 km of communities, depending on geography. This information will be conveyed as part of the public awareness campaign.

4. Public Communications and Signage

The GNWT agrees with Committee's comment concerning the need for public education about service availability. An integral part of the Implementation Plan is a public awareness campaign that will educate residents on when to call 9-1-1; when not to call 9-1-1; what services are available; and how callers can help 9-1-1 staff provide residents and visitors with the necessary resources in emergency situations. As per Committee's wishes, the GNWT will share the awareness campaign with Members prior to implementation. The GNWT fully expects the campaign will include highway and airport signage.

5. Full Cost Recovery

The GNWT appreciates SCOGO's support for full-cost recovery, which is a common approach for most jurisdictions in Canada. The 2015 POMAX report and subsequent 2016 addendum report include financial projections based on an operating model involving the City of Yellowknife, and an annual GNWT subsidy of approximately \$266,000. With a stand-alone 9-1-1 call centre now being implemented, the GNWT fully expects that a full cost-recovery model will result in user fees higher than originally projected in the 2015 POMAX report.

As part of the upcoming 2019-2020 business planning process, MACA will present a revised operating budget for NWT 9-1-1 based on the amended operating model and a final validation of cost data. Ultimately, it's the GNWT's goal to operate NWT 9-1-1 in an effective and fiscally responsible manner.

6. Project Timelines and Deliverables

Please find attached an Implementation Plan for NWT 9-1-1, which conveys the GNWT's vision for 9-1-1; the work involved to effectively implement 9-1-1; and a corresponding timeline for key milestones.

The communications plan discussed during the March 15, 2018 presentation is depicted in the Implementation Plan as a public awareness campaign, and the GNWT remains fully committed to sharing this document with SCOGO prior to launch.

Once again, thank you for your comments and we look forward to keeping Committee informed as key milestones are reached.

Glen Abernethy
Minister of Health and Social Services

Alfred Moses
Minister of Municipal
and Community Affairs

Attachment

c. Ms. Eleanor Young
Deputy Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs

Mr. Bruce Cooper
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Ms. Jennifer Franki-Smith
Committee Clerk, Legislative Assembly

Government of
Northwest Territories

9-1-1

Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Implementation Plan

2018 to 2020



Minister's Message



The Government of Northwest Territories is committed to improving access to emergency services and enhancing community wellness and safety.

In 2018, Municipal and Community Affairs started implementation of a Basic 9-1-1 system for the Northwest Territories. Referred to as Northwest Territories 9-1-1, this new system will greatly improve our ability to connect citizens and visitors with local emergency services, such as police, fire, and ambulance. Implementation will incorporate national best practices and standards, and the system will go live in summer 2019.

Several important initiatives lie ahead, which are critical in achieving success. It is my pleasure to present the Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Implementation Plan to help establish a common understanding of the GNWT's vision for 9-1-1, and the work necessary to effectively implement the system.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all emergency services and community governments whose participation and contributions to this important public safety initiative are essential.

***The Honourable Alfred Moses,
Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs***

Vision

To serve the public, community first responders, and territorial public safety agencies with effective emergency communications services.

Mission

To establish a communication system that allows any resident or visitor to the Northwest Territories to contact the appropriate emergency services by dialing 9-1-1.

Goals

1. Operate Northwest Territories (NWT) 9-1-1 in an effective and fiscally responsible manner;
2. Provide and maintain NWT 9-1-1 infrastructure including the equipment, network, and databases required to operate a reliable 9-1-1 system;
3. Increase public awareness of 9-1-1 and promote the proper use of the 9-1-1 system;
4. Provide training programs which enable NWT 9-1-1 staff to effectively process 9-1-1 calls; and
5. Ensure that 9-1-1 emergency calls, from all sources, are routed to the proper response agencies, and these agencies receive accurate and reliable information.

“9-1-1” is the universally recognized three-digit combination that people in North America dial when they need help in an emergency. It is dialed in life-threatening situations, during medical emergencies, when a crime is in progress or when there is a fire.

Service Statement

NWT 9-1-1 is for access to police, fire, rescue or medical emergencies **when immediate action is required**: when someone’s health, safety or property is in jeopardy or a crime is in progress.

NWT 9-1-1 will connect residents to available emergency services such as police, fire, rescue and ambulance services. NWT 9-1-1 staff will provide over-the-phone basic pre-arrival emergency medical instructions such as talking callers through performing CPR or other basic first aid.

Did you know that if a cell phone is locked out or has been barred from making outgoing calls (e.g., from not paying a bill), often “emergency” can still be pressed and the phone automatically calls 9-1-1? In 2017, 89% of all calls in North America were made by cell phones.

NWT 9-1-1 will link callers with interpretation services for those preferring another language.

NWT 9-1-1 will incorporate technologies to connect with callers who have hearing or speech communication impairments.

NWT 9-1-1 will manage and integrate the NWT public alerting system (NWT Alert Ready) into daily operations, providing critical information on emergencies in real time so citizens can act to protect themselves, their loved ones and their property.

Key Initiatives

The following key initiatives are essential for implementation of NWT 9-1-1.

Legislation

Legislation will be passed to support the creation and administration of the 9-1-1 service, and the necessary policies and standards. The legislation will mandate participation in the system by all public emergency services in the NWT, and it will result in a call answer fee to allow the service to be run on a full cost-recovery basis. As a result, residents will see a small charge on their telephone bills to cover operating costs, which will include an infrastructure and administration fee from the telephone company.

Municipal and Community Affairs anticipates introducing the new legislation in fall 2018, and fees will come into effect when the legislation passes.

Community Addressing

Although community addressing will not be mandatory for implementation of NWT 9-1-1, it will greatly enhance system effectiveness in helping deploy emergency services to the correct location when needed.

Municipal and Community Affairs is assisting communities to develop an addressing plan, which may be combined with development of a community plan.

Guidance is available to assist in developing an addressing scheme and an appropriate bylaw. A

Webinar will soon be available to help facilitate engagement with community governments.

Know your location at all times! You should know what community you are in, building or home address, cross streets, landmarks, and any other information that will help emergency personnel find you.

Emergency Communications Centre

An Emergency Communications Centre (ECC) is a secure, robust office space, which needs to be arranged for the NWT 9-1-1 system. The ECC will have a dispatch room with specialized desks, computer-aided dispatch software, phone systems and a host of supporting computer systems.

The entire office space will be connected to backup systems such as power, computer, telephone and heating, allowing for uninterrupted services.



Emergency Services Directory

Municipal and Community Affairs will work with community governments to establish and maintain an emergency services directory for NWT 9-1-1 staff. The directory will contain phone numbers for available emergency services in all communities. This information is crucial in helping 9-1-1 staff connect callers with the right help.

Recruitment and Training

A critical element for NWT 9-1-1 is knowledgeable, qualified staff. NWT 9-1-1 staff provide a vital service that supports both public and first responder safety through the delivery of information and assistance. A recruitment strategy will target candidates most familiar with the North's demographics, culture and languages.

The primary duties of NWT 9-1-1 staff will be to direct emergency calls to the appropriate emergency service; provide pre-arrival instructions for emergency medical calls; and interpret, analyze and anticipate a caller's situation to resolve problems, provide information, and connect emergency services or refer callers to other agencies. Individuals will receive job-specific training to acquire the competencies and skills necessary to become highly effective 9-1-1 staff.

Awareness Campaign

Prior to implementation and ongoing, an awareness campaign will educate residents on when to call 9-1-1; when not to call 9-1-1; what services are available; and how callers can help 9-1-1 staff provide residents and visitors with the necessary resources in emergency situations. Annual efforts will also focus on school age children.

Public education materials will be distributed regularly to help promote general awareness of 9-1-1 services, areas of limited cellular coverage, and help teach individuals how to effectively use 9-1-1.



Testing and Go Live

NWT 9-1-1 is expected to go live in the summer 2019. Before the go-live date, NWT 9-1-1 systems will undergo rigorous testing, as well as privacy and security assessments. During the transition period, both the current local emergency numbers and NWT 9-1-1 will be operational, ensuring emergency services can be reached as residents become familiar with the new 9-1-1 system.

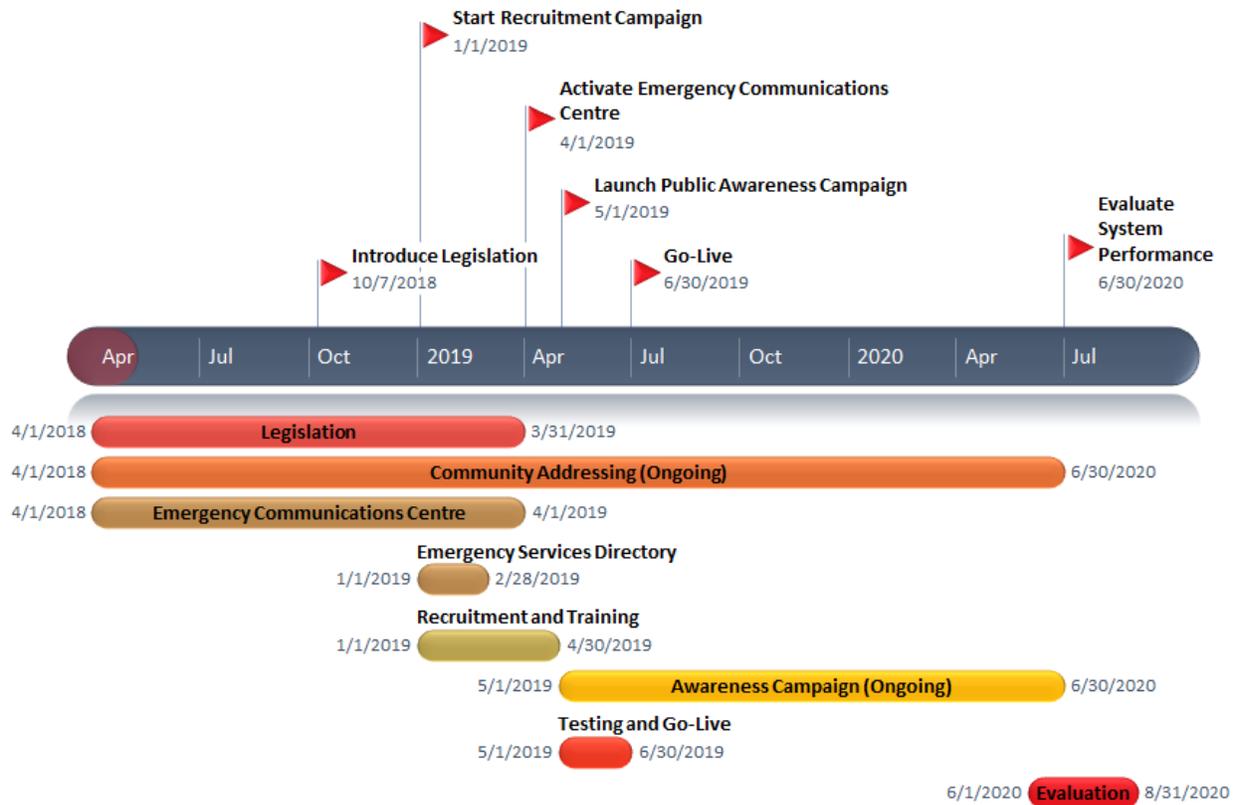
Evaluation

Once NWT 9-1-1 has been operational for twelve months, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted to ensure the system is meeting our needs. Information and data collected will help ensure staff have appropriate training and resources are adequately assigned to meet the call types and volumes received by the Emergency Communications Centre.

The evaluation will also include client satisfaction and community surveys to ensure a citizen-centred approach to service delivery.

Did you know children as young as three years old who have been taught to call 9-1-1 have saved lives? Children and youth save thousands of lives every year by calling 9-1-1!

Implementation Timeline



More Information

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