



**Public safety advisory,
9-1-1 and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP),
Important message for subscribers**

Broadcast time: 10:00
Thursday, March 29, 2007

Communications Services
416-808-8800

Toronto Emergency Services have joined together to issue a public safety advisory to consumers. Subscribers to some VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone services may not be aware of certain technical limitations in accessing 9-1-1 during an emergency.

VoIP has been offered in Toronto since January 2004, using broadband internet connections instead of the traditional telephone network. The ever-increasing popularity of VoIP telephone service raises a number of challenges for the emergency services.

The traditional 9-1-1 system, based on the use of landlines, ensures that a 9-1-1 call will go to the correct 9-1-1 Centre. At the same time, it will provide automatic address and telephone number information to make certain help will find the caller, even if they are not able to speak. This is known as Enhanced 9-1-1.

These unique 9-1-1 features are not guaranteed with some VoIP telephone services. Voice over Internet Protocol means the phone has no fixed address and therefore Enhanced 9-1-1 service is unavailable. The call has to be answered by a "third party operator service" so that it can then be transferred to a 9-1-1 Centre.

Possible 9-1-1 limitations when using VoIP:

- the VoIP service operator may send a request for emergency service to the wrong 9-1-1 Centre or a non-emergency line causing a potential delay in response,
- if a caller is unable to speak, or if the call is disconnected, the operator may not have automatic location information to give to 9-1-1 Call-takers,
- access to 9-1-1 service for VoIP customers may not be available during a power failure or if the internet connection is disrupted,
- VoIP services do not have to enlist the use of a Language Line interpretation service as currently used by the Toronto 9-1-1 Centre.

Consumers must be aware of these limitations when deciding whether to purchase VoIP

service and equipment. Obtaining answers to the following questions may help:

- Will I be able to contact my Toronto 9–1–1 Centre without the use of a third– party operator?
- When dialling 9–1–1, will my phone number and address be readily displayed in the Toronto 9–1–1 Centre (Enhanced 9–1–1)?

Ensuring direct and immediate public access to 9–1–1 is of great concern to Toronto's Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services. Speak with potential service providers for a full description of their 9–1–1 limitations.

For further information, please call Judy Broomfield, Toronto Police Service, at 416–808–8899; Captain Michael Strapko, Toronto Fire Services, at 416–338–0763; or Deputy Chief Norm Lambert, Emergency Medical Services at 416–392–2061.

Constable Victor Kwong, Public Information, for Staff Inspector Earl Witty, Communications Services