

Chapter 6

Department of Public Safety

New Brunswick's

Emergency 9-1-1 Service

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Department of Public Safety

New Brunswick's Emergency 9-1-1 Service

Overview

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to inform the Legislative Assembly about the work we did on New Brunswick's Emergency 9-1-1 Service (9-1-1 service). We provide information on both the 9-1-1 service and challenges faced by the service. We did not conduct an audit as explained in the section - Scope of Our Work.

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Scope of Our Work

In this section The purpose of this section is to explain the extent of our work on the 9-1-1 service. This section contains the following topics:

- why we chose the 9-1-1 service
 - what we did
 - what we did not do
 - rationale for our decision not to audit, and
 - contents of this chapter.
-

Why we chose the 9-1-1 service The 9-1-1 service is responsible for transferring a caller in an emergency situation to the appropriate emergency service provider, who will respond to the emergency. The 9-1-1 service is an essential service for the residents of New Brunswick that we believe would be of interest to the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, we did a preliminary review to determine the extent of our work.

What we did Our Office officially informed the Department of Public Safety (Department) in November 2005 that we would conduct an audit of the Province's 9-1-1 service. We did preliminary work from February to April, 2006. Our work focused on 9-1-1 call receive and transfer responsibilities of the 9-1-1 Bureau. (The 9-1-1 Bureau, a division of the Department, is also responsible for civic addressing and data maintenance operations.)

Our work included the following:

- We interviewed staff members from the Department, the Office of the Comptroller and the Department of Health – Ambulance Services.
 - We visited one Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), a call centre for the 9-1-1 service. We spoke with employees and observed operations.
 - We reviewed information provided by the Department (including documentation from the internal review), the Office of the Comptroller, and the Office of the Chief Coroner.
 - We reviewed recent audit reports done by the Auditor Generals' offices in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.
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Scope of Our Work, Continued

What we did not do

We decided not to do an audit, based on the findings from our preliminary review. This means we did not develop audit objectives and detailed criteria, and we did not perform audit procedures, such as testing samples.

Rationale for our decision not to audit

Significant reasons for our decision not to conduct a comprehensive audit of the 9-1-1 service included the following:

- The Office of the Comptroller (as a result of their last audit performed in 2004) and the Coroner's Office (as a result of the inquest done in July 2003) both reported favorably on the 9-1-1 service.
- An internal review of the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems was completed in October 2004. It identified the challenges facing the 9-1-1 service and made recommendations for improvement. We reviewed the process and information generated during the review, and we concluded that the internal review was comprehensive.

The Department publicly announced the improvements to be made to the 9-1-1 service to address the challenges identified by the internal review. We saw evidence that the Department is actively implementing the improvements.

- According to a comparative analysis of 9-1-1 services offered within Canada (done in 2004 as part of the internal review), the 9-1-1 service compares well to other Canadian jurisdictions. The analysis indicated that New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are the only provinces within Canada offering border-to-border "Enhanced 9-1-1 service". These provinces also have "Phase I cellular service" for most cell phones. Some provinces have areas with "Enhanced 9-1-1 service", while only "Basic 9-1-1 service" is offered in other areas. (The types of 9-1-1 service are described in the section - Background Information on the NB 9-1-1 Service - About the 9-1-1 service.)
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Contents of this chapter

We are reporting the following:

- background information on the 9-1-1 service in New Brunswick
 - the Department's actions on issues identified by reviews, and
 - significant observations made during our work, both positive observations and areas for improvement.
-

Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service

- In this section** The purpose of this section is to provide general information on the 9-1-1 service. This section contains the following topics:
- significant events
 - about the 9-1-1 service
 - about 9-1-1 calls
 - trend analysis on 9-1-1 calls
 - funding for the 9-1-1 service
 - improvements to the 9-1-1 service
 - parties involved with delivering emergency services, and
 - committee work contributing to 9-1-1.

Significant events Significant events relating to the 9-1-1 service are summarized here.

Year	Event
1972	Canada recognizes "9-1-1" as an emergency number. Some municipalities establish a 9-1-1 service.
1994	The current provincial service in NB begins. The Act is assented to in December 1994 and comes into force September 1995.
1997	New Brunswick has "Enhanced 9-1-1" service from border-to-border for landlines. The Department states, " <i>At the time of implementation, New Brunswick was the second jurisdiction in Canada, and fourth in North America to establish a province or statewide enhanced 9-1-1 system.</i> "
2002	Ministers from the departments of Public Safety and Health & Wellness announce that government will conduct a review of the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems.
2004	The internal review of the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems is completed; improvements to the existing service are announced.
2005	A monthly charge to all telephone subscribers is implemented to fund the proposed improvements. The monthly fee is \$.53/month for each outgoing capable telephone line.

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Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service, Continued

About the 9-1-1 service *New Brunswick's emergency 9-1-1 service* (9-1-1) is a telephone call-taking and call-transfer service, which is available to all New Brunswickers in both official languages, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. With this service in place, an individual can dial the three-digit number to report an emergency and the call will be transferred to the appropriate emergency service provider's dispatch service, which is responsible for dispatching the emergency vehicles. Emergency service providers (police force, fire department, ambulance service) and their dispatch are outside of the Bureau's 9-1-1 service responsibilities.

The Minister of Public Safety is responsible for the administration of the *Emergency 911 Act* and the regulations, which provide the authority, definitions and requirements for the service.

Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) handle all 9-1-1 calls at seven locations throughout the province: Miramichi, Codiac, Saint John, Bathurst, Edmundston, Fredericton and RCMP "J" Division. It is planned that as of October 2006, the RCMP "J" Division will stop handling 9-1-1 calls. As a result, the regional boundaries have been reset and agreements are made with the six municipalities to handle all 9-1-1 calls.

"Basic 9-1-1 service" allows the caller to dial 9-1-1 to report an emergency and access emergency service providers. Without this service, callers must dial the appropriate phone number for an emergency service themselves. (Some cell-phone providers in NB provide only basic 9-1-1 service.)

"Enhanced 9-1-1 service" allows the 9-1-1 operator to see the phone number and address of the call to 9-1-1 and process the call, even when the caller is unable to speak. (New Brunswick has border-to-border enhanced 9-1-1 service for landline phone calls.)

"Phase 1 cellular service" allows the 9-1-1 operator to see the cellular phone number and cellular tower civic address for a 9-1-1 call made using a cell phone. (Some cell-phone providers in NB provide Phase I cellular service.)

About 9-1-1 calls

The Department reports that approximately 150,000 calls are made annually and the average breakdown of the 9-1-1 calls is as follows:

- 43% - non-emergency
- 26% - police
- 23% - ambulance
- 4% - fire
- 4% - poison control

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Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service, Continued

About 9-1-1 calls (continued)

The average distribution of 9-1-1 calls among the PSAPs is shown in this table.¹ The Department informed us that regional 9-1-1 boundaries were developed by call volume and emergency response service areas and not by population base.

PSAP	% of total calls
Bathurst	16%
Edmundston	7%
Fredericton	21%
Miramichi	6%
Codiac and RCMP "J" Division ²	26%
Saint John	24%

Trend analysis on 9-1-1 calls

This table shows the number of 9-1-1 calls handled over the years.

	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Total 9-1-1 calls received	139,638	148,651	151,025	146,540	136,741	146,274	114,003
Calls received from cellular phones (Departmental estimates)	47,477 ³ (34%)	47,426 (32%)	50,488 (33%)	at least 25%	Information not available		

Source: Departmental Annual Reports

Continued on next page

¹ Calculated by the Office of the Auditor General using figures provided by the Department for December 2005.

² The RCMP "J" Division was still processing 9-1-1 calls in the areas surrounding Moncton in December 2005.

³ Calculated by the Office of the Auditor General using figures provided by the Department.

Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service, Continued

- Funding for the 9-1-1 service** New Brunswickers pay for the 9-1-1 service via fees on their monthly telephone bill. There are two fees:
- “NB 9-1-1 Emergency Service” charge is a federally regulated fee for the 9-1-1 infrastructure, provided by Aliant. This fee has been charged since the introduction of the 9-1-1 service. It has changed over the years and is currently \$.29/month for landline phone services and \$.25-.50/month for cell phone services. This fee is used to fund telephone infrastructure costs; no portion is remitted to the province.
 - “NB 9-1-1 Service Fund” is provincially regulated. The purpose of the fee is to finance the 9-1-1 service and the required improvements. The fee was introduced in November 2005 and is \$.53/month for each outgoing capable telephone line. The Department estimated that the fee will generate \$4 million annually, of which \$1.5 million will be paid to the PSAPs. Prior to November 2005, the Department of Public Safety funded the 9-1-1 Bureau (staff and administration), the provincial policing service contract funded the RCMP “J” Division PSAP for 9-1-1 services, and municipal property taxes funded the other PSAPs (call centres).
-
- Improvements to the 9-1-1 service** Publicly announced improvements to the 9-1-1 service included the following:
- developing and implementing standards for service delivery and training of staff in the PSAPs
 - developing quality assurance methods that will make sure the 9-1-1 service is meeting the needs and expectations of New Brunswickers
 - enhancing technology
 - educating the public on the proper use of 9-1-1
 - assigning call-taking responsibilities regionally to the six existing municipal PSAPs to replace the RCMP “J” Division’s call-taking responsibilities, and
 - developing and implementing regional fire dispatch and improvements so that fire services can communicate with each other on the scene.
-

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Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service, Continued

Parties involved with delivering emergency services

In addition to the Department of Public Safety that is responsible for providing the 9-1-1 service, it takes many different parties having specific responsibilities to properly serve an emergency call. Delivering emergency services requires the cooperation and involvement of several government departments, municipalities, public and private corporations, and volunteers in their communities. Some of them are listed here:

government departments

- Health is responsible for providing ambulance services.
- Local Government is responsible for providing policy direction and funds for fire services in local service districts.
- Transportation is responsible for proper road signage, mile markers and safe roads.
- Federal - *Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada* is responsible for the RCMP, who responds in rural areas and to highway situations.

municipalities

- Municipalities are responsible for police and fire services.

corporations

- Aliant provides the infrastructure for the 9-1-1 service in our province.
- Telecommunication companies provide landline and wireless phone services to individuals and businesses.

volunteers

- There are over 150 volunteer fire departments in New Brunswick.⁴

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⁴ Source = Internet – Department of Public Safety – Office of the Fire Marshal

Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service, Continued

**Committee
work
contributing to
9-1-1**

Committees that meet regularly help different parties communicate, cooperate and coordinate their efforts to provide effective services. 9-1-1 Bureau staff members participate in the following committees:

Provincial

- PSAP Committee
- Emergency Services Communication Committee
- Regional Fire Dispatch Committee
- Standards Development Committee
- Steering Committee
- Private Roads Committee
- Geo-referenced Civil Address Data Base (task group)
- Geographic Information Management Advisory Committee

Inter-provincial

- Atlantic Canada E-9-1-1 Regional Council

National

- National PSAP Working Group
- The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials
- CRTC⁵ Interconnection Steering Committee

International

- National Emergency Number Association (USA)
-

⁵ Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission

Department's Actions on Issues Identified by Reviews

In this section The purpose of this section is to provide information on how the Department has responded to issues identified by reviews of the 9-1-1 service. This section contains the following topics:

- recent reviews of 9-1-1
 - coroner's inquest
 - internal review
 - annual audits
 - action on recommendations, and
 - 9-1-1 governance committee needed.
-

Recent reviews of 9-1-1 Since the completion of its implementation in 1997, the 9-1-1 service has undergone the following reviews. Each review resulted in recommendations for improving the 9-1-1 service.

- The Office of the Comptroller and Aliant jointly conducted annual audits of 9-1-1 for the first seven years (1998 – 2004).
- The Coroner's Office reported on the results of an inquest done in 2003, where 9-1-1 had been called.

The internal review of the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems, done cooperatively by the departments of Public Safety and Health and Wellness, was announced in 2002 and completed in October 2004.

Coroner's inquest We reviewed the annual reports of the Chief Coroner for the past five years (2001 to 2005). We are reporting the most significant reference to 9-1-1 - the Coroner's inquest done in July 2003. (The deceased collapsed while playing hockey in an arena in April 2002.) The following information was taken from the annual report.⁶

"At the time he collapsed, no regular phone line (land line) was available for use anywhere in the arena. In large part, this inquest dealt with the structure of the 9-1-1 system and the nature of emergency response provided in this case. The jury concluded that the public can be confident in the Enhanced 9-1-1 System that serves the communities of New Brunswick and made the following recommendations. ..." Eight recommendations were made to various parties; two were addressed to the Department's 9-1-1 service.

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⁶ NB Chief Coroner's Annual Report 2003-04 (pages 47-56)

Department's Actions on Issues Identified by Reviews, Continued

Internal review The subject of the internal review, done cooperatively by the departments of Public Safety and Health & Wellness, was the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems. Several issues were identified by stakeholders during the internal review. Some of the issues related specifically to the 9-1-1 service while others were relevant to the service but outside of its mandated responsibilities.

We saw documentation indicating that a report on the internal review would be prepared in November 2003, and we saw evidence of significant work towards producing a report. We also saw a draft report dated December 2003 that appeared almost complete. We thought it was comprehensive, well written and organized. It included comments from various stakeholders. It contained both challenges and recommendations, including recommendations from the Coroner's inquest and the annual audits. We also saw documentation of additional research done in 2004.

The Department informed us that a final report on the internal review was not prepared. Rather, they took the information, summarized the findings into five issues and proposed enhancements, and presented them to the Executive Council.

Improvements to the 9-1-1 service were publicly announced as explained in the section - Background Information on the 9-1-1 Service.

Annual audits The audit report for 2004, prepared by Aliant Inc. and Office of the Comptroller contains the following statements.

- “**The objective of the audit** is to provide assurance that the PSAP Centres comply with enabling legislation, administration and *Operating Procedure Directives* associated with the management and processing of 9-1-1 calls.”
- The **audit opinion** states, “Based on our assessment of the results of the Compliance Self-Assessment questionnaires and our analysis of other data; we are satisfied that the overall risk for non-compliance with the *Operating Procedures Directives* is Low; and that there has been no significant deviation from 2003.”

The report contained five recommendations. One of the five involved all recommendations made in the previous six years that had not been acted upon. The audit report contained a table summarizing the status of all prior recommendations. It showed that 31 of the 47 recommendations had been addressed.

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Department's Actions on Issues Identified by Reviews, Continued

Action on recommendations

The table below shows the number of recommendations made by the three reviews and the action taken by the Department. We determined the status of action on each recommendation based on our understanding of the Department's work in addressing the issue. (The Department informed us that the findings from the internal review were summarized and presented as five key issues. For consistency in the presentation of our observations, we refer to twenty recommendations from the internal review documentation.) The following comments will help with understanding the information in the table.

- *Applicable recommendations* – Not all of the recommendations from the Coroner's inquest and the internal review applied solely to the 9-1-1 service. The Coroner's inquest made eight recommendations to various parties but only two were directed to the 9-1-1 service. The subject of the internal review was the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems; therefore some recommendations were outside of the 9-1-1 service's mandate. Only issues and recommendations that the 9-1-1 service is responsible for are included in the table. Also, the internal review incorporated issues from the other reviews; in the table the issues are classified according to the original source.
- *Addressed* - issues that were completely or substantially addressed.
- *Being addressed* - issues that the Department is actively working on.
- *Will be addressed* - issues that the Department has considered and intends to address, but has not yet made significant progress.
- *Will not be addressed* - issues that the Department does not intend to address.

	Coroner's inquest 2003	Internal review 2004	Annual audit	
			2004	1998-2003
Applicable recommendations	2	20	5	47
Addressed	-	4	-	31
Being addressed	1	13	3	Information not included in 2004 report.
Will be addressed	-	3	1	
Will not be addressed	1	0	1	

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Department's Actions on Issues Identified by Reviews, Continued

9-1-1 governance committee needed

The internal review identified other significant issues that are outside of the Bureau's 9-1-1 service responsibilities; and therefore, the publicly announced improvements did not address the issues. One example follows.

Governance structure - As we noted earlier, there are many parties involved with delivering emergency services. The internal review documentation indicated a need for more coordination of initiatives taken by the parties involved with delivering emergency services. It noted that some initiatives are interrelated and may have an impact on effective operations of 9-1-1 service. It also noted that while the PSAP committee was effective in handling operational issues, a different forum was needed for strategic issues. And, the internal review documentation suggested the establishment of a new governance model.

We support the idea for a governance committee.

Recommendation:

The Department should take the lead to establish a cross-functional, cross-jurisdictional governance committee to provide strategic direction to the 9-1-1 service and oversee the coordination of related services.

Departmental response:

DPS agrees to the creation of a cross-functional, cross-jurisdictional governance committee. A number of committees (i.e. Regional Fire Dispatch Steering Committee, Emergency Service Communications Committee, PSAP Management Committee, and Operating Procedures Directives Review Committee) have been established and these committees need to complete specific tasks before an integrated one would be beneficial to the program or its stakeholders. It is anticipated that a cross-jurisdictional governance committee will be established in 2007/08.

Positive Observations

In this section The purpose of this section is to present our significant positive observations on the 9-1-1 service.

Positive observations on 9-1-1

We observed many positive features in the 9-1-1 service. Our significant observations are listed here.

- *The 9-1-1 service compares well to other Canadian jurisdictions.* (For more information on this, see section: Scope of Our Work - Rationale for our decision not to audit.)
 - *The internal review of the 9-1-1 service and dispatch systems was comprehensive.* (For more information on this, see section: Scope of Our Work - Rationale for our decision not to audit.)
 - *A Coroner's inquest in July 2003 reported favourably on the Enhanced 9-1-1 service.* (For more information on this, see section: Department's Actions on Issues Identified by Reviews - Coroner's inquest.)
 - *Audits of 9-1-1 were conducted annually for the first seven years (1998 - 2004).*
 - *The Department is actively enhancing the 9-1-1 service, as a result of the reviews.* The Department has an implementation plan for the required improvements, which is reviewed and updated quarterly.
 - *Staff members from the 9-1-1 Bureau serve on several committees* with various stakeholders and also participate in inter-provincial, national and international committees. (For more information on this, see section: Background Information on the NB 9-1-1 Service - Committee work contributing to 9-1-1.)
 - *Legal agreements include a provision to audit.* We saw several legal agreements (some in the draft phase) including those with the PSAPs and those relating to the new monthly *NB 9-1-1 Service Fund* fee, and we were pleased to see that the agreements include the provision to audit.
 - *The service appears organized* with documented budgets, operating plans, manuals and terms of reference for various committees.
-

Areas for Improvement

In this section The purpose of this section is to present our significant observations in areas of the 9-1-1 service where we feel improvements could be made. This section contains the following topics:

- legislated authority to regionalize fire dispatch is questioned
 - enforcement is lacking
 - no auditors appointed
 - *NB 9-1-1 Service Fund* needs an audit plan
 - contract with Aliant expired in 2004, and
 - 9-1-1 performance reporting is needed.
-

Legislated authority to regionalize fire dispatch is questioned

We questioned whether the Department has legislated authority to regionalize fire dispatch as part of the 9-1-1 service. One of the publicly announced improvements to 9-1-1 is to regionalize fire dispatch. However, dispatch of emergency service providers is outside of the legislated mandate for the 9-1-1 service. As explained in a Department document dated 2002, *“The current 911 system deals with taking 911 calls – it does not address the actual dispatch of emergency resources. The scope of the service is to receive calls and transfer the call to one emergency service – either police, fire, ambulance or poison control. The legislation, policy and operations do not include the dispatch of these resources.”*

We presented this issue to the Department, questioning whether they had legislated authority to regionalize fire dispatch.

The Department told us that they would be providing only the infrastructure for regional fire dispatch. The Department informed us that they had a legal opinion stating that they had legislated authority to do so. Although we requested a copy of the legal opinion, it was not provided to us.

The Minister's speaking notes for a meeting with fire chiefs and police chiefs on improvements to the 9-1-1 system (on October 19th, 2004) state, *“With a Regional Fire Dispatch model, the six remaining PSAPs will now take all fire calls and dispatch all of them in a consistent way where ever the call originates in New Brunswick.”* This statement suggests more to us than providing only the infrastructure for regional fire dispatch. At the end of our work, our understanding of the Department's intentions to regionalize fire dispatch was unclear.

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Areas for Improvement, Continued

Legislated authority to regionalize fire dispatch is questioned
(continued)

Recommendation:

The Department should make a clear public statement on their intentions for the regionalization of fire dispatch and ensure that they have legislated authority to perform their intentions.

Departmental response:

Every opportunity is taken when speaking to stakeholders to address the provision of infrastructure for regional fire dispatch. As well DPS has approached legal services to further clarify legislated authority.

Enforcement is lacking

There are no enforcement actions when PSAPs do not comply with the operating procedures. The annual audits reported observations of non-compliance with the *Operating Procedure Directives*. During our work, we observed that the training requirements and the back-up requirement (stated in the *Operating Procedure Directives*) were not met by some of the PSAPs. There could be serious ramifications, involving the safety of individuals, if the 9-1-1 procedures are not followed.

Typically, an enforcement policy describes the sanctions exercised to bring about compliance with the procedures and states the penalties of not complying. Documented enforcement procedures usually specify the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved, along with the timing of actions. The Department does not have an enforcement policy for the 9-1-1 service and does not have documented procedures regarding enforcement.

Recommendation:

The Department should establish an enforcement policy, with appropriate procedures, to deal with situations when PSAPs do not comply with the operating procedures.

Departmental response:

As part of the development of PSAP operational standards, procedures are also to be established as to the process followed in the event of non-compliance, or the inability to meet, operational standards.

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Areas for Improvement, Continued

No auditors appointed

Currently there are no appointed auditors; the 9-1-1 service had been audited annually during its first seven years of operations. The last audit report was issued to the Department in September 2004. That report, like the preceding ones, provided recommendations to the Department for improving 9-1-1 operations. The 2004 audit report made the following statement on future audit services, *“It is our view that this type of objective review should be continued in the future; and that the audit role should be expanded to provide an assessment of the operations efficiency, effectiveness and accountability for delivery of the NB 9-1-1 service to the public.”*

The internal review documentation had a similar comment that operational audits should be conducted on the PSAPs and dispatch centres so that concerns are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Since the last audit, there have been significant changes to the 9-1-1 service, such as expanding the boundaries of the six PSAPs. An audit could identify new uncontrolled risks resulting from these changes, if any exist. While the Department has auditing provisions in its agreements with the PSAPs, as of April 2006 auditors had not been appointed.

Recommendation:

The Department should appoint auditors for conducting regular operational audits on the PSAPs.

Departmental response:

Existing agreements currently identify an audit process to be conducted at least annually based on detailed standards. Once these operational standards are established, it is planned that auditors will be appointed to observe, measure, report and make recommendations accordingly.

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Areas for Improvement, Continued

**NB 9-1-1
Service Fund
needs an audit
plan**

A formal audit plan has not been established for the new NB 9-1-1 Service Fund. While the Department has auditing provisions in its agreements for collecting and remitting the monthly fee to the Province, an auditing process has not been established to ensure that the fee is remitted for all telephone subscribers. An audit plan would include details such as the appointment of an auditor, the frequency of auditing, the population to be tested and the procedures to be conducted.

Recommendation:

The Department should formalize an audit plan for the new NB 9-1-1 Service Fund.

Departmental response:

Existing agreements and regulatory amendments will provide for an audit of the NB 9-1-1 Service Fund. Upon the advice of the Office of the Comptroller, it is planned that a detailed audit plan will be developed.

**Contract with
Aliant expired
in 2004**

A new contract with Aliant has not been signed. Aliant provides the infrastructure for the 9-1-1 service in our province. The contract with Aliant expired in 2004. As of April 2006, a new contract had not been signed.

Recommendations:

The Department should make securing a legal agreement with Aliant a priority and have a new contract signed.

The Department should have a process to ensure legal agreements are signed on a timely basis.

Departmental response:

Prior to the expiry of the existing service agreement both the Department of Public Safety and Aliant Telecom Inc. were aware of the expiry deadline. There was an agreement between the two parties that services would be continued under the terms and conditions of the existing agreement until such time as a new agreement was ratified. Discussions and negotiations of a draft agreement supplied by Aliant Telecom Inc. in February 2006 are ongoing and are planned to be finalized this fiscal year.

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Areas for Improvement, Continued

**9-1-1
performance
reporting is
needed**

Procedures have not been established to measure and report on the effectiveness of the 9-1-1 service. The Department's Annual Report for 2005 does not provide goals for the 9-1-1 service or performance indicators to reflect the success of the service.

Recommendations:

To measure the effectiveness of the 9-1-1 service, the Department should establish goals, performance indicators and monitoring procedures for evaluating performance.

To provide better accountability to the public, the Department should report on the performance of the 9-1-1 service in its annual report.

Departmental response:

Outcomes, goals and standards are being developed with the NB 9-1-1 service to evaluate performance.

Each year the Department of Public Safety publishes and submits to the Legislature its Annual Report. As part of the reporting process, the NB 9-1-1 Bureau submits a program update which highlights the actions and activities of the Branch. This public process will continue each year.

Conclusion

In this section The purpose of this section is to provide a brief review of the contents of the chapter. And, we end the chapter by noting how the Department and the Legislative Assembly can help maintain and improve the 9-1-1 service.

This section contains the following topics:

- chapter summary
 - what the Department can do, and
 - what the Legislative Assembly can do.
-

**Chapter
summary**

“The public’s expectations of an emergency response system are relatively high and failure of such an essential service is unacceptable.”⁷

We examined the 9-1-1 service because we agree with the statement and we believe government should be accountable for the safety of the people of New Brunswick.

While we did not perform an audit, we chose to report on our work with the 9-1-1 service because we believe it is useful information to the Legislative Assembly for holding the government accountable.

- To improve general understanding of New Brunswick’s emergency 9-1-1 service, we reported background information on the service. We explained that while the 9-1-1 service is an integral component of the emergency response system, it is only one of several components that lead to the final response.
 - To show the extent to which the 9-1-1 service has been examined in recent years, we identified the past reviews and reported the Department’s action on the issues identified.
 - To recognize good performance, we reported our significant positive observations on the 9-1-1 service; and
 - To help the Department further improve the service, we reported the areas for improvement that we observed.
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⁷ Internal review documentation.

Conclusion, Continued

**What the
Department
can do**

We hope that the Department will

- take action on our recommendations and appropriately address the areas for improvement that we observed,
 - continue implementing the publicly announced improvements, and
 - continue implementing the outstanding recommendations from the Coroner's inquest and the annual audits.
-

**What the
Legislative
Assembly can
do**

We hope the Legislative Assembly will use the information provided to hold the Department accountable for implementing

- the promised improvements to the 9-1-1 service,
 - the recommendations from the Coroner's inquest and the annual audits, and
 - our recommendations.
-