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News Release

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RCMP aims to reduce accidental calls to 9-1-1

The RCMP 911 Operations Communications Center (OCC) located in Courtenay is campaigning to reduce the huge volume of accidental emergency calls they receive on a daily basis.

This facility offers a centralized service to a combined population of some 200,000 people in a vast region between Nanoose Bay to the South, Tofino & Ucluelet to the West, Powell River to the East and to the very Northern tip of Vancouver Island, including areas off shore. They have been experiencing an increasing trend in unintended emergency calls that in turn remove valuable time and resources off the road from attending true emergency cases.

Last year, the OCC in Courtenay received a total of 66,244 9-1-1 calls, of which 5,744 were abandoned. Over half (56.5%) of those abandoned calls were generated from mobile devices, as more and more people are primarily using wireless technology as means of communication.

More recently, between January 1st and April 30th this year, the OCC in Courtenay received 1,998 abandoned calls with 58% of those coming from mobile devices. That's an average of 17 calls per day in those four months alone that requires operators and police officers to track down and verify for emergency.

The Manager of Courtenay OCC, Steve Cox says, "in that span of 4 months in the first quarter of this year, we calculated that just between 96-130 hours were spent by operators in locating and verifying abandoned calls. That time is exponentially longer for police officers on the road to follow up on abandoned calls."

Operators are required to call back dropped calls to determine whether they are real emergencies. If the operator is unable to get a hold of anyone, attempts to locate the caller is the next step then a police officer is dispatched to verify physically. Determining the location of a cell phone dropped/abandoned call requires much more effort. It means contacting the cell service provider to obtain subscriber information, obtaining their GPS coordinates and then dispatching police to the location.



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Putting it in perspective, Steve Cox explains that “police officers are taken off the road for hours each day just to respond and verify abandoned calls. That precious time could be spent on investigating more serious offences and responding to real emergencies.”

Operators and officers alike are asking the public to please stay on the line if you accidentally call 9-1-1 and simply tell the operator there is no emergency. The operator will appreciate you saving them the time. Additionally, pick up the phone when you receive a call back after accidentally dialing the emergency line. This will avoid having a police officer knock on your door.

Other very useful tips to eliminate accidental dialing of 9-1-1 include:

- Removing your mobile phones and wireless devices from your pockets while you are driving or in a car to avoid accidental “pocket dialing”.
- Locking your cellular phone when not in use, to avoid accidentally “pocket dialing”.
- Removing 9-1-1 from your programmed speed dials whether on your mobile phone or land line.
- If you realize you have dialed 9-1-1 by accident, please call back to let an operator know there is no emergency.

For more information on when to call for emergency assistance, please visit our website at www.bc.rcmp.ca.

Please direct media inquiries to:

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