

We are pleased that you have expressed an interest in VECTOR. Here are the frequently asked questions about the organization.

**What is Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR)?**

The Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) is a non-profit, volunteer based society committed to providing Amateur Radio services in the event of an emergency or disaster. VECTOR will provide a communications link from the Vancouver Emergency Operations Centre to the various Emergency Shelters and neighbourhoods in Vancouver and provide general back-up communications to the Emergency Operations Centre.

**Where is the Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) located?**

The Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) operates from the Amateur Radio room at the City's Emergency Operations Centre on the main floor of the E-Comm building, 3301 East Pender. The mailing address is: VECTOR, c/o E-Comm, 3301 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, V5K 5J3.

**Why was the Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) created?**

In recognition of the critical role that Amateur Radio plays in disaster communications, the City of Vancouver wished to formally develop an Amateur Radio component as part of its new Emergency Operations Centre. An independent 3-month study was carried out in 1997 to assess the capability and accessibility of amateur radio in the City. As a result of this study it was concluded that a non-profit society should be created to formalize and coordinate Amateur Radio disaster communications. Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) fulfils this important role.

**Why is Amateur Radio used in an emergency?**

Because it is reliable. A vivid example of the value of Amateur Radio in disaster communications was the 1998 ice storms that paralysed Eastern Canada and the United States. For days, throughout rural areas, hundreds of Amateur Radio operators provided the only communication link with the outside world. They augmented regular emergency services' communications in cities where telephone service had been severed. The technological advancements in Amateur Radio means that it is reliable, and has a high capability for transmitting large amounts of information quickly. Providing this type of assistance in times of emergency has generated growing public interest in the hobby, thereby enhancing its long-term survival.

In Vancouver, for example, the Emergency Social Services Program relies on Amateur Radio for communications in an emergency. Emergency Social Services, which is responsible for providing necessary clothing, food and shelter to disaster victims, has no communications network of its own. In an emergency Amateur Radio operators will convey emergency information between shelters or Reception Centres, provide information on persons seeking missing family members via the Red Cross (usually via packet radio – similar to wireless e-

mail), provide back-up communications and damage reports from the field to emergency providers, and even provide live television coverage if necessary.

**Does the Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) offer training?**

To train members and promote the Amateur Radio hobby, the Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) sponsors a number of voluntary training sessions at E-Comm to familiarize its members with the City of Vancouver Emergency Plan and the role of Amateur Radio. A regular weekly 'net' on VE7RPT (146.940 MHz -) on Wednesday evening at 8 PM provides a meeting forum for members and an opportunity for discussion on emergency preparedness topics.

Practical training is provided through regular emergency exercises and activations for pre-planned community events. For example, during the annual Celebration of Lights fireworks event, the largest public event in Canada, Amateur Radio operators provided communications between the event organizers, volunteers and emergency services. This was an invaluable service and helped to ensure better coordination of the event.

**What sort of commitment does the Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) expect of its volunteers?**

The Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) does not require a large time commitment. A willingness to assist and participation in two to three volunteer exercises per year are all that is required. Of course, should a member wish to become more actively involved, there is an excellent, fully equipped Amateur Radio facility at the new Vancouver Emergency Operations Centre (3301 East Pender Street), which you can become involved with.

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