

CREST

EMERGENCY
COMMUNICATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

MOTOROLA

**READY &
RESILIENT**



READY & RESILIENT

The CREST network experienced its third consecutive year of record-breaking system utilization in 2023, evidence of the strength and performance reliability of the P25 network, and a reminder of the heightened responsibilities being shouldered by our user agencies throughout the Capital Region. The CREST network consistently handled one transmission every three seconds, a clear demonstration of the network's capacity, and the critical role that CREST plays in supporting of our region's 3,000+ emergency response personnel who safeguard our communities.

Inflationary pressures continued to challenge the Capital Region and CREST remained steadfast in its commitment to fiscal stewardship and service excellence. To ensure objective evaluation measures of CREST's performance, a User Satisfaction Survey was conducted early in the year as a follow up to the 2020 benchmark survey on the P25 digital network. User satisfaction with the radio equipment and system rose in 2023 from 87% to 90%, and users gave our staff a 94% score on technical support. Survey feedback also helped inform CREST's commitment to continual improvement.

Efforts to bring the CREST network to the Juan de Fuca area along Highway 14 were realized this year through the completion of a co-location agreement with Rogers Communications and a leadership push from the provincial government. A second co-location agreement with Rogers Communications on Salt Spring Island was also completed. For BC Ambulance, RCMP, emergency program operations and the many volunteer fire departments providing essential services in these rural and remote areas, CREST's investments in these previously underserved areas were welcomed, particularly at a time when climate change impacts are increasing in severity.

BC experienced the most destructive wildfire season in recorded history this year. While the Capital Region has been spared, the risk remains real. As in previous years, several fire departments in the region sent crews and equipment to BC's interior and northern regions. To ensure that our firefighters had the right communications tools in their arsenal, CREST programmed all fire departments in the Capital Region with the essential channels used by the BC Forest Service and the BC Resource Department. The addition of these 56 channels ensures that our brave firefighters can travel to other jurisdictions and integrate safely and seamlessly with their new colleagues. With the threat of more serious wildfire seasons in our future, our region's fire departments are also better prepared to receive back-up support if needed.

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Being prepared for a large-scale event or emergency is an essential emergency management best practice for CREST. To ensure the protection of CREST's equipment and technology, and to mitigate the risk of network interruption in the event of a large-scale emergency, CREST moved ahead with its plans for a purpose-built, post-disaster, public safety building in which to consolidate its operations. This capital project was identified as a key priority in CREST's Strategic Plan and is widely supported by our user agencies. A construction management contract was awarded this year and site preparation work is expected to start next spring at 2321 City Gate Boulevard in Langford. Project financing with the Municipal Finance Authority was secured in 2022, and building completion is slated for the summer of 2025.

Prior to creating CREST, public safety organizations in the Capital Region used over 30 different radio systems for communicating. These systems were not integrated and critical public safety connectivity between emergency response agencies was not possible. Today, we can proudly say that the Capital Region – our emergency response and public service agencies and personnel – have the best public safety communications tools available, and our island region has a highly functioning, resilient, communications network that is considered a world standard in public safety. With our new building proceeding to construction, the integrity of the CREST network, technology and infrastructure will be secure for the benefit of residents of the Capital Region for years to come.

In closing, we offer our sincere appreciation to CREST's Board of Directors for their sound, thoughtful and constant guidance throughout the year. CREST's effectiveness is deeply rooted in the Directors' engaged participation, critical-thinking and collaboration across the region.

We also recognize and thank CREST's employees for their unwavering commitment to the provision of reliable public safety communications services. Their specialized work is underpinned by a level of service excellence and professionalism that has earned the trust and confidence of CREST user agencies and personnel. Working together, we have created an exemplary culture of teamwork that deepens CREST's professional capabilities, and strengthens the delivery of public safety services throughout the Capital Region.

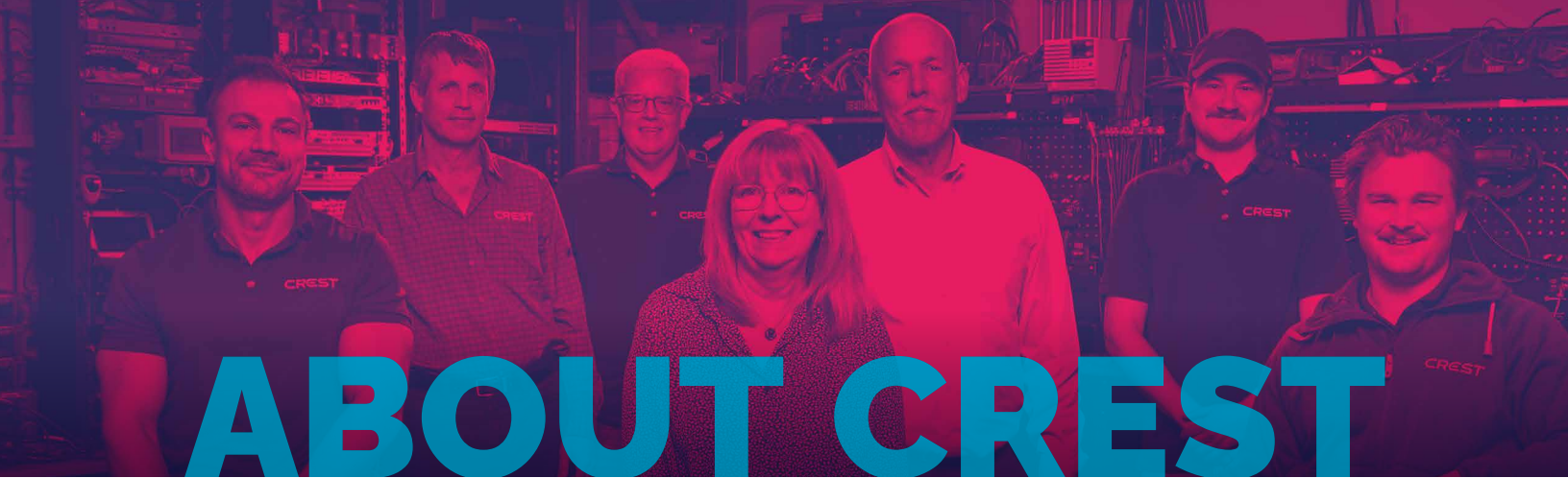


Tim Morrison,
Chair of the Board



Gordon Horth,
General Manager





On behalf of its shareholders, CREST operates and maintains emergency communications equipment and infrastructure for more than 50 first responder and public service agencies throughout the Capital Region, an area that spans the Territories of the Coast Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth peoples. In the delivery of essential public safety services to all citizens, CREST's Board of Directors and CREST employees proudly recognize First Nations' governments across the region.

The CREST network is considered the world standard in public safety communications technology. A primary feature of the network is interoperability. All CREST user agencies are communicating on a common network utilizing the same technology. In the event of a large-scale emergency that requires a multi-agency response from across jurisdictions, all the region's first responders can communicate seamlessly with one another in real time. CREST also shares a common platform with E-Comm, the organization that supports emergency response agencies throughout the lower mainland. Interoperability strengthens emergency response activations.

CREST is incorporated under the BC Business Corporations Act and regulated by the Emergency Communications Corporations Act. It is a private emergency communications not-for-profit corporation owned by its shareholders and governed by a 20-member Board of Directors, nominated by CREST shareholders.

The design of the CREST public safety communications network considers our unique geography and island circumstance. Redundancies have been built into the network. If transmission linkages are temporarily lost, for whatever reason, the network can reroute itself mitigating the risk of system interruption and strengthening business continuity ensuring the safe and effective delivery of public safety services by our region's emergency response organizations.

OUR MISSION AND VISION

MISSION: CREST provides effective emergency communications for the safety of our communities.

VISION: CREST is a recognized leader in public safety communications: responsive, resilient, connected



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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NEW PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING TASK FORCE

Director Karel Roessingh
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Director Esther Paterson
Oak Bay

Director Dean Jantzen
Colwood

Director Kimberley Guiry
Langford

Director Megan McMath
Sooke

John Wakefield
Director – CRD Salt Spring
Island Electoral Area



Ensuring optimal performance of the P25 network and continued fiscal sustainability underly CREST's strategic priorities.

The full CREST Strategic Plan can be read [here](#).

CREST HAS MEASURABLE GOALS IN FOUR KEY AREAS

GOAL 1

Confidence of Shareholders and User Agency Organizations

GOAL 2

Public Safety Service Excellence

GOAL 3

Organizational Effectiveness

GOAL 4

Financial Performance



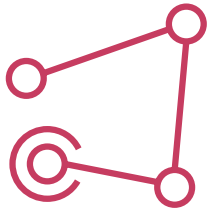
TECHNOLOGY PERFORMANCE METRICS

The CREST network handled another record number of transmissions in 2023. First responders and public service agencies across the Capital Region continued to manage increased workplace demands and more complex working environments, and a co-location agreement with Rogers Communications (Rogers) saw the expansion of the CREST network along highway 14 from Otter Point to Port Renfrew. While a vast improvement for first responders working in this well-travelled corridor, CREST faced some technical challenges with the provision of 'back haul' service from Rogers that has occasionally impacted the reliability of the CREST system. Rogers is committed to working with CREST to meet the operational measures within the co-location agreement, and overall, the reliability and performance of the CREST network and professional staff continued to meet the standards of excellence set out in CREST's strategic goals.

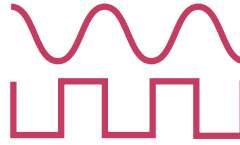
	2021	2022	2023
Total Transmissions	10,386,160	10,067,183	10,166,306
System Availability	99.9984%	99.9992%	99.9983%
Average Calls per Hour	1,185	1,149	1,160
Radios in Service	2,926	2,994	2,994
1 Busy For Every	16,356 calls	26,149 calls	17,086 calls



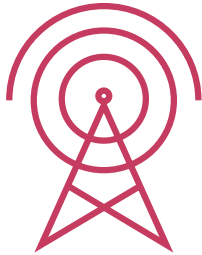
QUICK FACTS



10 million calls per year



Links all 50 CREST user agencies - police, fire, ambulance and other emergency response and public service agencies supporting the work of more than 3,000 users



35 transmission towers and more than 75 in-vehicle repeaters



Improved audio clarity and coverage



Over 3,000 radios programmed



Technology upgrade to all digital platform with broadcast frequency of 700 MHz in the urban areas and using VHF in the rural areas

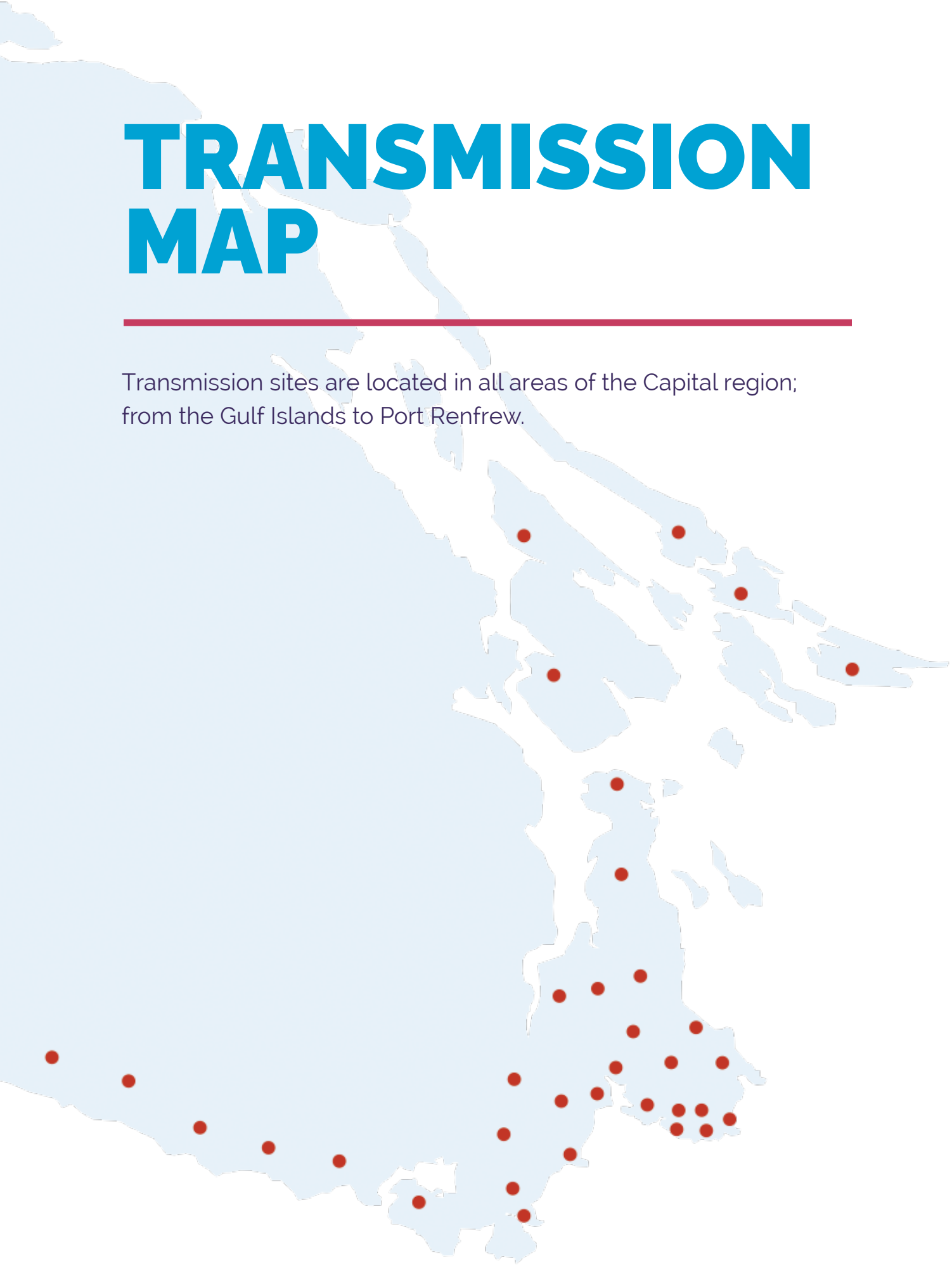


Interoperability and encryption capabilities



TRANSMISSION MAP

Transmission sites are located in all areas of the Capital region; from the Gulf Islands to Port Renfrew.





ABOVE: Artist rendering of the new CREST public safety building

PLANNING CONTINUES FOR CREST'S POST-DISASTER PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

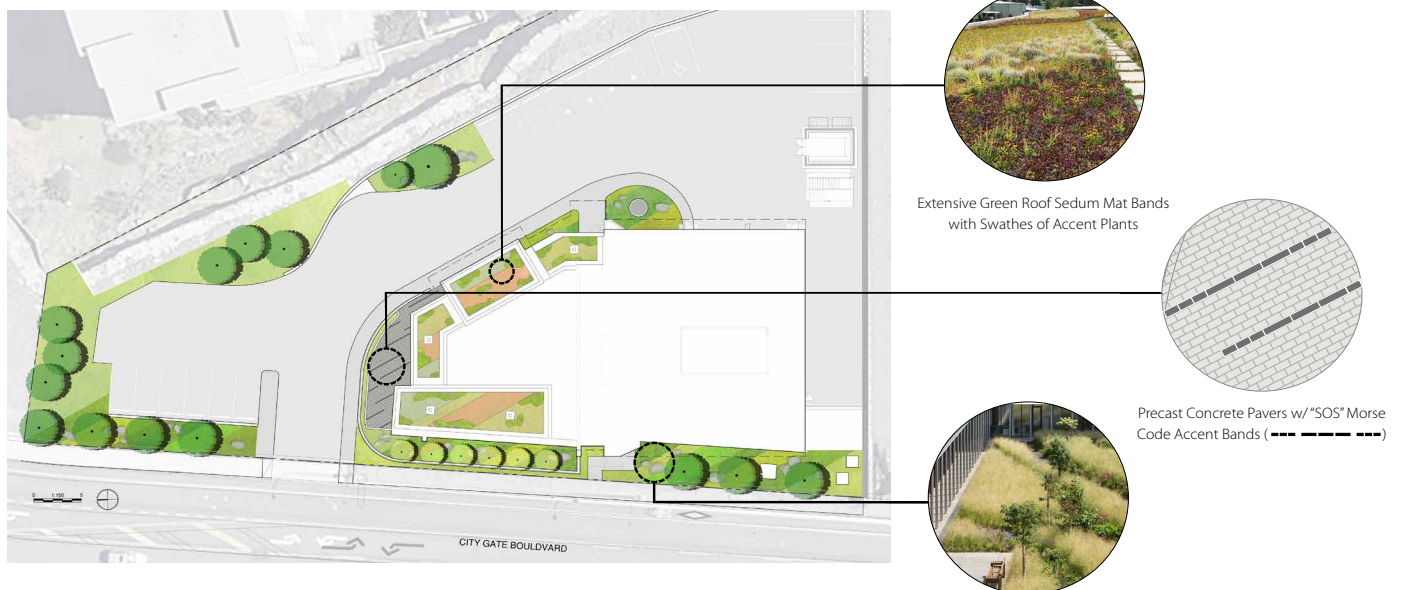
CREST finalized the plans for the new post-disaster public safety building this year. Staff, the Finance Committee of the Board, and the Building Task Force overseeing the project, have been closely monitoring the inflationary impacts on cost.

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PLANNING CONTINUES FOR CREST'S POST-DISASTER PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

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ABOVE: Landscape plan for the new CREST public safety building considers views of the adjacent residential buildings, native plantings and water conservation goals

To date, the estimates are still within the range of funds allocated in the budget passed by the Board and Shareholders. Entering the final phase of the project, staff engaged Durwest Construction Management Inc. to:

- Hire and supervise subcontractors.
- Manage and mitigate risks.
- Coordinate permits.
- Ensure quality construction.
- Schedule deliverables.
- Prepare reports on the project.

Current plans for early 2024 see CREST hosting an information meeting for those living and working in the City Gate Boulevard area, and the commencement of site preparation work to ready the property for construction. The CREST public safety building is expected to be completed by the summer of 2025.



Protecting the regions public safety assets is essential to ensuring our first responder agencies and personnel can deliver critical life safety services during a major emergency or disaster event. To that end, the CREST system is the foundation of our success. Having our telecommunications infrastructure located in a purpose-built, post-disaster building is simply an emergency management best practice.

Chris Aubrey
Fire Chief, Langford Fire Rescue Department

The region made a smart investment in updating and modernizing the CREST emergency communications platform. For first responder agencies, like the Victoria Police Department, protecting that investment is vital.

Del Manak
Police Chief, Victoria Police Department



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	\$ 7,798,130	\$ 8,180,701	\$ 8,314,677
Direct operating expenses	2,967,057	3,907,389	4,864,204
Other expenses			
Amortization	3,551,812	3,019,350	3,085,090
Interest expense	1,010,809	1,017,923	1,279,558
Total expenses*	7,529,678	7,944,662	9,228,852
Excess of revenue over expenses	268,452	236,039	-914,175
Surplus, beginning of year	12,709,526	15,334,807	15,570,846
Surplus, end of year	12,977,978	15,570,846	14,656,671

*Total Expenses in 2023 reflect the advancement of the new post-disaster public safety building in which to consolidate and protect CREST technology and infrastructure

CREST is funded through user fees paid by the agencies using the system. Their fees are based on the geographic size of the area they serve, its population, the number of radios required, and radio traffic.

In addition, the Capital Regional District contracts with CREST to provide an emergency communications system for the region. In 2023, the CRD and CREST entered into a new contract agreement that runs to the end of 2027. This collaborative shareholder model ensures that each shareholder has an equitable voice in public safety decision making.



CREST IS COMMITTED TO ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS TO SERVICE DELIVERY

- With the growth and densification of the Capital Region, CREST continues to look for opportunities to move existing sites onto newer, taller buildings to improve coverage. Additional future sites are slated both for the Westshore and in the Ganges area on Salt Spring Island.
- Co-location agreements with Rogers Communications on their cellular installations on the Juan de Fuca/Highway 14 corridor, and on west Salt Spring Island dramatically improved public and responder safety in these rural areas.
- CREST, working with the Paging Working Group, a sub-group of the Fire Service Advisory Committee, began replacing the existing paging system that previously had no remote monitoring or remote management capabilities. Once completed (2024), the new paging network will provide full remote monitoring and remote management with seven new sites to improve service in the Gulf Islands and Juan de Fuca/Highway 14 areas. The system being implemented is capable of both analog (existing) and digital (future) paging.

CREST RECOGNIZES THE LONG-SERVICE AND FRIENDSHIP OF POLICE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEMBER, DARLENE PERRY, VICTORIA POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Since its inception in 2003, CREST has had 2 Service Advisory Committees (Police & Fire) that, based on the professional knowledge and experience of the Committee members, work cooperatively to provide a single voice for the services. Three members provide advice and recommendations to CREST's general manager on operational issues of CREST as they affect the services represented by that Service Committee.



Gord and his team have worked so hard to build a robust radio system, that our committee now meets just a few times a year (in the early years, we met monthly). I truly enjoyed working with everyone at CREST. I am thrilled to see the tremendous success that they have achieved. It has been a remarkable journey and one that I am proud to have been a part of.

Darlene Perry
VicPD, retired 2023





CREST NETWORK EXTENDED TO PORT RENFREW

Thanks to a push from the provincial government to bring cellular service to Port Renfrew along Highway 14, CREST was able to successfully negotiate a co-location agreement with Rodgers Communications (Rogers) and bring emergency response and public service agencies working in this underserved area onto the CREST digital network. The extension of the CREST network from Otter Point to Port Renfrew makes life safer for residents, for emergency responders, and for visitors to this well-traveled corridor. Otter Point, Shirley and Port Renfrew Fire Departments, along with RCMP and BC Ambulance Service welcomed this news.



I would like to thank all the CREST team who worked on the new tower in Otter Point! Our communications testing verified that there have been significant improvements throughout this section of our district. So far, we have clear communications throughout this whole area where we had spotty or no communications previously.

John McCrea
Fire Chief, Otter Point Fire department



USER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

	2020	2023
Satisfaction with Overall Radio System & Equipment	87.2	90
Satisfaction with Mobile (in-vehicle radio)	90.1	93
Satisfaction with Portable (handheld radio)	87.2	91.5

As part of CREST's commitment to continual improvement, a second User Satisfaction Survey was conducted in early 2023 following up on the benchmark survey undertaken to seek performance feedback on the region-wide upgrade to a digital P25 platform in 2020.

The survey asked user agency personnel to rank equipment performance and quality of services provided to users. Clarity of audio, coverage including outside of jurisdiction, reliability, quality and ease of use were evaluated. Users gave a 94% satisfaction score for CREST's technical support, and 84% noted that more operational training on the features of the radios would be appreciated. The survey feedback resulted in the creation of several new online training modules/tutorials to further strengthen support for users on the network.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CREST TRAINING MODULES: 11

Looking to improve their radio training, the RCMP in the province of Saskatchewan approached CREST requesting information on the development of CREST's training modules: "Your training modules are excellent."



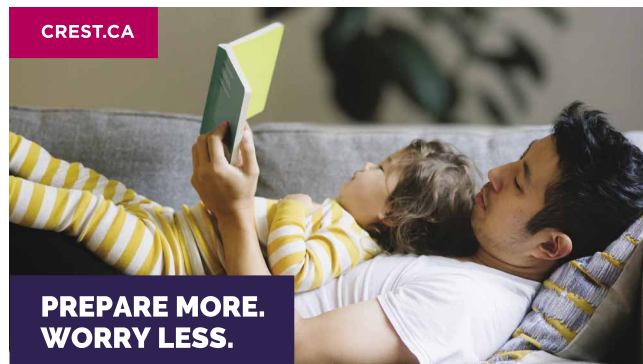


ABOVE: The Greater Victoria Police Foundation's Police Camp connects youth with officers from policing agencies of Oak Bay, Saanich, Central Saanich and Victoria, including Esquimalt.

CREST is a proud supporter of emergency responder and public safety initiatives throughout the Capital Region.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND INITIATIVES SUPPORTED IN 2023

- Victoria Foundation's Vital Signs report
- Canada Day
- Tour de Rock
- Greater Victoria Police Foundation's Police Camp
- Crime Stoppers
- Emergency Preparedness Week



**PREPARE MORE.
WORRY LESS.**

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK MAY 7-13

Being prepared in the event of a natural disaster or extreme weather event helps to ease the stress of thinking about such matters. Have a family emergency kit, make a safety plan, and learn about your community's emergency plan. Share the responsibility of emergency preparedness, so first responders can prioritize the most urgent calls. Learn what steps you can take and worry less.

For more information visit crd.bc.ca/prepare-yourself

CREST operates the emergency communications system connecting over 50 emergency response and public safety agencies across the Capital Region.



CREST USER AGENCIES

BC AMBULANCE SERVICE

BC CONSERVATION OFFICER SERVICE

BC TRANSIT

CANADIAN FORCES BASE

- Fire
- Police

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT

- Salt Spring Island Electoral Area – Fire
- Piers Island – Fire
- Saturna Island – Fire
- Mayne Island – Fire
- Galiano Island North – Fire
- Galiano Island South – Fire
- Southern Gulf Island Emergency Program
- Otter Point – Fire
- Pender Island – Fire
- Willis Point – Fire
- East Sooke – Fire
- Shirley – Fire
- Hazmat Team

CENTRAL SAANICH

- Fire
- Police

COLWOOD

- Bylaw Enforcement
- Fire

CRD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

ESQUIMALT FIRE

GREATER VICTORIA POLICE VICTIM SERVICES

HIGHLANDS FIRE

JDF EMERGENCY PROGRAM

LANGFORD

- Bylaw Enforcement
- Fire

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PROTECTIVE SERVICES

METCHOSIN FIRE

NORTH SAANICH FIRE

OAK BAY

- Fire
- Police

PARKS CANADA

PORT RENFREW FIRE

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

SAANICH

- Fire
- Police

SALT SPRING ISLAND EMERGENCY PROGRAM

SIDNEY FIRE

SIDNEY ISLAND FIRE

SONGHEES FIRST NATION

SOOKE

- Bylaw Enforcement
- Fire

ST. JOHN AMBULANCE

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA SECURITY

VICTORIA

- Bylaw Enforcement
- Fire
- Police

VICTORIA AIRPORT AUTHORITY FIRE

VIEW ROYAL FIRE

DID YOU KNOW?

CREST complies with Health Canada's Safety Code 6 (SC6), the federal regulations that govern electromagnetic devices. CREST sites are lower emitters of electromagnetic energy than a personal cell phone, or a household microwave oven. Since only public safety users are on the CREST system, the amount of transmission air time is a fraction of the activity that commercial cell carriers generate through calls, texts, and on-line interest.