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**Hamilton**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Release**

## **Public Safety Advisory Concerning 911 Calls**

HAMILTON, ON – May 6, 2008 – Hamilton Emergency Services is once again reminding citizens of certain limitations involving the use of cellular phones and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone services when calling 911.

The traditional 911 system, based on the use of landlines, ensures that when you call 911, the call is routed to the correct 911 call centre. This 911 call includes electronic data that provides the 911 call taker with automatic address and telephone number information to ensure that emergency personnel will find the caller, even if they are not able to speak or if the call is lost. This service is known as enhanced 911.

When dialing 911 from a cellular phone, electronic data with location information is not automatically available to the emergency operator. Most cellular providers now have an enhanced 911 service that allows emergency operators to view the wireless caller's phone number and the location of the cellular tower handling your call, but not the specific location from which the call is being made or where the emergency is. It is up to the caller to describe the exact location of the emergency.

Areas of the City that border neighbouring municipalities may have cellular towers that will receive a call and transmit that call to an emergency operator in another municipality. As a result, the 911 call taker you will be speaking with may not be familiar with the address or location you are referring to. The 911 call taker will make every effort to verbally confirm your location and advise the appropriate emergency services.

Subscribers to VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone services may not be aware of limitations in accessing 911 during an emergency. VoIP is a telephone service that connects calls through the internet as a means of communicating with other phones. Voice over Internet Protocol means the phone has no fixed address and therefore enhanced 911 service is unavailable. The call is answered by a "third party operator service" where it is then transferred to a 911 call centre. Some possible limitations when using a VoIP phone service when calling 911 are:

- The VoIP service operator receiving your 911 call may be located in a different city and when re-directing your call, may send your call to the wrong 911 call centre causing a potential delay in any emergency response
- If the caller is unable to speak or the call is lost, the operator may not have automatic location information to give to the 911 call taker
- Access to 911 service may not be available during a power failure or if the internet connection is disrupted

Public safety is a priority and it is important that consumers be aware of these limitations when deciding whether to purchase VoIP service and equipment. Consumers should contact their VoIP telephone service providers and clarify the options and restrictions of their products as it pertains to calling 911.

When calling 911 in an emergency, provide the 911 call-taker with your name, your complete phone number including area code, your location and the location of the emergency, including the municipality. Stay on the line with the call taker and don't hang up. If using a cellular phone, leave your phone on so the call-taker can call you back.

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***For more information, please contact***

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