

DHS Establishes Standard for Interoperable Gateways

A public-safety communications standards effort that began just more than a year ago has resulted in a published draft for VoIP-based bridges and gateways. Testing between two vendors took place last November at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) facility in Boulder, Colo.

A group of industry providers, public-safety officials and federal professionals met in August 2006 to discuss a standards effort for interoperability technology and placed a priority on bridges and gateways. Three subsequent meetings of the VoIP working group mapped out a phased approach to address 90 percent of the public-safety systems across the country that use bridges.

"Most VoIP in LMR systems is proprietary technology and incompatible," said Luke Klein-Berndt, chief technology officer (CTO) for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) science and technology

directorate. "The group agreed on requirements and to create standards-based approaches to connect VoIP devices, regardless of manufacturer."

Industry suppliers presented a technical draft in August, which was put out for comment. A draft was published in September,



and vendor testing took place the week of Nov. 5. The testing will help debug and enhance the session initiation protocol (SIP)-based standards stack. The ultimate goal is to have the voice-only standard published by the summer, DHS officials said.

Company officials from Twisted Pair Solutions and Cisco performed the first vendor tests in November, said Rob Mitchell, Twisted Pair market and technology specialist. Other suppliers will participate in a larger testing effort in late March through NIST's Office of Law Enforcement Standards (NIST/OLES).

Mitchell said the entire group will test products at the late March event and potentially ratify the standard. "There will also be future discussions regarding phase two of the specification, which will have a lot more functionality. Phase one is just about simple interoperability," Mitchell said.

Other members of the VoIP working group include Motorola, M/A-COM, Catalyst Communications, General Dynamics, Raytheon JPS Communications, SRA and others. The work is separate from the Project 25 (P25) standards process, but the two standards potentially can benefit each other, Klein-Berndt said.

its 900 MHz spectrum holdings, thereby increasing the amount of 900 MHz spectrum that will remain unavailable to EWA members.

Finally, the alliance announced an affiliation agreement with the American Association of Paging Carriers (AAPC), granting full EWA membership to AAPC members and mutually promoting wireless regulatory advocacy, educational and associated services. The annual AAPC membership meeting will be held during the Enterprise Wireless conference starting in 2008.

Groups Announce Data Interoperability Initiative

Several public-safety groups said they will begin an interoperability initiative focused on data sharing. Comcare Emergency Response Alliance, the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), the National Emergency Number Association (NENA)

and the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) plan to conduct a core services initiative to significantly improve interoperable, interorganizational communications and information sharing for emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

The initiative will have three phases. Comcare will lead the first phase, focused on developing core services. During the second phase, OGC will conduct a core services interoperability pilot. A third phase will emphasize field trials of the core services, showcasing their all-hazards capabilities in real-world settings. The result will be tested, standardized core services that companies can competitively offer to the emergency-response community.

Tait Appoints New Director

The Utilities Telecom Council (UTC) launched the UtiliSite Council, a subsidiary dedicated to sharing

best practices and combined marketing efforts for utilities that provide site services to commercial wireless carriers. Member utilities will work together to help commercial carriers accelerate the deployment of wireless services in U.S. communities.

Members of the UtiliSite Council have more than 36,000 antenna sites developed on electric transmission and distribution facilities available to use. The council members include Duke Energy, First Energy, Gainesville Regional Utilities, JEA, Memphis Light, Gas & Water Division, Portland General Electric, Southern Telecom, SRP Telecom and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

PEOPLE

Tait Appoints New Director

Former Nokia executive Rob Gill has been appointed a nonexecutive