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DHS plans enhanced interoperability standard

- **By , Alice Lipowicz**
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The Homeland Security Department expects to complete an enhanced version of its Bridging Systems Interface technical standard in the this summer to better enable interoperability among emergency response agencies, a senior official said at the GovSec conference today.

The enhanced standard will allow for better connections between systems that link disparate radio systems, said Luke Berndt, chief technical officer for DHS' Office of Interoperability and Compatibility. It also will provide for better linkages with different types of first responder radio systems.

The office and its partners developed the bridging system interface during the past two years to enable more effective use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) digital radio systems. In theory, those systems could be easily patched together. However, depending on how the systems were configured, they often were not working together effectively as a result of different manufacturers and different linkages.

Communities use patchworking boxes to link the VOIP radio systems.

In winter 2008, DHS tested the standard in tying together a half dozen radio patchworking boxes. Next week, it will demonstrate the standard with 12 patchworking boxes, Berndt said."With VOIP, there are lots of standards and people are implementing it differently," Berndt said. "There are different technologies, standards and configurations."

To simplify things, the bridging systems interface suggests standardized basic settings, coding, channel labeling and transport methods.

Eventually, the goal is to leverage the power of the standard to transmit radio information and data. "The system can be leveraged to connect more advanced devices into the radio system," Berndt said.

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