

## SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

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### Officials debut emergency communications network at Love Field

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS -- Local, state and federal officials unveiled a new service Thursday they hope will make it easier for police, firefighters and other emergency workers to communicate with each other in the event of a terror attack or natural disaster.

The Dallas Love Field Wireless Integration Project uses special software made by a Seattle-based CoCo Communications Corp. to let authorities from various departments and agencies talk to each other, even if they are using different technologies such as a two-way radio and a cell phone.

Previously, there was no way for the two different systems to connect.

The system uses a special "mesh" network that is able to transmit voice, video and data from various devices, such as cell phones, laptops, PDAs and radios. Tools allow the various agencies to manage the flow of incoming and outgoing information.

If there is a disaster, the idea is that officers from another part of the state could arrive in Dallas and quickly connect to the system, even if they use different communication gear, Texas Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw said.

The Dallas implementation is the first of its kind in the nation. The plan is to roll out similar services statewide - and eventually nationwide, officials said.

"The bottom line is that the events of 9/11, Katrina, Rita, wildfires and floods have made it abundantly clear that first responders have to talk to each other," McCraw said. "This has been maybe a 30-year sin, and we have to fix it."

Agencies now using the system include the Dallas police, fire and aviation departments; the Texas Department of Public Safety; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and Southwest Airlines, which is based at Love Field.

The project was developed with the state of Texas, the city of Dallas, the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

It was funded with a \$979,100 grant from federal Homeland Security. The system was developed at Love Field because of the airport's location in a large urban area.