



TRANSCRIPT FROM WEBCAST 3/22/2011

DESCRIPTION: Emergency Data Exchange Language (EDXL)

WHO: Denis Gusty,

Program Manager (EDXL), DHS Science & Technology Directorate

Bill Kalin,

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And what we have coming up next is a taped interview with Denis Gusty. He is from the DHS Office for Interoperability and Compatibility and he's going to have a little discussion to help us to understand more about emergency management standards which have helped us enable the capability that we've been talking about today.

>> Hi, I'm Bill Kalin. I'm the director of Homeland Security Operations for Safe Environment Engineering, and I'm here today with Denis Gusty who is the program manager for the Emergency Data Exchange Language program. And we're gonna go over a little bit of that program with Denis today and hopefully learn more about it and see how it's contributing to the Integrated Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological, and Explosive integration program. So Denis, can you give us a little bit of an overview of the Emergency Data Exchange Language and what it does?

>> Sure Bill. First, let me describe the problem. When you think about--when you think about all the emergency response agencies and you include federal, state, local, private, tribal, you're looking at probably over 100,000 different agencies. These agencies need to communicate with one another. It's very difficult to do that when you have private sector vendor selling their products to individual agencies. So what we've done is tried to develop standards that allow interoperability amongst the different agencies and among the different products that these vendors are selling. So, if the vendors build their product to the standard, then we achieve interoperability. So EDXL is based on XML. We applied the best practices of XML and build those or use those best practices as we develop XML standards. So the standards, like I said, if you're building to the standard, it allows interoperability amongst the different disciplines within those different agencies and among the different products that these vendors are selling.



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>> Well, that's great. Can you tell me a little bit how the standards are developed?

>> Absolutely. As I just mentioned, over 100,000 different agencies, if they're the ones actually using the standard along with private industry that are developing their products to the standard, it's important for us to get the stakeholders involved in the entire process.

>> So you get the first responders involved?

>> Absolutely. They drive the requirements. So from step one to the final stage of this whole development process, we--it is a stakeholder driven approach. We immediately start working with the stakeholders to develop the requirements. Those requirements then get transferred into a specification which in the long run, that specification is what gets transferred over to the standards development organization.

>> In this case, it's OASIS. They take that specification then turn it into a standard. Their process is also very open. So it doesn't stop where we leave off. It continues that whole stakeholder driven approach once we turn over the specification to OASIS.

>> So the key to this whole thing is the stakeholder involvement from the first responder hazard not necessarily federal standards but these are stakeholder driven.

>> Absolutely. We sponsor--we sponsor the process, but you're right. These are not federal standards. OASIS, the standards development organization is a nonprofit entity. So we don't--the federal government doesn't own the standards. We help develop them and they get used by anyone that really wants to including folks in the international community.



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>> So what is that you do that encourages the adoption of these standards with the private sector and stakeholders?

>> Well, one of the things we do is not only do we work with the stakeholders or the practitioners to drive the requirements, we also involve the vendors in the process as well because ultimately they have to build their product to that specification or the standard. So, we get them involved early in the process as well because then they know what's coming down the pike. They can start gearing up for development of any new products that they may have in their pipeline to build to that standard. We have monthly meetings with them. We have a working group. It's the Emergency Interoperability Consortium, which is represented by private industry who actually sell their products to the first responders. We have a memorandum of understanding with them. So again, having monthly meetings, getting the interaction between the private industry vendors who are developing these products, getting them involved early on helps the process move along smoothly.

>> That sounds great. It's something very vibrant and flexible.

>> That absolutely, absolutely.

>> So how do the EDXL standards then fit in specifically with the ICBRNE project out in Los Angeles with the, you know, the integration for the chemical, biological, and radiological sensors that are out there?

>> Very good question. I look at that program or Los Angeles County in this case is being a consumer of EDXL, in particular, one of our standards, the Common Alerting Protocol. That's being used to actually carry sensor data to the--either to a different device that alerts either the public or that emergency response manager of any impending concerns or disasters based on what that data, the data that got picked up by the sensor in this case. So to me, that really speeds up the process. It allows that interoperability between a sensor and the final end result or in this case the emergency manager allows him to react much faster to any type of incident based on the Common Alerting Protocol.



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>> So you're taking time off of the response. You're taking--

>> Absolutely.

>> --some of the decision capabilities into real time allowing an incident commander or emergency management personnel to really decide faster based on real time data what they can or should do and then allocate their resources more appropriately.

>> Absolutely, absolutely. If you look back at some of the processes that are in place before using or implementing a standard, a lot of them are manual processes. So if we can build anything, any process, any product to a standard that will allow that information or that data exchange to happen a lot quicker, then in the case of a natural disaster, seconds matter, seconds matter, it saves lives. So we're shaving seconds and even minutes in some cases of a process by instituting a standard into that process.

>> That's great.

>> You mentioned the Emergency Interoperability Consortium, are there other ways that vendors could participate in this type of program, and how would the stakeholders potentially know what vendors may be interoperable? Is there some kind of testing program or certification program behind any of these?

>> Yes, there is. And let me go back a step because as we're developing the specification, what we like to do is get stakeholder involvement early on in the process. And a lot of times that looks like a pilot project maybe. And that allows us to further vet the process. So that's one way of getting more involvement. Getting to your--that the last point, we do--there's a testing center, the NIMS support center and they--what we actually do is allow the vendor community to come in, test their product against the



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standard to see whether or not it complies with that standard. If it does, then we post it on a database that the first responder community can then look at and see what vendors are compliant to the standards.

>> And that's the responder knowledge base, correct?

>> Exactly.

>> Okay, correct.

>> Exactly.

>> And so once the--once the vendors go through this process and they're put out on--their report is put out on the responder knowledge base, then the first responders can actually go look at the report to see how compliant they may be at that point.

>> Exactly, yes.

>> Okay. So, so you're providing all of that information back and they can incorporate this into their RFPs, request for quotations, something like that

>> Yes, yes.

>> And they can see who's compliant with the EDXL standard.



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>> Yes, yes. And what we also do is we work with--with FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and they actually built that language into their--some of their grant language as well. So, if any state or local jurisdiction has grant dollars and they wanna use it to purchase a particular product, they can go back to make sure that that the vendor who maybe or the state or local government that's applying for that grant has clear visibility into, into those products where there's vendors that are EDXL compliant.

>> That's excellent, excellent. Now, we also understand that a testbed has been established with the ICBRNE program through Teresa Lustig which will allow vendors to further enhance or develop and test any new concepts with the EDXL standards that's based out in the Naval Postgraduate School's.

>> Absolutely, and we--we try to take advantage of situations like that because, again, going back to what I said earlier about allowing the vendor community to participate early on in the process only benefits everyone. So, including us to make sure that that the standard or the specification that were developing meets the needs of the stakeholders. So, allowing the vendors to come in and test their products in a testing environment have beneficial to all of us. In the long run, it pays off huge dividends.

>> Well, that's great. Well, thank you for your time today. We appreciated it. It's good to see you, sir.

>> Thank you.