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Queensland Government
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Black box delivers enhanced capability in communications

A little “black box” is revolutionising technological capacity within emergency services.

The Free2Move technology or the “black box” as it is commonly known gives DES operational personnel access to important electronic communication tools in the field.

The DES Clever Networks Project – a joint project with Queensland Health that receives federal funding – is exploring and implementing communication services at the point of demand through the use of innovative mobile broadband solutions.

“Queensland’s Emergency Services are the first in Australia to utilise such a high standard of technology in this form,” said Allan Short, the Manager of the DES Clever Networks Project.

Fundamentally, the black box provides a mobile “internet hotspot” small enough to fit in the back of a vehicle!

Incorporating network cards from each of the major telecommunications providers, the most appropriate service provider for each situation is automatically detected and provides high speed internet access. If required, a projector can be connected to enable sharing and analysis of job and crew data.

This technology also works well in conjunction with the 3G network cards which are installed in paramedics’ tough books to provide data to the field headquarters from the field.

The technology has already proved its value at events such as Indy and Gold Coast Schoolies Week over the past two

years where it has been used at a QAS command centre and has contributed to improved response times to emergencies.

By mid-2009 each of the seven emergency service regions will have their own “black box” and will be able to take advantage of new satellite technology that will be available by then.

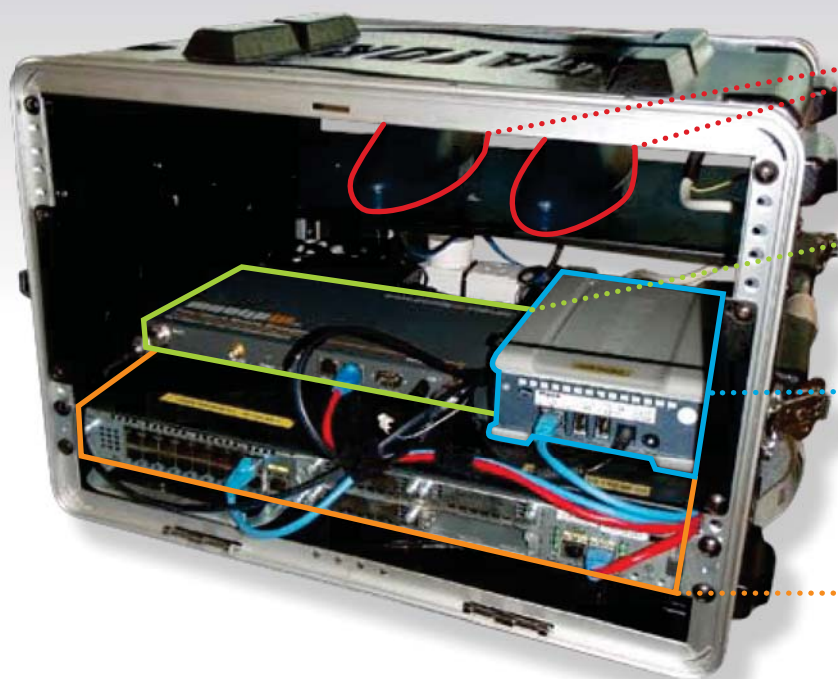
The combination of the ‘black box’ and the satellite technology will mean that remote command centres can be established during major events such as floods or other emergencies and will not impact local telecommunications services.

Other future options for the technology are to improve patient response and support early diagnosis, including more rapid transfer of patients’ medical information and other data which it will be possible to transmit from the ambulance or even emergency helicopters.

DES currently has four black boxes operating throughout south east Queensland; two portable communications units used by QFRS and QAS, one installed in the QFRS 850 Oscar vehicle and another installed in the QAS Special Ops vehicle.

At the completion of the project DES will have up to 20 devices installed across the state in portable kits, vehicles, trailers and possibly helicopters.

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Gain antennas for Telstra NextG and Optus 3G connectivity.

Communications hub – manages which carrier is used.

Network Drive for data storage.

Local Area network for wired (blue cable), wireless computer connection. Network printer connection and Voice Over IP functions.