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## Acision and Seeker propose emergency notification system

by Stuart Comer

Monday, 27 April 2009

**Australian wireless location technology company, Seeker Wireless, has teamed up with global mobile messaging company Acision to propose a system to locate mobile phones and in an emergency to target broadcasts to appropriate phones in the event of an emergency.**



According to Seeker Wireless CEO, Chris Drane the proposed solution does not require any hardware in the mobile network, only a Seeker Wireless application that could be installed on any SIM card. And while its functionality would be greatly enhanced if phones are GPS capable this is not essential.

Bill Dekker, Acision's vice president for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific, estimated that a basic system could be set up for about ten million dollars, and he contrasted this with the situation in the US where, a mandatory system had been introduced to provide location information for cellphones making 911 emergency calls.

"In the US they have spent at least half a billion dollars developing a system that needs a special receiver in every cellphone," Drane said. "We could put together a system that would be equal in performance to the US system and much, much cheaper by combing our technology with GPS and WiFi."

In the system envisaged by Acision and Seeker Wireless for emergency notification the two companies' technologies would be integrated so that messages could be directed to phones in locations affected by an emergency and delivered via cell broadcast.

Dekker said: "All the infrastructure is already there for cell broadcast and it is independent" of SMS so if the network is really congested messages still go through.

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The core Seeker Wireless technology derives position information from the relative signal strength of nearby base stations, but Drane said it was also able to integrate position information from GPS when available and from WiFi hotspots, for WiFi enabled cellphones. "GPS is highly accurate but if you are in an urban canyon or a shopping centre it does not work, and most mobile phone calls are made from indoors."



Acision and Seeker Wireless have already implemented a system, in Singapore that combines their respective technologies, in partnership with SPH Search, a subsidiary of Singapore Press Holdings (SPH). It is claimed to be the world's first commercial fully integrated GPS – cellular – WiFi location system. Rednano Locate is a mobile application downloaded onto the phone that allows consumers to perform a location search on more than 100,000 vendors through SPH Search's directory of business listings.

To use WiFi base stations for location information the locations of these must first be mapped and once this has been done the system keeps an updated inventory of base stations and locations from data delivered from users' handsets. Dekker said the initial mapping of

Singapore's WiFi hotspots had taken just two weeks.

Dekker said Seeker Wireless and Acision had only recently started trying to initiate discussions with Australian state and federal government bodies to interest them in the potential of using the technology for an emergency notification system. "It is still early days yet and we are trying to understand what stage everybody is at, but I have just found out that COAG is trying to drive something forward."

Dekker suggested that once the basic system was in place it could be exploited to deliver a wide range of non-emergency service applications such as weather and traffic warnings. "To make this work you could set it up as a bureau service and make it available to the relevant people. It is not a massive cost compared to the amount of money that is being poured into the NBN, Dekker concluded. "All this needs is the political will for someone to get behind it."