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Technisyst wins \$20m ambulance deal

Kelly Mills

JANUARY 21, 2003

A QUEENSLAND company has beaten Telstra for a NSW emergency services communications contract that may be the foundation of a whole-of-government mobile data network.

Technisyst Computing won the contract, worth more than \$20 million - one of two five-year communications deals worth \$40 million.

Telstra retained a contract to manage the statewide Government Radio Network (GRN) – used by about 34 government agencies including the fire brigade, State Emergency Service and the Roads and Traffic Authority – but Technisyst will deploy a Mobile Radio Data Service (MRDS) for the Ambulance Service of NSW.

The MRDS will enable operators to pinpoint all ambulances at any time and direct the closest vehicle to an emergency.

Each ambulance will be equipped with a mobile data terminal that enables text communication between communications centre operators and vehicles.

Work on the system has begun and it is expected to be operational before the end of 2003.

A spokesman for NSW Information Technology Minister Kim Yeadon said other agencies were expected to use the data system once the Ambulance Service confirmed its performance.

"Once the system has been implemented we will shift our focus on marketing the network to other government agencies, such as emergency services agencies," Technisyst Computing chief executive Bill Delaney said. "I expect the system will be the basis for a whole-of-government mobile data network.

"All key narrowband data will be available on the network."

The MDRS tender said the winning solution would have to be able to support up to 8500 vehicles within about three years.

Ambulance Service corporate services general manager Robert Gray said the new system would overcome radio blackspot problems. The GRN was introduced in 1993 to deal with voice traffic, but the increasing use of data had affected the system's performance.

The Ambulance Service's \$30 million AmbCAD system was one of the main applications affected by the growth of data traffic.

The deployment of the MDRS will free the GRN to focus on voice communications.

Blackspots on the NSW Central Coast will be eliminated by three new base stations, a spokesman for Mr Yeadon said.

Another four base stations are planned for Sydney, he said.

The mainly analog GRN – a Motorola SmartZone OmniLink trunked mobile radio system – consisted of 93 sites covering an area about one third the size of NSW, he said.

The Technisyst system – based on Ericsson's Mobitex technology -- has been used by the Queensland Ambulance Service for the past two years.

Mobitex is an Internet Protocol capable narrowband network tool.

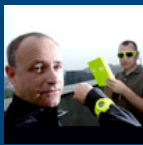
Mr Delaney said the system was a "scaled carrier-sized network".

Within the Ambulance Service it will operate over a network of 31 base stations, connecting more than 300 ambulances in the Sydney basin.

The central network management system will handle call switching

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Technisyst wins \$20m ambulance deal

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while the base stations will be connected by frame relay technology.

The network itself used IP technology, Mr Delaney said.

The AmbCAD system will interface with Technisyst's TC-Gateway product.

Interfaces were currently being written, Mr Gray said.

"Multiple agencies could connect from host systems over this gateway," Mr Delaney said.

The ambulances will be fitted with Intel-based embedded computer systems that use a wireless modem and GPS technology.

The system will enable the Ambulance Service, in the future, to add capabilities such as wireless access to email, databases and patient medical history information.

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