

Technology talk: Emergency responders hear latest from software providers

BY SARAH FISHER

Some Essex County fire and emergency responders discussed technology's role in the county's emergency preparedness plans Sept. 29 during a workshop in Essex.

Representatives from Telus Mobility and other providers gave presentations about how their services would help police, firefighters and county administrators deal with several scenarios including a pandemic. The key to providing the best service to residents in times of crisis is to

test personnel beforehand, said Ivan Kusal, a representative from Telus.

"You need to train your people to get them to know what to do in the case of a disaster," Kusal said. "... If they can handle as much pressure in an exercise, you know when reality comes they're not going to fold."

Phil Berthiaume, the county's emergency management co-ordinator, said the purpose of the seminar was primarily information sharing. He said county administrators might take some software representatives up on their offer to test

their products and services in the future.

Included among the day's presentations was a demonstration of a service provided by Wallace Wireless. Rob Moffat, the president of Wallace Wireless Incident Communicator, showed the audience how some programs available through Telus and other providers can deliver important information instantly.

Moffat showed how personnel could access information, such as mapped locations, through their Blackberries without travel-

ing to an office to use a computer terminal. The information is more advanced than many people know, he said.

"You can use the web cam and set your Blackberry for Trafalgar Square," Moffat said showing the crowd a live shot of London, England. "Or it can be Times Square in New York City."

Moffat said there is technology available that would allow firefighters to identify the contents of a tractor trailer, or a railway car, by typing in the number identified on the outside of the

cargo. When Moffat typed in a number, the program identified the contents and also listed instructions for firefighters in responding to a fire with those ingredients.

Another option on the program showed the mug shot of a person arrested by police and listed that person's current charges, criminal history and contact information. The same program can be used by schools to identify and call the parents of truant or absent students, he said.

"We matched the truant (students) against all the

numbers in the system and we reduced the call time from three hours to eight minutes," Moffat said about some schools in Lambton and Kent counties.

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