Georgia Tech Researchers Demo Disaster Communications System

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Georgia Institute of Technology (08/16/11) Liz Klipp

Georgia Tech researchers have developed LifeNet, a wireless communication system that is designed to help first responders manage disaster zones. LifeNet is a mobile ad-hoc network designed for use in highly transient environments that requires no infrastructure such as Internet, cell towers or traditional landlines. LifeNet bridges connectivity between a satellite phone, the standard for post-disaster communications, and a WiFi-based network on the ground. The new system extends the coverage of a satellite phone from one computer with access to the entire independent network in the field, meaning that several users who might not have satellite phones but do have smartphones or laptops with WiFi can connect to the LifeNet network, communicate with each other, and use the Internet as long as any one of them has access. "If you use LifeNet, the cost savings per text message is 100 times less than a satellite phone," says Georgia Tech graduate student Hrushikesh Mehendale. Each LifeNet-equipped computer acts as both a host client and a router, moving data to and from any other available wireless device. The LifeNet software provides basic communications that are low bandwidth, but reliable.

Full article: http://www.gatech.edu/newsroom/release.html?nid=69356