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## First responder XML

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With almost every local jurisdiction and agency nationwide running different systems, officials hope a new data standard will help information-sharing programs overcome the differences between hardware and applications.

The Emergency Data Exchange Language (EDXL) is a proposed Extensible Markup Language standard specific to the emergency management and response community. Experts in the public and private sectors developed the standard as part of the Homeland Security Department's Disaster Management e-Government initiative.

Showcasing the standard during a demonstration this week at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., officials from the Emergency Interoperability Consortium, DHS, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia emphasized the benefits of sharing alerts and information across a geographic region, regardless of a user's technology and applications.

By better defining the information being shared and identifying the people and agencies involved, EDXL should help get around the problem of incompatible existing and proprietary systems, said Matt Walton, chairman of the consortium. Many groups are developing XML schemas for their unique purposes, such as the law enforcement community's Global Justice XML Data Model.

"There are many systems out there ... [and] we have to live with what we have," Walton said. "We have to make sure that those systems continue to provide the service that they provided in the past, just enhanced, so that they now can perform the functions with other systems."

This proposed emergency data standard is the next generation of the Common Alerting Protocol, which is already in use and approved by the Organization for the Advancement

of Structured Information Standards. Developing and using EDXL and the protocol are critically important steps, said Steve Cooper, chief information officer at DHS. However, the work can't stop there and has to move even faster into improvement and implementation, he said.

"The faster we can move to basically take the successes like this...and make them pervasive across the country, the safer all of us will be," Cooper said.