

## **Interoperability Now!**

by Rex Brooks, co-chair, OASIS EM (Emergency Management) Messages and Notification Subcommittee (SC)

Much of the following report is excerpted from a recent message by Art Botterell, co-chair, OASIS EM Messages and Notification SC, to the mailing list he maintains for the working group which began the work of developing The Common Alerting Protocol, CAP, which was subsequently brought under the aegis of the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee. The Interoperability Now! event, which included a demonstration of CAP interoperability, was organized by Congressman Carl Weldon following a similar demonstration during the Global Homeland Security Conference held in Washington D.C. September 24-26, 2003.

The Interoperability Now! event highlights the current context of CAP. The Emergency Management Technical Committee (EM TC) of the international Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) voted to approve The CAP 1.0 Committee Draft for submission as a standard to OASIS, which occurred shortly after. On April 6th, after the OASIS member organizations completed their vote, OASIS announced the successful approval of CAP 1.0 as a new OASIS Standard. Allen Wyke, Chair of the EM TC said, "the successful OASIS adoption of CAP is a reflection of our increased focus to start making an impact sooner rather than later in the field of emergency management. The level of adoption we are already seeing, coupled with the longer term strategy and plan for the EM TC, solidly positions CAP as the first of many successful standards in the world of crisis management."

Recently, the ComCARE Alliance and the Emergency Interoperability Consortium took CAP to Capitol Hill on March 11th, 2004. As part of a program called "Interoperability Now!" an operating network of CAP-based applications were shown to legislators, staff and agency representatives in the Rayburn House Office Building. Participants in the CAP demo included the DHS DMIS (Disaster Management Interoperability Services) program, MyStateUSA, Warning Systems Inc., the Contra Costa County (CA) Community Warning System and mobileFoundations, Inc.

According to Art Botterell, a member of the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee and a participant in Partnership for Public Warning, attended the event and reported that David Aylward of ComCARE described it as "CAP's debutante ball, saying, " It did feel a bit like that, actually."

Art reported that "the technology demonstration also featured the "E-Safety Network" and the "Emergency Provider Access Directory" projects being spearheaded by ComCARE members ... systems for geospatial imaging and radio/telephone interconnection ... It was preceded by a series of panel sessions covering various aspects of standards-based interoperable communication. ..."

Among the notable news that Art collected was the item that, "Pete O'Dell of the Oregon RAINS project dropped by the demo event to mention that they've now processed over 87,000 CAP

messages in their system. ..." and "... Elsewhere, the California Office of Emergency Services has issued a contract to update its Emergency Digital Information Service system to more fully integrate CAP.

Art also reports to his list that "... we've been contacted by a research team in Western Australia who're putting together a CAP-based integrated warning methodology demo Down Under.

Art noted in closing his message, "...we're bringing CAP from concept to reality, faster than expected but not sooner than we need it . ..."

Gary Ham, of DMIS, and an OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee member, also attended the event as a participant in the demonstration which consisted of two demonstration networks, the DMIS transport system which provides a CAP API which can be used via SOAP in a web services-based implementation for sending and receiving CAP alert messages, and the ComCARE E-Safety EMERGENCY PROVIDER ACCESS DIRECTORY (EPAD), which can receive CAP alert messages through an intelligent message broker service.

Included in the demonstration was a mobile computer backpack which points toward one of the next challenges to interoperability of emergency response capabilities, sending and receiving updates from rapidly evolving emergency sites. Thus, future considerations were included within the overall theme of the "Interoperability Now!" event.