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NEWS

Emergency workers to use 'virtual world' software

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PIONEERING software that utilises technology that is used on virtual worlds such as Second Life and on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter is being given to emergency services by Scottish academics.

Experts at Edinburgh University claim it will help emergency workers around the world remotely tackle crises such as earthquakes or tsunamis.

Open Virtual Collaboration Environment (OpenVCE) creates a virtual "building" in on-line worlds such as Second Life or Open Sim, where people can "pin up" maps and play videos for others to see.

Users can also speak to one another using special microphones and can run Twitter feeds.

Professor Austin Tate, from Edinburgh's school of informatics, led development of the software.

He said: "We hope that by making this software available, we can help support the work of emergency services in coping with crises as they break and develop."

It has been created jointly with online event management firm Clever Zebra.

Earlier this month, it was revealed that a version of Facebook is being developed for the latest Apple iPhone.

The application should allow users to access a networking site on their mobile phones, similar to the one they see on their computers.

Page 1 of 1

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