

Sprint to stop selling certain push-to-talk phones

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(AP) -- Sprint Nextel Corp. is giving up on a technology that allows some Sprint-branded phones to use a "push-to-talk" walkie-talkie service similar to what's available on the company's Nextel-branded phones.

Scott Sloat, a spokesman for the nation's third-largest wireless provider, said Sprint will still support customers who have phones with the technology, known as QChat, but will no longer introduce new phones with the feature.

Sprint introduced QChat last year as a potential replacement for the push-to-talk service on its Nextel-branded iDEN network, which is a mainstay among dispatchers, contractors and other business users. Some analysts were pushing Sprint to jettison iDEN, which Sprint acquired with Nextel in 2005 but has been losing thousands of subscribers every quarter.

Since then, Sprint says the iDEN network's technical performance has improved and the company has used it for subscribers on the Boost Mobile brand.

Sloat wouldn't say how many QChat customers Sprint has, but he said iDEN customers account for the bulk of the company's push-to-talk users.

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