

New Sprint does push-to-talk without Nextel

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(AP) -- Sprint Nextel Corp. will start shutting down the Nextel part of its network in little more than a year. So what are the folks who use Nextel's walkie-talkie-like push-to-talk function going to do?

Sprint says it has the solution in the shape of phones that replicate push-to-talk, but operate on the Sprint network. On Tuesday, the company announced that the first one goes on sale next week: the \$70 Kyocera DuraMax, a shock- and water-resistant model designed for the construction workers and other outdoorsy types who use Nextel phones.

The push-to-talk feature is called Sprint Direct Connect. Sprint tried offering a feature called Nextel Direct Connect on some Sprint phones in 2008, but that faltered because the Sprint network wasn't quite capable of offering the split-second call connection speeds users had come to expect from Nextel.

With Direct Connect, users can communicate with up to 20 other phones in a workgroup at the touch of a button.

Nextel phones don't work on the Sprint network, and vice versa, though a few phones can use either network. According to Sprint's latest financial report, it has 7.7 million subscribers on the Nextel network and 42.2 million on the [Sprint network](#).

Sprint bought Nextel in 2005, an acquisition that soon turned sour. Nextel subscribers started leaving, and Sprint was saddled with the cost of running two incompatible networks. That has contributed to the

company's constant quarterly [financial losses](#) since 2007.

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