



Case Study

SkyTerra's satellite two-way radio communication proved critical to Florida's response/recovery efforts

Forty-four days of destruction with landlines down and cellular overloaded and unreliable

The Situation

Four hurricanes in two months! The 2004 hurricane season was a test of human spirit and emergency communication systems. Dealing with even a single hurricane is a challenge, but the sequence of one after another meant the providers of aid one week were requesting help the next.

On **August 14th**, Category 4 Hurricane Charley literally leveled parts of several Florida counties including Lee County, a large share of Charlotte County, as well as considerable damage to the inland counties of Hendy and Desoto.



With winds of 105 mph Hurricane Frances came ashore at Sewall's Point, FL on **September 5th**. The storm was downgraded to a Category 2 and became a sprawling mass of wind and rain that spread 950 miles north and south, as well as 740 miles east and west.

Hurricane Ivan was the season's monster storm. At one point Ivan's winds reach 165 mph, making it one of the strongest hurricanes in recorded history. Fortunately, it weakened considerably before coming ashore near Mobile Bay, Alabama, on **September 16th**. However, the storm's front right quadrant smashed into Pensacola, Florida, pounding the coastline spawning at a least a dozen tornados and wreaking havoc throughout inland towns.

On **September 25th** with winds of 115 mph, Hurricane Jeanne went ashore at almost the exact same spot as Frances. Jeanne ripped through areas only three weeks into recovery from Frances. Roofs that withstood Frances toppled to Jeanne. Slowing down to a crawl, Jeanne then dumped eight to ten inches of rain in eastern and central Polk County, FL.

In 2004 hurricanes killed 116 people in Florida. The last time one state took such a pounding was in 1886 when Texas was hit by four hurricanes.

The Challenge

Cell phones and landline service were down and regular two-way radios didn't work over extended ranges. Emergency responders and relief providers needed a means to conduct essential, interoperable communications.

SkyTerra Communications Inc.
10802 Parkridge Boulevard, Reston, VA 20191-4334
T: +1 703 390 2700
info@skyterra.com www.skyterra.com

The Solution

SkyTerra's satellite push-to-talk, two-way radios proved to be an essential communications tool for emergency responders and relief providers. Federal and state emergency management personnel, along with volunteers from as far away as Alaska, helped with the recovery and rebuilding of the battered state.

Coverage was one of the big advantages of SkyTerra's satellite network. Interoperable satellite communications meant emergency coordinators stayed in contact with their mobile teams. Here are a few examples:

- The Duval County, FL emergency manager takes preparedness seriously and tested his SkyTerra equipment on a weekly basis. Due to the training and familiarity with the MSAT equipment, the Pensacola emergency management team was able to immediately put SkyTerra equipment to use after Hurricane Ivan's strongest winds and biggest storm surge devastated the area.
- During Hurricane Frances, the Cape Coral, FL Fire Chief provided initial impact assessment support to several inland counties. In rapidly deteriorating conditions he called the Lee County, FL Emergency Operations Center via his mobile satellite phone for an update on the storm's position as it was blowing through. Although 75 miles away, the communication was very clear and the chief was able to report and coordinate emergency operations.
- When Hurricane Charley hit Charlotte County, FL, they had no communications. Manatee County sent some of their SkyTerra satellite units. Charlotte County was then able to communicate with 15 talk groups including hospitals, transportation, utilities, public safety and emergency management. Over the course of four hurricanes, they lost landlines and experienced cellular and radio overload. SkyTerra's satellite two-way radios ensured that they were never without communication.

In any emergency, interoperable satellite communication is a most valuable asset.

Having enough radios to go around and the implementation of interoperable talkgroups between the various agencies was vital during the 2004 hurricane season. Without satellite, the various county and state EOCs wouldn't have been able to communicate with emergency crews during those critical hours and days of response and repair.



Satellite services from SkyTerra enabled emergency personnel to coordinate and maintain communication between multiple responding agencies – even when the four hurricanes took down the traditional land-based communications systems for extended periods.