



## Case Study

### **SkyTerra Services Support California Emergency Operations**

*Responding to emergencies with a single voice*

#### **The Situation**

When the State of California wanted to ensure their emergency response system was well prepared to deal with any and all situations, they turned to SkyTerra for help. Through the implementation of a communications system based on satellite dispatch radio service from SkyTerra, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is able to securely and reliably connect local and state agencies, fire, police and other first responder groups with each other. Dubbed "SKYMARS: (Sky Mutual Air Radio System), the service ensures that all emergency service groups can work together to quickly respond to situations and initiate recovery efforts. SKYMARS provides an interoperable communications solution for many agencies located throughout California.



#### **The Challenge**

Coordinating emergency response in the State of California is a big job, especially in light of fires and other natural disasters that have hit the state in recent years. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state agency response to major disasters in support of local government. The Office is responsible for assuring the state's readiness to respond to and recover from natural, manmade, and other emergencies, including terrorism and other incidents relating to homeland security. In addition, the Office assists local and state agencies to work together on their emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

#### **The Solution**

The ability to communicate across agencies is a critical requirement. That is why OES has established a unique communications system called SKYMARS Network (Sky Mutual Aid Radio System) based on SkyTerra's push-to-talk, dispatch radio capability. The SKYMARS Network provides needed interoperability across fire, police and other first responder groups that previously relied on different radio spectrums to communicate.

Over the years, the OES has used several systems to tie together various levels of government. According to OES officials, the SKYMARS system provides a beneficial two-way radio circuit that enables OES to communicate immediately – and not just with one user but with all users in the SKYMARS network. OES makes the SKYMARS talkgroup available to any public safety agency in the state. OES serves as the gatekeeper in that anyone wishing to be on the network must submit a request through OES

**SkyTerra Communications Inc.**

10802 Parkridge Boulevard, Reston, VA 20191-4334

T: +1 703 390 2700

[info@skyterra.com](mailto:info@skyterra.com) [www.skyterra.com](http://www.skyterra.com)

before their radio units can be added onto the system. OES has numerous agencies signed up to the system, and that number continues to grow.

The SKYMARS system operates in each of California's six Emergency Operations Centers located in the coastal, inland and southern parts of the state. OES officials add that they also have a number of transportable units that can be deployed to a disaster site as needed.

OES officials explain that all of the fire coordinators have these units in their vehicles so when they are in an area where other communications services fail, they can utilize SKYMARS to communicate with Sacramento headquarters. The system was widely used in the Fall of 2003 and most recently during the Southern California wildfires of 2007, the state's deadliest and most destructive outbreak of fires in several decades. Driven by the Santa Ana winds, the fires displaced more than 500,000 people, destroying over 2,000 homes and some 200 commercial buildings in the process.

The network has not only benefited Californians; it also came in handy for hurricane response when OES resources were deployed from California to Florida. Officials also note that the SKYMARS system was used to support firefighting operations in Idaho and Montana – when OES moved resources from California to those areas.



MSAT-G2 "Go Kit"

A valuable communications resource, the SKYMARS system enhances the California OES' ability to respond to disasters quickly.

SkyTerra is developing its hybrid satellite-terrestrial communications network, based on SkyTerra's patented ancillary terrestrial component (ATC) technology. The company expects its next-generation network will provide seamless, transparent and ubiquitous wireless coverage of the United States and Canada to conventional handsets. SkyTerra plans to launch two of the most powerful commercial satellites ever built that will enable this network to support communications in a variety of areas including public safety, homeland security, aviation, transportation and entertainment, by providing a platform for interoperable, user-friendly and feature-rich voice and high-speed data services.