



CASE STUDY:

The Deadliest Catch: Risky business counts on satellite dispatch radio north of 60°

The Situation

There are many lines of work that are considered dangerous or at the very least risky to some extent... police, firemen, miners, oil riggers and 'crabbers' to name a few. But according to the Discovery Channel's sources the Alaskan 'crabbers' are top of the list in risky business.

Crabber is the name give to those who challenge the high seas north of 60 risking their lives for a two-to-five week period once a year in pursuit of the Alaskan king crab. Alaskan crab fishing is considered to be one of the most dangerous jobs in North America. Every year, hundreds of seemingly fearless crabbers endure 20+ hour shifts for days at a time, in extreme weather conditions: 40-foot waves, 80-mph winds and sub-zero temperatures with the hope of netting their share of one of the most desirable seafood delicacies in the world – the Alaskan king crab.

It is estimated that approximately 10 to 15 million pounds of crab are caught every year by the crab fishing fleet of just over 300 boats.

The Challenge

Maintaining reliable satellite communications north of 60° that operates in extreme environments.

The Solution

For a week prior to the start of the fishing season, crabbers flock to the small town of Dutch Harbor, Alaska on the island of Unalaska. There they pick up their pots, food supplies, fuel and bait readying themselves for the upcoming weeks at sea.

There are a number of satellite carriers offering service north of 60; however, SkyTerra's dispatch radio is the service of choice for the Pacific fishing community.



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Utilizing dispatch radio service for its flat rated, one-to-one and one-to-many service allows for an easy to use push-to-talk voice service in the most remote corners of North America. In fact, the ship captains refer to the SkyTerra dispatch radio phones as 'TAG' phones – a label they use in reference to their talkgroups. A captain of one ship might say to another "I'll call you on TAG 1".

For the crabbers this service is often the only means of communication. In these parts where you truly are 'on the edge of the world,' being able to push a button and hear a voice can often mean the difference between life and death. For most, it is something they simply cannot live without.

With seasonal fishing quotas to fill on crab, cod, halibut, pollock, hake and squid to name a few, the Pacific fishing fleet now numbers over 1400 MSAT units. From the Pacific Mexican Coast to the far reaches of the Aleutian Islands, the MSAT 'TAG' phones have become as popular as the common cell phone. Whether using dispatch radio, circuit switched data to download maps and weather reports, catching up on emails or simply making a voice call to a loved one back home, the SkyTerra Network has become part of doing business for those who dare to challenge the seas of the Pacific Ocean.

SkyTerra Communications Inc.

10802 Parkridge Boulevard, Reston, VA 20191-4334

T: +1 703 390 2700

www.skyterra.com

info@skyterra.com