

# Communications equipment to assist in Disaster Management

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As water flooded the City of New Orleans on August 29, 2005, members of the National Guard struggled to coordinate rescue efforts.

Many of the buildings used by the Guard as headquarters had sustained considerable damage in the storm and various communications equipment used by the local fire, EMT and police departments proved to be incompatible, making communication with civilian agencies nearly impossible.

Unable to speak with other responders and lacking a proper command and control center, the National Guard were unable to

receive much of the information needed to quickly and efficiently respond to residents still trapped without food, water or proper shelter in the days following the costliest storm in United States history.

The command and control issues facing the National Guard during Hurricane Katrina have proven common during disaster relief missions time and time again. Emergency responders, including National Guard and Army Reserve units, have often used widely different hardware - making communication between various agencies and departments difficult.

Responders have also been



forced to plan and execute orders for the multiple departments involved while without a proper command and control center at the scene of the incident.

The problems facing responders during such large-scale disasters as Hurricane Katrina have demonstrated the chaos and confusion that can erupt when proper communication is absent. They have also revealed which tools the Army National Guard and Reserve need to properly direct personnel during an emergency.

No matter a disaster's size, interoperability allows units to con-

communications system features satellite, radio, voice, data and video teleconferencing capabilities.

Having a mobile command post is also crucial to relief efforts. Even during a natural disaster, such as hurricanes, tornadoes and wildfires, units must be able to organize responders from a central location close to the incident.

Realizing the need for structures that can easily and quickly be deployed to any scene, some organizations have introduced shelter systems that offer both mobility and protection from harsh environmental conditions. One such

company, DHS Systems LLC, offers Deployable Rapid Assembly Shelter (DRASH) systems, which can be combined with heating and cooling units, power and lighting.




reverse with local departments and gather all the intelligence needed to quickly make the right decisions during joint rescue operations. Investing in a single system also allows local, state and federal organizations to save costs.

The National Guard has already taken steps to ensure that communication between Guardsmen and civilian responders is feasible during future disasters. In recent years the Guard has fielded Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) systems to all 50 states, as well as four U.S. territories. The interoperable commu-


Most recently, in 2008, the company added the Reeves Incident Command Post (ICP) to its line of emergency response products. The trailer and shelter system provides personnel with a transportable command post, as well as various optional communication packages - including satellite communications, Internet access and an integrated command and control system.

By utilizing emerging shelter and communications technology, Reserve units can be prepared to work alongside local organizations during a disaster.



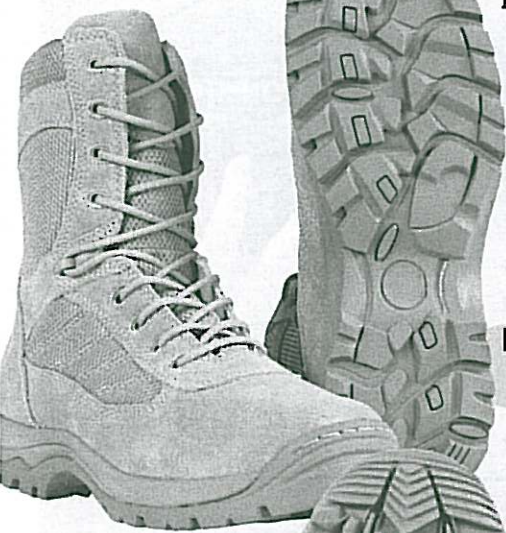
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