

AMERICAN RED CROSS “GO TEAMS” GO DIGITAL


Vertex Standard

eVerge™

CASE STUDY

On January 21, 2013, nearly a million people gathered at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. to watch President Barack Obama take the oath of office during the 57th Presidential Inauguration. Also present were more than 200 trained American Red Cross volunteers, there to assist local, state and federal authorities responsible for planning and coordinating the inaugural events.



As part of the Red Cross effort, 20 American Red Cross Disaster Relief “Go Teams” were deployed to provide public safety assistance throughout the National Mall area. Trained in CPR and First Aid, Go Team volunteers are positioned strategically within the crowd at major events, like the Inauguration, to monitor well-being and offer assistance. In the event that someone becomes ill, suffers an injury, or is separated from their families or groups, Go Teams contact first responders, provide immediate assistance and, assist with transporting individuals to mobile first aid stations.

The success or failure of such an assignment is highly dependent upon reliable, available, first-rate radio communications. For more than 20 years, Gary, Coordinator of Operations and Planning, Emergency & International Services for the American Red Cross, has relied on Vertex Standard mobile and portable two-way radios and repeaters.

“The radios help our teams communicate with each other and the repeaters allow us to coordinate back to the Command truck, which is equipped with public safety radios,” says. “It also gives us the ability to communicate with our Logistics, Administration, Security/Safety, and our liaison in the DC fire department.”

“Go Teams” Go Digital

While Gilham has always been happy with the performance of his Vertex Standard analogue radios, he was interested in looking at the possibility of migrating to digital. Not only does the encryption capability of digital add a critical layer of security to prevent unauthorised monitoring, the TDMA [Time Division Multiple Access] digital protocol would double his existing capacity without adding new frequencies.

Vertex Standard had just introduced the eVerge™ line of digital radios which Gilham used at the Inauguration. Because no extra encryption hardware is required to ensure private communications when operating in digital mode, and there is no significant loss in voice quality [which can happen with analogue scrambling], Vertex Standard was confident the new eVerge digital two-way radios would meet his needs.

Not only did Gilham appreciate the secure communications, which was of primary importance to him, he also learnt that the digital radios’ superior audio quality and the ability to deliver enhanced clarity right up to the edge of the transmit range was a surprise benefit as well.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Customer

American Red Cross of the
National Capital Region
Fairfax, Virginia
www.redcross.org



Industry

Humanitarian Organisation

Radios Used

eVerge™ EVX-531 Portables

Benefits

- ▶ Encryption for secure communications
- ▶ TDMA for double the capacity with existing frequency license
- ▶ Crisp, clear audio quality
- ▶ Digital / analogue dual mode capability

“I’ve been looking at a lot of digital radios and Vertex Standard are the only radios that impressed me. Overall, the digital eVerge EVX-531 is a great product.”

Gary Gilham, American Red Cross Coordinator of Operations and Planning, Emergency & International Services

eVerge™



EVX-531



“I’ve never been a big fan of the digital quality I’ve heard in other radios,” Gilham says. “However, when we tried out Vertex Standard’s eVerge EVX-531, we were impressed with the audio quality. It was crisp, clear and so much better than other digital radios I’ve tested.”

With Little Time To Spare, Go Team Hits The Ground Running

Gilham received the new digital radios only two weeks before the Inauguration. In the midst of preparations for the event, he had limited time to become familiar with the radios, program them and train the volunteers how to use them.

“We always pre-program the radios to be as ‘event-specific’ as possible to make it easier for the Go Teams,” says Gilham. “Thankfully, I found that the programming process was easy, straightforward and went very smoothly.”

Over 200 Red Cross volunteers worked the 57th Presidential Inauguration in various roles. Some served as members of the Go Team. Others were on medical teams, Family Reunification teams, managing logistics, or operating command trucks. Each volunteer was issued either an analogue or a digital radio, depending on his or her specific role. Because the digital radios can easily switch to analogue to communicate with analogue users, everyone on the team was able to stay in constant contact.

“All of our special security events are 100% radio-based, so it’s important that everyone is comfortable with the radios,” Gilham says. “During the event, the radios performed without any issues,

the sound quality was very clear, and they worked well with both the analogue and digital systems.” Gilham also noted that the team liked the small form factor and many of them wore their radios clipped comfortably to their vests.

Armed with their highly reliable Vertex Standard digital and analogue two-way radios, the American Red Cross Go Teams were able to communicate efficiently, work together and achieve their mission of helping to keep inaugural guests safe and secure throughout the event.

Looking Ahead

With the successful event behind him, Gilham hopes to migrate his analogue radio fleet to digital as older radios need to be replaced. This phased migration will be made easy and affordable with Vertex Standard’s eVerge dual mode radios, allowing eVerge digital users to switch to analogue mode when they need to communicate with other analogue users.

Gilham is also looking forward to leveraging digital technology to double his capacity. The digital TDMA protocol used by Vertex Standard’s eVerge digital radios enables twice the number of users (over analogue technology) for the cost of one frequency license. This will allow American Red Cross Go Teams to branch off more of its functions into independent call groups, eliminating radio traffic and chatter from other groups.

“I’ve been looking at a lot of digital radios and Vertex Standard are the only radios that impressed me.” says Gilham. “Overall, the digital eVerge EVX-531 is a great product.”