

Previous Experience - Press Coverage in New York



Previous Experience Press Coverage in New York - I



The Daily Gazette, Schenectady, New York - Nov 6, 1998:

Emergency Vehicle

Master Sgt. Mike Worobey of the New York National Guard, in driver's seat, and Ramon Abelleiro of Radio Systems Marketing work with a laptop computer in a sport utility vehicle Thursday. The vehicle, a prototype being tested by the Guard, will allow rescue workers from different agencies to communicate during emergencies



The Record, Troy, New York - Nov 6, 1998:

Ramon Abelleiro, principal Radio Systems Marketing works with MSG. Mike Worobey to demonstrate the Mobile Emergency Response Interface (MERC), which is being developed by the New York National Guard. The communications system will enable all emergency responders to communicate.

Previous Experience Press Coverage in New York - II

State National Guard testing disaster response vehicle.

Times Union, Albany, New York, November 6, 1998

COLONIE - The New York National Guard has been selected to help rate a new vehicle which can be easily taken to an emergency and become a communications center. Being developed by the Department of Defense Advanced Research Project Agency and Raytheon Corporation, a defense contractor, the prototype is a rugged, Land Rover-type vehicle containing an assortment of communications gear and computers.

At an emergency situation, the vehicle, known as Mobile Emergency Communications Response Interface (MERCRI), would become a communications center through which military and local officials can coordinate efforts. Local Police, fire and ambulance crews normally operate on one band of radio frequencies while military radios are on separate bands. In a disaster such as the northern New York ice storm or the tornado that hit Stillwater earlier this year, a similar communications center would be able to talk to all relief efforts.

Maj. General Jack Fenimore, who heads the State Guard, said the selection puts New York on the "cutting edge of emerging defense and emergency response-related technologies," and noted the National Guard and State Police are already working to ease communications problems and share information during disasters.

Previous Experience Press Coverage in New York - III

Guard Innovation brings MERCI to New York

Storm inspires satellite uplink, mobile interface.

Army Times, November 30, 1998

Last January, Mother Nature showed no mercy on the state of New York. She blanketed five counties with ice storm that downed 22,000 power lines and clogged cellular phone capability. "All conventional forms of communication were nonexistent," said Brig. Gen. Billy Martin, New York National Guard deputy adjutant general. "Residents couldn't ask us for help because they had no way to communicate with us," he said.

"We couldn't communicate with each other. We couldn't even anticipate the mission requirements because we didn't know what was really out there." Now the National Guard has a weapon to counter disasters of that magnitude with some MERCI of its own. The Mobile Emergency Response Communications Interface (MERCI) revolutionizes emergency communications, said Martin. "With MERCI, we uplink to a satellite and work with a multimedia communications system. We'll be able to talk to each other, get information, send back video, transmit voice and faxes, improve our response time and help emergency workers while they are making decisions." MERCI is housed in a sport utility vehicle so it's capable of handling rugged terrain. While on the move and operating on its own generated power, it has the capability to transmit data and video simultaneously. It allows emergency workers to get immediate firsthand information. No more counting on power restoration or cell phones. "One of the most important things about MERCI is that it allows emergency responders to communicate horizontally," said Martin. "

When there is a disaster, the first responders are usually local police and firefighters. Then you bring in the state police, then the state agencies, and then the guard comes in. MERCI revolutionizes how we can communicate. We'll be able to get information out faster and more efficiently, talk to first responders and second responders, and third." Martin said given the National Guard's task of the homeland defense, the 1998 ice storm represents only one kind of disaster, and also proves how one kind of disaster can spawn another one, such as a communication blackout. Linking emergency response needs with the newest technology and a rugged vehicle is part of the research and development push the National Defense Panel called for several years ago. "The defense panel encouraged innovation based on real world requirements," said Martin. "They said the engine for innovation comes from unresolved challenges in the field. Well this is certainly the answer to an unresolved critical mission requirement." MERCI was one of the few positive things that came in the aftermath of the storm. The State Guard leaders put together a think tank to come up with a solution. Since 1996, the state has dealt with eight natural and manmade disasters of magnitude that required intervention by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The think tank appealed to the Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which then asked the Raytheon Corp. for help.

