

Satellite Phones for Emergencies

SATELLITE PHONES FOR SAFETY AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Satellite phones are very specialized radios that act as phones. They work even when cell towers go down, since they can get service directly from satellites. The subscription fees for satellite phones are much higher than for cell phones.

Most satellite phones get service just from satellites, while others may use land-based services (cell towers) as well when they are available, in order to keep costs lower.

There are three primary satellite service providers recommended for emergency communications: Iridium, and Immarsat, and Globalstar. Each provide plans for both voice and data communications.

Satellite Phones at MDH

MDH contracts with Iridium, which offers solid global coverage with 66 Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites at 476 miles above the earth's surface. LEO satellites have shorter transmission paths and offer stronger signal paths. Orbits pass over each pole to provide full global coverage.

MDH has fixed bases at two locations: Saint Paul (Freeman Building) and the Saint Cloud district office. Both are set up as multi-resource communications centers with outdoor antenna systems for radio and phone equipment. Portable equipment is staged at each of the other district offices around the state.

MDH uses satellite phones primarily for response but is also used to support MDH events and activities throughout the state. Phones are available to any trained MDH staff.

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