

SATERN 20 years and growing

It's amazing to think that ham radio operators have had such a remarkable impact on the world thanks to SATERN (Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network). The lives saved, families reunited and vital information relayed by this international fellowship of amateurs are beyond measure. Time and again, these volunteers are often the only link to the outside world during a disaster.



June 1988

SATERN is the brainchild of Captain Patrick McPherson, emergency disaster services (EDS) coordinator for central Illinois and eastern Iowa in the Heartland Division. SATERN's first network consists of Pat, EDS volunteer Arthur Evans and two Canadian Salvationists.

The possibility that the fledgling network could accommodate international emergencies begins to dawn on its founders.

September 1988

Two months after its inception, SATERN's first international response occurs. Hurricane Gilbert batters the Caribbean for nine days, killing 341 people. Pat and Art work with radio operators in Atlanta and Jamaica to relay information.

1990

Major Pat McPherson is named the Metropolitan Division's EDS director.

Patricia Duce becomes the division's first radio liaison. A week later, a horrific F5 tornado hits Plainfield, Ill., killing 29 people and causing \$200 million in damages. The network requires 64 operators daily for 11 days. Other operators get on the air to help the SATERN volunteers.

1992

Art Evans opens the door for SATERN's evolution into a high-profile global response network by contacting international networks.

The Metropolitan Division holds the first of several disaster seminars; SATERN members from across America attend.

1993

A thousand miles of Mississippi River flooding require a multi-state SATERN network.

The SATERN website is launched thanks to a member's grandson.



1994

SATERN responds to the American Eagle airline crash in Indiana; 68 lives are claimed.

1995

A SATERN operator and canteen are sent to earthquake-stricken Kobe, Japan. Measuring 6.9, the quake is among Japan's most devastating—5,500 are dead, 26,000 injured.

1997

SATERN responds to the extensive Grand Forks flooding in North Dakota and Minnesota.

1998

During Hurricane Mitch, the Atlantic's second deadliest, the FCC designates SATERN's radio frequency for official emergency use. Honduras and Nicaragua report 11,000 dead and 8,000 missing. SATERN begins using the internet for missing person requests.

SATERN is named an official Salvation Army program and receives funding. Major Patrick McPherson is officially appointed national director.

(over)



1999

A quake measuring 7.9 strikes Turkey. Over 300 aftershocks leave 14,000 dead and 200,000 homeless. Operator Dick Montgomery, who made the first voice contact into Turkey on another band, asks SATERN if he can help relay information. Dick later joins SATERN and is now its Eastern Territory coordinator.

2001

SATERN springs into action September 11th. Operators coordinate emergency responses, including linking a California blood bank to one near Ground Zero. A SATERN North America Command is set up at Central Territorial Headquarters. Australian and German stations check in to help with "Stand by for America."

SATERN facilitates divisional EDS responses as wildfires engulf portions of western states. Afterwards, the SATERN Western States Net is established.

The National Association for Amateur Radio produces a video narrated by Walter Cronkite highlighting the work of The Salvation Army and SATERN.



2003

Bermuda corps officer and radio operator Major Rick Shirran relays data to SATERN from the midst of Hurricane Fabian.

The Metropolitan Division opens a leading-edge EDS facility containing a high-tech communications center for the SATERN North American Command.

2004

Four hurricanes blast Florida and the Bahamas. SATERN is nationally heralded for its missing person operations (over 1,000 requests). As a Bahamian operator transmits from her docked sailboat, other operators hear the wind howling.



2005

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast leaving 1,800 dead and \$81 billion in damages. International SATERN runs full force for 20 days. Using all available modes of communication, operators save lives during the flooding by directing emergency personnel to people trapped in houses or on rooftops. Over 61,000 missing person requests come in at a rate of 20 per second; amazingly, SATERN locates 25,508 people!

Major Pat McPherson comments, "It appeared the entire amateur radio population of the United States pitched in to assist, including 50 operators from the Texas National Guard." SATERN acquires 600 new members.

For the first time, an emergency call sign on a federal frequency is assigned to SATERN.

2007

The Department of Homeland Security assigns call signs to three SATERN members: Major Patrick McPherson, Dick Montgomery and Joseph Fratto.

With a membership of 3,800 trained operators, SATERN stands ready at a moment's notice to serve The Salvation Army and the world. Over 40 net meetings are held weekly, along with frequent training classes, which are listened to by thousands more around the globe.

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