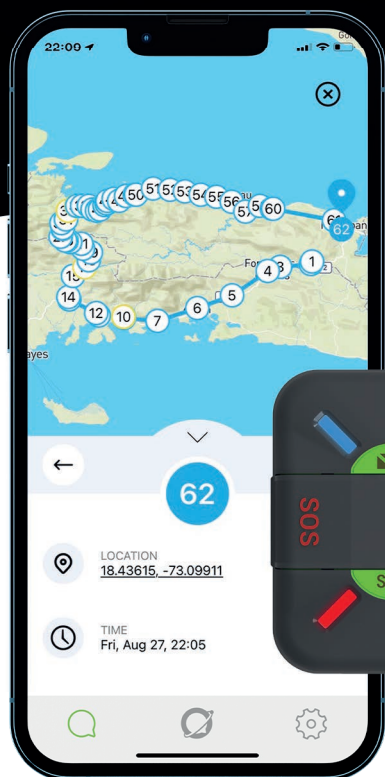


How ITDRC Improves Situational Awareness Using ZOLEO



OVERVIEW

Known for connecting communities in crisis, the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC) provides technical resources to support disaster relief and recovery operations. Since 2008, the volunteer-driven organization has responded to crises across the US, including wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes.

CHALLENGE

In August of 2021, Haiti was struck by a 7.2-magnitude earthquake, leaving over 650,000 individuals in need of assistance in its aftermath. ITDRC deployed its members to provide critical support, but with much of the infrastructure damaged or destroyed, the group was immediately met with a roadblock.

Traditionally functioning as a domestic organization, the communications equipment ITDRC had on hand was designed for stationary use and required the internet to establish a connection. In Haiti, the earthquake had completely degraded the terrestrial communication networks in its areas – most of which had limited coverage, while others never had cellular connectivity to begin with. **ITDRC would need an alternative method of communication to provide relief to the Haitian community.**

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Situational awareness is critical to mounting an effective relief effort. ZOLEO was paramount in the success of our relief mission. The devices enabled our team to effectively communicate with one another as well as automatically track each other's locations so we could ensure everyone's safety and security each step of the way.

– Chris Hillis, Co-founder, ITDRC.

SOLUTION

ZOLEO was selected as the best solution to enable effective cross-border communication based on its affordability, ease of use and flexible monthly plans that could be suspended when not in use. **ITDRC deployed nine ZOLEO devices to augment the limited communications capabilities present after the disaster.** With the aid of ZOLEO, the team could now easily coordinate food, medicine and supply needs, monitor each other's physical and mental health, and provide a lifeline home to their families via the free app. The familiar texting experience coupled with the portable design of the ZOLEO devices enabled quick and effortless communication between the team locally in Haiti and across the ocean in the US. The field team no longer had to rely on satellite dishes, as they were accustomed to on previous missions, and could send messages in transit as long as there was an unobstructed view of the sky.



What was originally intended as a means of communication, the ZOLEO devices also quickly doubled as personnel trackers. Using the Location Share+ feature, the ITDRC team could monitor its field team's movements and retrieve their exact GPS coordinates which were automatically shared in six-minute intervals. With the high-security risk of gangs controlling many of the roadways in Haiti, **both the Location Share+ and SOS functionalities provided greater peace of mind to both the field team and central command.**

In addition to being used internally by the ITDRC team, ZOLEO devices were also given to other response organizations requiring portable communications in areas with limited or unreliable terrestrial communications infrastructure. Providing a similar texting experience to WhatsApp, which is popular in Haiti, the ZOLEO app was easy for users to learn how to exchange messages and share their locations. Both ITDRC volunteers and clients in Haiti were excited about the capabilities the ZOLEO devices could provide.

OUTCOME

Using ZOLEO for field communication enabled the ITDRC volunteers to coordinate the installation of equipment and power at 15 sites to support NGOs providing critical relief to affected communities.

Going forward, **ZOLEO has become part of the ITDRC toolbox.** Devices will be used internally to enhance its operational efficiency, as well as to ensure the safety and security of its team both in the US and across the globe. ITDRC will continue relying on ZOLEO to help maximize visibility and minimize risk in high-security operations, and allow the organization to respond to disasters that would otherwise be deemed too risky.



For more information on how ZOLEO can help connect and safeguard your employees, contact BlueCosmo Inc., our Master Distributor in North America:

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