



First Responder

NAB's "Radio Heard Here" recently combined forces with the American Red Cross and the radio manufacturer Eton to distribute radios in disaster prone markets. The Red Cross also took to station airwaves across the country to remind listeners of the importance of radio during times of crisis. Beyond educating the public, the campaign also serves as a reminder to the industry of the integral role radio plays in its communities. And with it, the responsibility to be there — to be able to serve on a moment's notice, "live and local," when the need arises. While today's economics dictate tough programming decisions at many stations, if disaster strikes, does yours have a plan in place for providing reliable, critical information to your listeners?



interviews with radio stations across the country to discuss emergency preparedness and the importance of owning a radio. The campaign reached millions of listeners from Miami to Seattle.

In an age of new technology and new media outlets, what makes radio unique in times of disaster? How can radio's advantages be put to even better use?

LH: Many recent disasters have shown

that new media and technology have emerged as powerful ways to distribute and collect emergency information. But in most communities, radio continues to be the most reliable source for news and information when there is a disaster of any kind. Internet and television are often limited by the availability of power and other utilities during an emergency. But radio is immediately accessible, with or without power, and by people of any age or income level. Local radio personalities often serve as community bridge builders, helping people connect and assist one another, and as watchdogs to ensure that response organizations are meeting the needs of the community.

Moving forward, I think we will always need traditional, community-based radio to serve as the foundation of disaster preparedness and response information, but you may see more integration with social media and the Internet. Many stations are already using sites like Twitter and Facebook to collect and distribute emergency information.

DW: Radio is portable, ubiquitous, and local. When your Internet connection goes dead, when your power goes out, local radio remains one of the only information lifelines available to citizens in peril. Radio's continuous availability and ability to provide up-to-the-second life-saving information is why groups like the Red Cross encourage Americans to keep a battery-powered radio in their emergency survival kits. Whether it's Hurricane Katrina, the California wildfires, or Snowmageddon 2010, broadcasters are always on and always there when you need them.

And for public-service organizations and local governments looking to disseminate timely information, there is often no stronger medium than local radio. Nationwide, radio reaches 236 million listeners every week, a number that will likely continue to grow as new technologies incorporate radio receivers in their devices. We think radio-capable cellphones is another growth area in which radio can reach Americans with critical and timely information. ■

What was the goal of the campaign?

Laura Howe: The Red Cross really wanted to emphasize the use of radio in an overall family-preparedness plan. As part of our regular disaster-preparedness messaging, we encourage people to include a battery-powered radio in their disaster supply kit. We also wanted to raise awareness about the effectiveness of radio as an information source during an emergency. We found that this initiative perfectly complemented what we have been telling people for years about emergency preparedness.

How did your organization become involved with the campaign?

Dennis Wharton: The NAB has enjoyed a decades-long partnership with the American Red Cross, having worked together on a number of public-service campaigns, from Hurricane Katrina to the California wildfires to the Haitian earthquake. This partnership was a natural extension of our pre-existing relationship.

Jesse Kearney: We are constantly supporting radio as a medium around the world. During a catastrophe, information is crucial, and radio is the only medium standing. We have had great experiences in the past donating products to people in need.

Who determined the markets that would receive the radios? How were they distributed?

DW: Radio Heard Here identified markets across the country that are prone to devastating storms or natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornados, and blizzards. Working with individual stations in markets like Miami, New Orleans, Chicago, Denver, and Los Angeles, Radio Heard Here teamed with the Red Cross and Eton to distribute roughly 200 battery-powered and crank radios. Beyond that, the American Red Cross conducted a series of on-air



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