

“When there is a medical emergency, response times are critical.”

Interview with Chevra Hatzolah’s administrator, Danny Elbaum



Chevra Hatzolah use Zeon Digital radios across south-east Melbourne.

Chevra Hatzolah is dedicated to helping save lives. Zeon Digital adds another worthwhile dimension to this volunteer organisation.

“If you save a life, you save the whole world.” This is the fundamental premise of the organisation called Hatzolah, a volunteer medical emergency service which in Melbourne, operates out of Caulfield and covers a large area of the south eastern suburbs.

Melbourne has the largest per capita numbers of holocaust survivors in the world, a fact which brings its own unique problems; a major one being English is not the first language for many of them, who are now quite elderly. This was the inspiration behind the inception of Melbourne’s Hatzolah in 1995.

This first responder organisation is staffed by volunteers, who are on call for 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. There are no rosters because all the volunteers view it as a way of life.

Hatzolah is essentially a bridge between the scene of a medical emergency and Ambulance Victoria. Hatzolah itself doesn’t run an ambulance. The volunteers use their own fully equipped vehicles and look after the patient until the ambulance arrives.

Danny Elbaum, one of only two paid administrative staff in the Melbourne office, says people who volunteer for Hatzolah (mainly religious Jews) see it as an opportunity to give something back to the community. And they respond to everyone, not just the Jewish community.

“It’s a huge commitment, not only by the volunteers themselves, but by the whole family. A lot of the volunteers are small business people, so they may only be home for five minutes and they could receive a call which takes them right back out again,” says Danny.

Hatzolah responders are trained by Ambulance Victoria and are equipped with oxygen and semi automatic defibrillators. When seconds count, Hatzolah has saved lives.

In any emergency fast and reliable communications are essential. While Hatzolah has been a dedicated Motorola two-way radio user since it began, there was a need to upgrade to a system which would equip the organisation with the most recent technological advances. Zeon Digital was the obvious choice.

“In an emergency service such as ours, where the average response time is three minutes, the ability to see who is closest and available is critical. trackZEON, Zeon Digital’s GPS system, has been vital in ensuring that we can instantly see who is closest to an incident, on an hour by hour basis. We couldn’t operate effectively without a communications system incorporating all the latest 21st century features,” says Danny.

Why two-way radio?

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Another real benefit of the Zeon Digital system is the size of the radios and the ability to use them not only as radios but also as mobile phones.

“Our people have very quickly adapted to the additional features and now can’t operate without them. The new system has surpassed our expectations,” says Danny.

Cost is important to an organization such as Hatzolah, however GPS is really the only additional cost and ‘worth its weight in gold’ for what it provides.

“The dispatchers have found street search extremely useful; when covering such a densely populated area we have to know where we’re being asked to go. It’s definitely improved our ability to home in on the right streets quickly,” says Danny.