

York Rescue Boat upgrades emergency communications with IoT SIM connectivity

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York Rescue Boat, an independent lifeboat and national flood rescue charity, has strengthened its emergency communications capability by deploying IoT SIM connectivity to support real-time operations in both urban and remote environments.

Founded in 2014 following a series of fatalities on the River Ouse, York Rescue Boat has grown from a small volunteer-led initiative into a highly specialised rescue organisation, now regularly deployed across the UK to support flood response and missing person searches.

“We were established in 2014 after a series of deaths on the river, and a group of people got together to try and do something to solve that,” said Tom Atkinson, IT Team Lead at York Rescue Boat. “We’ve gone from fundraising in the back of a Land Rover to being quite a specialist team, and now a national flood rescue team deployed across the country.”

Mission-critical connectivity

Reliable communications are central to York Rescue Boat’s operations, particularly for radio traffic, command coordination and live situational awareness.

“The main use case we have for the SIM cards is for our radio traffic,” Atkinson explained. “Radio’s fundamental to how we work. For the Incident Commander, they’re not always on scene, so being able to have full situational awareness from wherever they are is really important.”

York Rescue Boat vessels are equipped with advanced technology including thermal imaging cameras and sonar. These systems allow live video feeds to be streamed back to command vehicles during incidents, improving coordination with emergency services.

“We can stream video back into the van,” Atkinson added. “So if we’re performing missing person searches, we can work directly with the police, and they can see exactly what our boat team is seeing in real time.”

Overcoming outages in demanding environments

Following repeated connectivity issues and an extended outage with a previous provider, York Rescue Boat began evaluating alternatives capable of delivering consistent performance under pressure.

“We had an extended outage with our previous supplier after a series of smaller ones, and the level of support we were receiving wasn’t what we’d expect,” said Atkinson. “So we started looking at other options.”

The charity selected KeySIM for its multi-network SIM capability, enabling devices to roam across multiple UK mobile networks to maintain the strongest available signal.

“We operate in very varied environments,” Atkinson explained. “In urban areas we see a lot of contention on the network, so being able to move to another network helps. At the other end of the spectrum, we can be very remote during searches, so being able to roam onto the network with the strongest signal is key.”

A step-change in reliability

Since deploying the solution, York Rescue Boat reports a marked improvement in communications resilience during critical operations.

“KeySIM really has changed the game for us in terms of having reliable communication,” Atkinson concluded.

By strengthening connectivity across its fleet and command vehicles, York Rescue Boat can continue to deliver fast, coordinated responses in challenging conditions—helping to protect lives when every second counts.

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