

EQUAL TIME FOR SATPHONES

In the interest of keeping this discussion balanced, we checked in with Jeff Thomassen of OCENS, a satphone sales and service provider:

While satellite phones can cost less than a new SSB/Pactor modem and are much easier to install, they do not replace your basic SSB for ship-ship communications. That being said, when looking at data communications for things like email and weather, using a satellite phone is point-and-click — actually more like the older dialup connections of the past — and has a much shorter learning curve than SSB.

Like SSB, using your satellite phone effectively requires software and services that are designed to make the best use of the limited bandwidth, and takes into account the cost of airtime and reliability of the connection. OCENS (www.ocens.com) does this by utilizing data compression and firewall management to help reduce data usage and curb unexpected or runaway data charges. We do this with software such as OCENS Mail and WeatherNet as well as hardware such as the Optimizer.

OCENS Mail runs \$240 per year and

provides unrestricted email access allowing you to conduct any type of business via your email and includes automatic data compression as well as customizable size restrictions to cache and manage large files. You can post to services like *Sailblogs.com*, Facebook and Twitter directly via the OCENS Mail client. OCENS also provides a number of tracking solutions that can be used with OCENS

Mail and/or your satellite phone directly for automatic reporting or semi-automatic or manual updates.

One of OCENS'

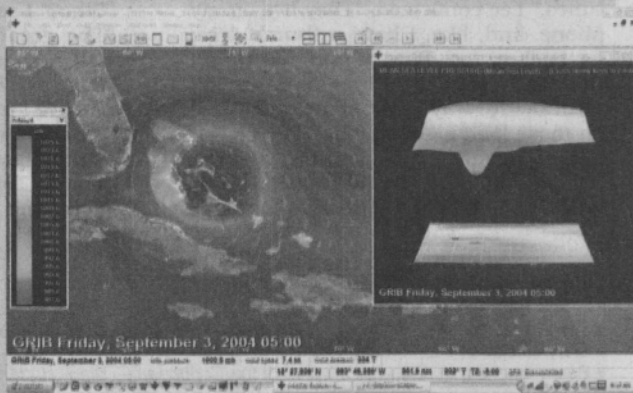
key products is WeatherNet. This service allows you to download weather on demand easily and for any location on earth in a variety of formats (text, GRIB, weather charts, satellite imagery). This service eliminates the need to request weather files via email, which would require making two phone calls (one call/message out to request the data and then another call to receive the message a few minutes later). Instead, you just select the file you want and hit download. The request is made and processed and returned to you all in the same call, thus reducing your

airtime costs.

Unlike SSB, a satellite phone can give you standard Internet access, allowing you to actually load a webpage if you need to. We do, however, recommend utilizing web compression service that



The Iridium 9575 Extreme.



Programs like GRIB Explorer are designed to be user-friendly.

will greatly improve performance and reduce data usage when doing this.

Having a satellite phone onboard does have more ongoing costs than an SSB, but you are also gaining quite a bit in simplicity and flexibility. You can make a phone call whenever you want, download whenever and whatever you want, and you have a key safety component for your ditch bag should the need arise.

Bottom line, if you are going to pay to have this phone on board for emergencies, then why not utilize the airtime that you have already purchased and put that asset to work for you?

— jeff thomassen