

In a disaster situation, the [presence or absence of communication](#) could mean life or death as it affects the fast exchange of information crucial in disaster response and recovery. This happened in the immediate aftermath of Super Typhoon Yolanda when electricity and cellular signals were cut.



When Yolanda hit the country in November 2013 and [cellular lines were disrupted](#), HAM radio operators continued to talk to each other, passing on messages for individuals, private firms, and government offices.

"One of the first messages received by the group tracking the typhoon from Tacloban was 'we need cadaver bags'," Roberto Vicencio, an amateur radio operator in Metro Manila, recalled. They received the message on November 9, 2013, a day after Typhoon Yolanda first made landfall in Guiuan.

According to Vicencio, the station in Tacloban relied on a car battery to power their radio.

The request for body bags for Tacloban was coursed through Naga. Eventually, the message was picked up in Antipolo and passed on to DOH, Red Cross, and DSWD.

From Roxas City, the first message from operator DV6ILA, Iver, was "Roxas City is gone, Jo."

After the storm, along with other radio operators, Vicencio helped relay messages of Yolanda survivors – about their health and welfare – to relatives in Metro Manila.

"Basically we are hobbyists. That we can provide public service is an added bonus that is realized by the flexibility of our equipment. Some hams even build their own equipment," Vicencio said.