



RCS Radio Rentals Connecting the Kentucky Derby Festival for Over 30 Years

The World-Famous Kentucky Derby Festival

The Kentucky Derby Festival (KDF) is one event we're sure you've heard of. It is one of the premier community events of its kind in the world and a proud five-time winner of the International Festivals and Events Association award for Best Overall Festival. It brings fun, excitement, international recognition and a spirit that is unmatched.

Produced annually since 1956, the Derby Festival has grown into the Commonwealth's largest single annual event, boasting more than 70 special events over two weeks that attract crowds of over 1.5 million. The Festival blasts off each year with the Opening Ceremonies, Thunder Over Louisville, one of the nation's largest annual fireworks extravaganzas. Other highlights include a half

and full marathon with over 12,000 participants, hot-air balloon events, and live bed racing. And, you can't talk about the Kentucky Derby Festival without mentioning the event that started it all, the Pegasus Parade that marches down Broadway.

To manage an event of this scale, not only does it take thousands of individuals to plan and coordinate, but it also takes a reliable communications solution. The KDF staff is no stranger to the quality service of two-way radio rentals in Kentucky. Since the 1980s, the KDF has trusted the team at RCS Communications (RCS) with city-wide communications that keep festival workers, participants, and emergency response teams connected and safe.



The Challenge

As the festival grew in its earlier years, the folks behind the KDF knew they needed an instant communications solution in order to keep up. Back in the 1980s, cellphones were not a reliable solution for instant communications, nor were they something staff could comfortably carry with them for hours. After consulting with RCS, portable analog two-way radios were recommended to enable push-to-talk communications across the city of Louisville, Kentucky.



This proved to be the ideal solution for many years, but as the festival continued to grow and technology continued to advanced, analog radios could no longer sustain the KDF communication requirements. Analog radios were not able to provide the coverage, reliability, or audio quality required to keep up with the festival.

It's fair to wonder why modern cellphones wouldn't be the next logical solution to follow analog radios, considering everyone already owns and knows how to use a cellphone. The fact that there are so many cellphones in use is actually part of the problem.

When over 1.5 million people gather, cellphone lines get congested with an

influx of users. This is not an issue the KDF can afford to have, especially in the event of an emergency. Network congestion can completely disable cellphones from making important calls or sending critical messages.

Cellphones also do not provide instant communications but require you to call and wait for someone to answer and hope you or the receiver are not in a dead zone. With a team of thousands, addressing each staff member individually is not adequate when an entire group of people needs to be updated and informed instantly. Even with the amazing advancements in cellphone technology we've seen, Kentucky radio rentals far outmatch cellphones as the premier instant one-to-one and one-to-many communications solution.

“Communicating to a broad or sometimes specific group instantly keeps key players and teams up-to-speed on the ever-changing elements of large-scale events all over this large metropolis.”

Matt Gibson
CEO of the Kentucky Derby Festival

The Solution

To keep up with the major influx of visitors and complex organization of over 70 events stretching across the city, Kentucky event radio rentals continue to be the most reliable communications solution for the KDF. While Analog radios were to the go-to solution for the KDF for nearly 20 years, to maintain pace in the modern world, RCS transitioned the KDF over to digital two-way radios in 2006.

To cover all ongoing events, over 400 radios and accessories are provided to the KDF staff. RCS recommended two of their most popular event radio rentals in Kentucky, the Motorola XPR7580e and the Motorola CP200D portable radios. Multi-unit chargers were provided to keep radios ready for action. Lightweight headsets offered high-clarity, hands-free, discreet two-way communication. Bluetooth accessories were also used to improve the safety of drivers and attendees by keeping hands on the wheel and eyes on the road, and not searching for a radio.

RCS also supplied an advanced trunking system, Business Dispatch. This system, based on repeaters with Motorola Connect Plus, offers city-wide coverage and operates on a private licensed network. From Thunder over Louisville to the Tour De Lou and everything in between, the KDF staff never have to worry about network congestion, dead zones or inconsistent coverage areas.

RCS team members are also present on-site throughout the festival to ensure all radios are charged, properly programmed, and operating at peak performance, in addition to carrying out service requests to get radios back up and running as quickly as possible.



Motorola CP200D



Motorola XPR7580e



The Benefits

Like most large-scale events, the KDF required a communications solution for only a portion of the year, making it difficult to justify the upfront investment of new equipment. With RCS' Kentucky two-way radio rentals, the festival is supplied with the most up-to-date digital radio technology on the market without the purchasing price tag and hassle of storing radios during the off-season.

The transition from analog to digital radios (walkie talkies) also came with more advanced features, such as:

- Background noise suppression to filter out the sounds of crowds and traffic
- Auto error correction to eliminate white noise interference for crystal-clear audio
- Double the channel capacity of analog radios
- 40% better battery life for extended use and less need to frequently swap out batteries

- Over-the-air-programming to program and update software patches from a remote location to a group of radios at the same time
- Text messaging capabilities to discreetly send critical information

These solutions evolve each year with the needs of the festival. RCS works with the KDF team to make sure each individual user knows how to effectively operate their radio, with a focus on how to connect with on-site public safety agencies. RCS pre-programs emergency alert messages for the festival that can be sent directly to emergency response teams with the touch of a button.

"RCS reviews our communications operations and helps us improve the process so as to better utilize the up-to-date equipment that we have at our disposal." - Matt Gibson, CEO of



Kentucky Derby Festival, Motorola two-way radios further elevate safety for all with reliable and accurate GPS location tracking. This feature proves extremely important when coordinating everyone whilst en-route such as during the KDF marathon or parade. Festival personnel can learn the precise location of their team and quickly dispatch the nearest member to address situations before they turn into larger issues.

Impress Your Guests with RCS

Founded in 1952, RCS Communications has been providing quality communications equipment, systems, and services to customers across Kentucky and Southern Indiana for over 60 years. A leading Motorola authorized two-way radio dealer, RCS specializes in the sales, service, rental, and installation of two-way radios, pagers, and wireless communications systems.

RCS radio rental services stretch beyond borders with short and long-term contracts available to anyone, anywhere across the United States. Radios come pre-programmed to specific user needs and 24/7 on-call or on-site support is always available should equipment not performing as intended.

RCS takes great pride in knowing that we have provided the Kentucky Derby Festival with the right radios, accessories, and infrastructure needed to coordinate the best possible experience for the 1.5 million people that gather every year in celebration. The Kentucky Derby Festival is an event RCS is beyond proud to have sponsored for over 30 years and looks forward to supporting the festival's success for years to come.

Elevate visitor enjoyment and safety by finding the perfect radio for your next event or project by Booking a Free Radio Demo with RCS.

