



# How Alpine Helicopters and SKYTRAC are Leading the Way for Remote Communications in Western Canada

Learn how Alpine Helicopters and SKYTRAC showcased Iridium Push-to-Talk (PTT) communications in Western Canada.

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**SKYTRAC**



# About Alpine Helicopters

**Alpine Helicopters is one of Western Canada's well-known rotor-wing operators.**

From its start in Calgary in 1961, Alpine Helicopters later established its main headquarters in Kelowna, eventually growing to seven locations across Alberta and British Columbia, including Canmore, Calgary, Golden, High Level, Kananaskis, and Grimshaw. This extensive network allows Alpine Helicopters to support a wide range of missions year-round. Alpine operates one of the largest Bell helicopter fleets in Canada, with 39 intermediate and medium aircraft in active service.



## OVERVIEW:

**ORGANIZATION:**  
Alpine Helicopters Inc.

**HEADQUARTERS:**  
West Kelowna, British Columbia,  
Canada

**INDUSTRY(S):**  
Forestry, Mining, Heli-Skiing,  
Aerial Firefighting

While widely recognized for its heli-skiing and mountain-flying operations in British Columbia, Alpine Helicopters also supports a broad range of commercial missions including Resource Support for Oil and Gas, Aerial Firefighting, Drill Moves, Utility & Power-Line Work, Seismic Work and Lodge Resupply. A key part of Alpine's unique service offering is their ability to operate from multiple locations across the province, allowing them to respond quickly and effectively to mission requirements. During the summer months, aerial firefighting becomes Alpine's primary focus, with aircraft and crews mobilized wherever the province requires support.

As Alpine Helicopters has grown over the years, their mission has remained clear: deliver top-tier service through exceptional maintenance, a strong safety culture, and continuous investment in their people. This people-first approach is supported by experienced leadership and strong teamwork across the organization. Together, these elements underpin Alpine's vision to be a leading operator and employer by advancing safety, technology, and operational excellence in step with customers' needs.

This commitment is very evident in their aerial firefighting work. Every summer, Alpine Helicopters deploys up to 27 aircraft across Alberta, where dependable support is crucial. Their fleet of Bell helicopters is central to providing the power and capability needed for crew transport, coordination with fire operations, and critical wildfire suppression in remote, challenging terrain. As wildfire seasons intensify, Alpine's focus on modernization and improved connectivity continues to strengthen their role as a trusted partner in Canadian firefighting operations.

## FLEET OVERVIEW:

**15** BELL  
212 HP

**14** BELL  
407

**07** BELL  
206L-3

**02** AIRBUS  
AS350 B3E

**01** BELL  
412

## CHALLENGE

# Communication in Areas Where VHF Coverage is Limited

Managing a varied fleet of rotorcraft that supports a variety of mission profiles requires a detailed level of maintenance oversight. Due to the seasonal nature of their work, aircraft switch between aerial firefighting, heli-skiing, and other commercial activities, each of which has unique contractual and operational needs. It was in this that Alpine saw the need for a versatile technology solution that could grow with a diverse fleet.

As Alpine sought solutions, SKYTRAC's expertise, combined with its role as a Canadian-based service provider, made it a natural fit. With truly global connectivity, Alpine leveraged the ISAT-200A to enable the host of capabilities they would require now and, in the future. It was important for Alpine Helicopters to invest in a scalable solution, and in their extensive review, they saw a growing need for expanded communication availability.

**“To best serve our forestry clients, we had to look for a comprehensive operational solution, and we believe what we have with SKYTRAC provides exactly that.”**

**BURT POTTER, CHIEF ENGINEER**

The possibility of alternate communications is needed in areas where traditional coverage is limited, especially in aerial firefighting operations. With increasing wildfire growth in Canada that is unplanned and unpredictable, the demand for aircraft operations in areas where there is limited VHF radio coverage is common for aerial firefighting support operators such as Alpine. Response teams are looking for ways to work together to leverage systems inside the aircraft to improve or provide alternate forms of mission communication. Through this, Alpine Helicopters saw the value of SKYTRAC's Iridium Push-to-Talk (PTT), enabled by the ISAT-200A, to mitigate these communication issues

and, as a result, agreed to demonstrate it in an operational environment with SKYTRAC's support.

## SOLUTION IN ACTION

Satellite PTT works by allowing users in talk groups to communicate with each other when the communication gateway is opened, enabling pilots or ground crew members to communicate without relying on VHF radio. By using a satphone, those on the ground or in mission control would be able to communicate with the aircraft even in the most remote operating areas and vice versa. Alpine Helicopters and SKYTRAC were able to test this capability in their own backyard of West Kelowna. Harnessing the power of Iridium's truly global network, Alpine sought to confirm that operators in regions where VHF coverage is limited would still be able to communicate via satellite PTT.

As a leader in Canadian aerial firefighting operations, Alpine Helicopters is among the first firefighting operators to utilise satellite PTT, leveraging future communications technology to support wildfire response.



**The ISAT-200A powered on and onboard Alpine's Bell 212 HP Helicopter.**



**Brandon Graham (SKYTRAC) onboard Alpine's Bell 212 HP Helicopter.**

**Brandon Graham (SKYTRAC) onboard completing on-ground test before take off.**

To conduct this demonstration, SKYTRAC's team was onsite mid-October 2025 to support Alpine during flight operations. Departing from Alpine's West Kelowna headquarters, Brandon Graham, a member of SKYTRAC's Technical Support Engineering team, showcased the PTT functionality from the cockpit while in flight. Using SKYTRAC's ISAT-200A with PTT initiated through the CDP/DVI interface, Graham communicated with Alpine staff on the ground, who had an Iridium satellite phone, to confirm the communication protocol worked as expected.

capability. The audio captured from this activity can be heard at [www.skytrac.ca/resources/case-study/alpine-helicopters-and-skytrac-leading-the-way-for-remote-communications](http://www.skytrac.ca/resources/case-study/alpine-helicopters-and-skytrac-leading-the-way-for-remote-communications)

This successful demonstration marks an important milestone as Alpine Helicopters completes its Bell 212 fleetwide upgrade and prepares to support aerial firefighting missions across Western Canada in summer 2026. As Alpine Helicopters continues to upgrade its fleet with SKYTRAC's ISAT-200A, SKYTRAC is proud to continue to support Alpine throughout installation and testing, by providing responsive, hands-on help.

**“Leadership in aviation sometimes requires exploring, testing and refining capabilities, and aviation technology leaders like Alpine Helicopters understand this very well. We value that Alpine Helicopters was willing to partner with SKYTRAC to test our Push-to-Talk capabilities in an operational setting. Together, we can leverage this technology to help aid wildfire response communication strategies and improve them.”**

## CONCLUSION

With SKYTRAC's ISAT-200A and Satellite Push-to-Talk (PTT), Alpine Helicopters can stay connected across remote wildfire operating areas, supporting clearer coordination between air and ground crews when traditional communications fall short. As Alpine completes its Bell 212 fleetwide upgrade, the team is positioned to meet evolving forestry requirements and head into the 2026 season with greater operational readiness. To learn more, please contact [sales@skytrac.ca](mailto:sales@skytrac.ca) or visit [www.skytrac.ca](http://www.skytrac.ca).

**MANDI SKINNER, BUSINESS MANAGER**

**“I think the benefit it will provide to communication between the ground, air and equipment crews on a localized fire, will result in better safety. Ultimately, I would say this would provide better safety across all operations.”**

**SCOTT HAYWARD, DIRECTOR OF MAINTENANCE**

By Alpine Helicopters proactively evaluating satellite Push-to-Talk (PTT) in actual operational scenarios, the effectiveness of the technology can be confirmed prior to use. By moving early on this capability, Alpine Helicopters is positioning its operations ahead of known communications difficulties within the industry and Western Canada. Multiple recordings of PTT communications were captured during the flight, demonstrating the performance of the

## CONCLUSION

# Solution Overview

SKYTRAC serves the largest organizations in multiple industry verticals. With 7,500+ global customers on all seven continents, we ensure our products and services are highly reliable and are trusted by those that depend on us for mission-critical applications. Our solutions are designed for both fixed-wing, rotorcraft, and unmanned aviation.

## ISAT-200A SATCOM

The ISAT-200A is SKYTRAC's lightweight data acquisition unit with added transceiver and on-board server capabilities. This proven and multi-functional system is central to facilitating real-time fleet awareness, accurate FDM performance analysis, and integrated connectivity for Health and Usage Monitoring (HUMS) alerts. Track fleet activity across the globe, automatically detect in-flight events, and capture robust data to feed your FOQA, MOQA, SMS and other operations systems.



## CDP/DVI

SKYTRAC's Cockpit Display Panel and Dispatch Voice Interface (CDP/DVI) is a reliable solution for connecting air and ground crew via satellite voice and text. The system includes up to 125 programmable speed dial numbers international dialing, up to 99 pre-programmed quick mail messages with editable fields (such as ETA, PAX or destination), automatic and manual brightness control, and audible alerts for incoming messages. The hardware comes in an NVIS version, ideal for use in night-time operations.



## PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Enable multiple capabilities with an all-in-one Satcom solution
- Gain unprecedented onboard data logging and real-time analysis
- Guarantee global satellite coverage with a small form factor GPS/Iridium Antenna
- Capture internal and external audio visual with rugged, discreet camera kits
- Gain cost-effective Satcom connectivity with Iridium narrowband bandwidth

For more information, contact a connectivity expert at [sales@skytrac.ca](mailto:sales@skytrac.ca)



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