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K5wth

Definitions and Shadowing

This evening's session is designed to provide a standard for the Arkansas ARES/RACES organizations and their members. We are all in this "HOBBY" to provide emergency communications for the public as a free service in the times of emergencies and/or disasters.

Dale and I have tried to stress the following points in many ways. The need for efficient, reliable and accurate emergency communications is a must. Therefore all of us have a responsibility to make our best effort to be capable of what we are volunteering to do. A heart in the right place is a good start, but a good heart doesn't always get the job done. The welfare, property and maybe lives of many could depend on our capabilities. It is our individual responsibility to insure that we are making the best effort we can.

We need to first understand the proper definitions of the words EMERGENCY, INCIDENT and DISASTER before we can really understand what it is we are doing, or need to do. So, let's look at the definitions of these:

1. EMERGENCY:

- (A) There is a sign around that reads “Your emergency is not necessarily my emergency.
- (B) While those of us involved in emergency communications probably know what an emergency is, that is not the point, let’s be specific so we are talking a standard meaning.
- (C) Some areas define emergency as “a situation of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property.
- (D) Webster’s defines emergency as “unexpected situation requiring immediate action.”
- (E) The FCC’s definition when it comes to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications is “The immediate safety of human life and immediate protection of property and/or natural resources. This of course is the definition of an emergency that governs most ARES/RACES operations.

While all of this may seem obvious to experienced communicators, we cannot afford to assume that we currently share a common language across state and national boundaries. Effective communications begins with a good understanding of words and meanings.

OK, let’s look at the definition of “INCIDENT”.

2. INCIDENT:

- (A) An incident is defined as an occurrence or event (either human or natural caused) requiring action by

emergency personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources.

And lastly, let's look at the word "DISASTER" and its definition; also I'll mention a few characteristics of a disaster.

3. DISASTER:

(A) A disaster is defined as a sudden on set of an emergency event bringing damage, injury to or loss of life and/or destruction to property and natural resources. Disasters may occur with little or no advance warning, such as EARTHQUAKES, FLASHFLOODS, TORNADOES, FIRES or they could be situations caused by a TERRORIST attack.

Some distinguishing characteristics of a disaster are:

1. They generally affect a widespread population and geographic area.
2. They will last over a substantial time period (days to weeks).
3. Local governments will proclaim an emergency (as may other levels such as state/federal).
4. Emergency Operations Centers are activated to provide central overall coordination of jurisdictional assets, department and incident support functions and initial recovery coordination.
5. Resource demand can go beyond local capabilities and extensive outside aid is needed.

Life and death communications are not part of our daily routine as amateur radio operators, and most of what we say and do each day does not have the potential to severely impact the lives and property of hundreds or thousands of people. In an emergency, the untrained amateur operator can cause huge and often unintentional problems. So this is one of the greatest reasons that we should TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN.

A few weeks back, W5SUB, Richard brought up SHADOW OPERATIONS, and suggested we have a program on this subject. So, here's one for you Richard.

The shadow operator should be an organization's best. Shadow operations are mobile or portable and generally conducted under more difficult conditions than other operations. There is no time to look up rules or procedures as the operator is always on the move. The vast majority of the traffic will be verbal, not written.

The operator is usually assigned to shadow, or constantly stays with the Incident Commander or an Information Officer. These officials travel everywhere within the affected area, especially the Information Officer's and generally amateur radio is the only communications they use. Often, in the performance of their duties, they will approach potentially hazardous areas; however they will not put the amateur operator into a dangerous situation. They are experts in their fields and can be trusted to make the right decisions. Almost always, the person you are shadowing

will be in an Official vehicle, so therefore an operator's equipment must be able to be plugged into the vehicles power outlets. Another good idea would be to have a $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{5}{8}$ wave mag mount antenna with adaptors to connect to the hand held radio. Since a shadow operator will usually be in the field for up to twelve hours, a good supply of batteries will be needed and in most operations the Incident Commander will have a large supply of them, but you should also plan ahead and have your supply with you.

A good way to improve portable operations is to use a mobile dual band full duplexing transceiver as a repeater in conjunction with a handheld. This will allow excellent portable operation as long as the operator doesn't get out of range.

Shadowing is probably one of the most interesting operating positions in amateur radio. Only well trained, experienced and properly equipped operators should fill this position.

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