

“Emergency Communications 101”
“Short, Sweet and to the POINT”

Efficient emergency communications takes proper training, preparedness, rugged and reliable equipment, a positive attitude and DISCIPLINE! Just because you have a deep-cycle battery to power your 2-meter mobile or portable HF radio, an “Energizer Bunny pack,” a couple spare sets of double A’s for your dual-band hand-held, a half-wave telescoping antenna, canteen of water and a fanny pack full of field rations, does not mean that you are ready to be an emergency communicator. I would like to emphasize that one cannot over estimate the value of training. There are troubling horror stories caused by untrained personnel during emergency situations. Volunteers need to know and understand the system and that our main purpose according to Part 97 is to deliver professional auxiliary communications when activated.

ARES/RACES do not respond as individuals, but as part of a team providing a coordinated response. For Pete's sake don't pack up and drive anywhere, expecting to be welcomed with open arms. If you report to a disaster area untrained, with your hand held and an ego, without being part of a coordinated response, you will not be welcome and probably considered in the way and not

appreciated. Times have really changed since Sept. 11, the inception of Homeland Security and hurricane Katrina. As emergency communications operators we must now be trained; according to the Emergency Managers. The time has come and gone for the independent operator who just appears when there is an emergency. In today's world of Emergency Management most of the officials will not work the untrained operators.

Emergency managers need to know that you know where you belong, who you report to, what you are doing and that YOU know what you are doing. To interface effectively with served agencies, ARES / RACES are integrated into local disaster plans prior to an event. Once activated, RACES is part of the emergency response team. You stay on your assignment until someone comes to relieve you. This is because you have made a greater commitment than the guy who just wandered in. In a disaster, license class does not matter. In an emergency you must use whatever assets are available to get the job done. The no-coder who can keyboard data can pass more Winlink and Packet traffic than most of the best brass pounders in the world will in a minute. Participants in the Arkansas Amateur Radio Emergency Service are expected and encouraged to participate in training programs

to prepare them for disaster communications. Spontaneous and untrained volunteers are not generally very useful during times of disaster, and there is rarely time to train them during an actual activation.

Disaster response cannot be done just with us "old guys." We need to recruit young amateurs who have stamina for moving supplies, setting up tents and equipment, or shadowing busy officials in the field. Some tasks are difficult for hams over 50, and that is now the majority of amateurs in our shrinking community. Some of us are more useful at fixed locations, where our experience, technical skill and maturity are advantages.

My final thought for you this evening is for all of us to work smarter, not harder. Untrained and unprepared operators simply get in the way and hinder recovery efforts. Simply being active in the hobby, working a few public service events where everything is usually pre-planned, unlike emergency and or disaster events, is not enough to prepare us and our equipment for the rigors of service under dire and disaster conditions encountered in real emergencies.