



Jan – Mar 2013

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

In times of disaster, normal means of communications may not be available. Telephone systems, computer networks even Cellular phones are highly susceptible to failure in the event of an emergency. Knowing, understanding and planning for just such an emergency can save lives.

ERRS

ERRS is the acronym for the “Emergency Response Radio System”. This Amateur Radio communications network is supported by local HAM radio organizations to provide a means of reporting the critical information necessary to provide neighbors and their families the needed emergency assistance in times of local, regional or national disaster. It is a specialized and dedicated network for community communications.

The ERRS network is staffed by skilled and licensed Amateur radio operators, called and organized by local CERT teams, at each level of the network.

Our area communications committee is a network of volunteer HAM radio operators who meet semi-annually to participate in radio checks, provide weekly equipment tri-

als, community Radio Net announcements, comments and training topics.

Our local communications Net is always looking for new members who are licensed or have a desire to learn a new hobby and become licensed. There are three levels of HAM radio operators: Technician, General, and Amateur Extra. These licensees gain more privileges on the traditional HF or “short wave” bands of Amateur Radio. They all started just like you, taking the basic exams and getting on the air.

More information regarding HAM radio and the exams can be found at the end of the newsletter.

Neighborhood Organization

Our area is organized into CERT staging areas. Ask your Block Captain where your staging area is. This is where members of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) will gather after providing for their own families. The Communications committee members will do the same.

The Incident Commander of CERT will coordinate with local leaders using the assigned radio operators. The most crucial information will come from Block Captains

using the “Damage Assessment Form”. After providing for their own families, the Block Captains will carry these forms to the CERT staging area where an assessment will be made and required assistance provided. Our staging areas will have the ability to communicate by way of HAM radio to each other and also to the Area Coordinator of CERT who can then relay information on to city communication centers.

In the event of natural disaster, a particular area needs professional assistance; the need can be quickly forwarded to local police, fire, and search and rescue. Each level of organization requires multiple people to staff their posts. Twelve hours is the maximum amount a volunteer can work. Our CERT and Communications committee has provided for just such an event.

What do you do?

First, be prepared! Have you filled out a Family Emergency Plan worksheet found on page 7 of your “Neighborhood and Emergency Preparedness Guidebook”? Have you completed your wallet card information and your Family Member Information sheet to be shared with your Block Captain? This information is a means to provide for your family in the event of an emergency and not to be used for any other purpose.

Second, provide for your family. Make sure your family needs are taken care of before you assist in helping others. Use the color-coded cards in your manual to alert your Block Captain of your situation; Green- Everyone is O.K., Yellow – Help Needed Not Urgent, Red – Help Needed Now. Put these signs in you front window.

Third, help your Neighbor. The plan is that your Block Captain reports your neighbor needs to the CERT staging area. He/She or his assistant might not be unavailable. Check on your neighbors and report what you see to the CERT staging area.

Use the training you’ve received to be a better volunteer. If you have training in a particular area, let your Block Captain know. If you have equipment that might be useful in the event of an emergency, let your Block Captain know. Take first aid and CPR classes now. Communicate to someone out of state your intentions to use them as an information source if local phone lines are busy. Family members can call this individual to obtain knowledge of other family members.

In Conclusion:

Someone once said, “Fanaticism is someone who has lost their way and doubled their speed; commitment is someone who has found their way and quadrupled their speed.” When hard times come, will you be a fanatic or committed? Will you be hopeless or prepared?

Communications is extremely important in Emergency Preparedness. Know yourself, know your family, know your neighbors, and know the organization that can best help your family. Become CERT trained or join the HAM communications committee in your area. Remember, communications emergency is a situation in which communications is required for immediate safety of human life or protection of property

Additional information:

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www.arrl.org/ --HAM radio

www.slcoares.net/ --HAM radio

www.citizencorps.gov/cert/ --CERT

www.taylorsvilleut.gov/emergency_preparedness.main.html --CERT, First aid, CPR

www.fema.gov/ --Emergency Preparedness

www.unifiedfire.org/ --CERT, First aid, CPR