

## Talking Points for Public Officials / Emergency Management Officials

### General tips for speaking with government officials:

1. Be respectful. Respect their office and position of responsibility, and do your best to earn *their* respect as a knowledgeable citizen who wants to provide meaningful help. This includes how you dress and how you speak.
2. Be professional. If you want to be treated as a peer and as a professional communicator, dress in a professional manner. Don't come to a meeting wearing a T-shirt and callsign cap, and carrying four radios on your belt. At the same time, don't try to look like a police officer (unless you happen to be one). Dress appropriately for the occasion.
3. Be clear. Don't try to impress officials with your technical knowledge by talking in "techspeak." Use plain language and try to convert our terminology to theirs. Your goal is to increase their knowledge and understanding of how ham radio can help them.
4. Be honest. Don't be afraid to ask questions of your own, or to say, "I don't know. I'll look into it for you." And don't oversell the number of people or the services we can provide. A good approach is to find out what their needs are and then tell them how hams and ham radio might help meet those needs.
5. Be reliable. Make sure officials (especially emergency management officials) know how to reach you at any time of day or night, and be responsive when they call. You will not be an "asset" for long if you can't produce what you promised when you're needed.

### Specific Talking Points

- Ham radio can provide backup when normal communications systems go down or are overloaded.
- Ham radio is flexible. We can make or remake our networks as needed; change frequencies or bands as conditions require; use voice, data, video or code, and communicate locally, regionally or nationally, as needed, including provision of links to state capital, Washington, DC, or other federal center, such as the National Hurricane Center.
- Much of our equipment is portable, from handheld and mobile radios for local communications to some portable shortwave units capable of being set up nearly anywhere and providing long-distance communications when connected to proper antenna.
- We can link to stations outside the emergency/disaster area for relays and links to the internet, including non-commercial e-mail.
- Hams understand their radios and how they work, and can improvise as needed to get on the air and communicate.
- Hams are free. By law, hams may not be compensated for providing radio communications. (On the other hand, ham radio may not be used for routine

communications normally available through other radio services.) Most hams also provide their own equipment, saving taxpayers thousands of dollars. (However, a municipality may choose to purchase some permanent amateur equipment, such as for an EOC or mobile command post, or antennas atop EOC and other critical buildings.)

- Ham organizations provide both formal and informal training in emergency communications techniques, including organizing and running an emergency network. The national ham radio organization, the ARRL, sponsors the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), which operates on a local level (generally a county level), and provides on-air training through practice “nets” and by providing communications at local events such as races and parades. The ARRL also offers a highly-acclaimed series of federally-funded online emergency communications training programs. Additional training through nets and drills is provided through the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), which functions under state, county or local offices of emergency management. Hams involved with emergency communications may also avail themselves of other training opportunities, such as the Incident Command System (ICS), that may be offered. Finally, day-to-day communications from home/mobile stations provide valuable training in using various features of their radios, and knowing which frequencies will be best at a given time to reach the desired location.
  - There are some limitations on the use of amateur radio:
    - The FCC licenses individual amateur operators as well as their stations. A licensed operator must be in control of the station at all times, so a police department may not simply move its operations to amateur radio frequencies if the regular system fails. Generally, messages are relayed via the ham operators who come along with the equipment. This frees up emergency officials to concentrate on matters other than communication.
    - Amateur radio may not be used for routine communications when other services are available. It may only be used for police/fire/medical communications during true emergencies, drills and training sessions.
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