



PUBLIC SERVICE

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

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Building Trust in Georgia

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Building trust and mutual respect is a process that often takes many years. In Fayette County, Georgia, we've been fortunate to have an excellent working relationship between our ARES® group, the Department of Public Safety and our Emergency Management Coordinator, Captain Pete Nelms. We recently began a new and unique program that elevates that trust and cooperation to a new level and helps our community.

Discussion between ARES, Public Safety, Emergency Management and 911 has resulted in a cooperative effort and partnership to allow ARES communicators to handle nonemergency yet critical events in the 911 Center. Due to the confidential information processed and relayed at the Center, it was essential no laws, policies or procedures were violated. On January 17, 2008, David Benoist, AG4ZR, Emergency Coordinator (EC); Lynn Bianco, KN4YZ, Assistant EC, and Cheryl Rogers, 911 Director, met to formulate an implementation plan.

Since then, a group of nine hams has undergone formal background checks, trained in criminal justice information system policies and procedures, attended security and integrity class, a basic call taking class and a Web-based emergency operations center class. All nine have now attained the designation of 911 Practitioner. An additional benefit the hams provide is the ability to use the HF/VHF/UHF/Winlink station in the Center to provide backup communications and communicate with SKYWARN at the National Weather Service (NWS) in nearby Peachtree City during inclement weather. In the words of Interim Director of Public Safety, Chief M. Allen McCullough, this provides "a win-win proposition and partnership for all involved."

The charter class of 911 Practitioners was formally recognized on June 26, 2008 by the County Board of Commissioners. The class includes David Benoist, AG4ZR; Lynn Bianco, KN4YZ; George Knight, N4FLT;

COURTESY LYNN BIANCO, KN4YZ



Charter class of Fayette County, GA, 911 Practitioners: (left to right) Commissioner Eric Maxwell; Commissioner Herb Frady; George Knight, N4FLT; David Alread, N4FGA; Commissioner Robert Horgan; ARRL Georgia Section Manager Susan Swiderski, AF4FO; Commission Chairman Jack Smith; Lynn Bianco, KN4YZ; Brian Cook, KG4FJD; David Benoist, AG4ZR; Commissioner Peter Pfeifer; Jim Burchfield, W4JB; Lewis Patterson, WD4GTY; Jim Lynch, K4GVO; 911 Supervisor Nicole Smith, KG4WUW; Interim Director of Public Safety M. Allen McCullough; 911 TAC Cathy Crenshaw, and Huey Kenmar, KI4NGD.

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Building trust and respect is an ongoing process. Working beside and learning from the outstanding operators in our 911 Center gives us a much greater appreciation and understanding of the why and how of Public Safety. It also allows the Public Safety organizations to learn what capabilities we can contribute during times of disaster when resources are stretched thin.

VIP RED FLAG PATROL — PART 2

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Continuing our story about the California Fire VIP "Volunteers In Prevention" Patrol (Public Service, *QST*, August 2008, pp 60-61), this past 4th of July holiday was the first time the Patrol at the Monte Vista Dispatch

Center in San Diego County used its new Amateur Radio gear. The local media did three news reports about the new Amateur Radio gear and what the California Fire VIP Patrol is and does. The first report was published on July 3 to get the word out about the Patrol and to let everyone know that local volunteers will be out patrolling and looking for fires. This was a very timely piece due to all of the California fires burning to the north of San Diego County.

Some of them know people who lost homes in the 2003 and 2007 firestorms and say that's the reason they got involved in Amateur Radio in the first place, to serve the local community and help out in time of need.

NTS Methods and Practices Guidelines

Here is an ARRL Web resource that is worth checking out: www.arrl.org/FandES/field/nts-mpg/. The NTS Methods and Practices Guidelines (NTS MPG), is the working reference manual on traffic net and message handling procedures in the ARRL National Traffic System (NTS). It also serves as an appendix to the *ARRL Public Service Communications Manual* (www.arrl.org/FandES/field/pscm/).



According to the manual's editor, Al Nollmeyer, W3YVQ, "The methods presented are a reasonably accurate snapshot of current practices. They are indeed practices, and not strict rules, but the beginner, Section, Region, Area and Transcontinental Corps net operators and management alike will find it beneficial to have a uniform protocol reference to be used by operators."

Rich Beisigl, N6NKJ, is the local Amateur Radio contact for CAL Fire and had nine groups of two patrolling San Diego's East County and five patrols in the Fallbrook area looking for anything that may start a fire or looked out of place. We used a local repeater system that is maintained by RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service). Overall, the radios work very well. We used 2 meters and 70 centimeters, but still had some dead spots due to the mountainous terrain.

Among the Amateur Radio operators on patrol was a husband and wife team, Steve Weed, KO4QT, and Linda Weed, KI6JUD. This was Steve's second patrol and Linda's first. While on patrol, Steve and Linda observed a man with a bag walking into the woods in a remote area. They called this information in to net control operator Paul Rios, KC6QLS, who reported to Roxanne Provaznik, Fire Prevention Specialist. Roxanne had Paul advise Steve and Linda to not engage, but to continue on patrol and double back to check for smoke.

Many of the volunteers were asked why they give their time. They told of a need to give back to the community. Some of them know people who lost homes in the 2003 and 2007 firestorms and say that's the reason they got involved in Amateur Radio in the first place, to serve the local community and help out in time of need.

Steve and Linda's patrol totaled over 150 miles. Multiply those miles by the number of volunteer patrols on the 4th of July holiday and you can imagine the amount of area patrolled. We covered nearly all of East County, Alpine, Crest, Campo, Cuyamaca and Lakeside just to name a few. Most of the areas had burned in the last firestorms.

The VIP Red Flag Patrol was a great success due to the enthusiasm and dedication of local Amateur Radio operators as well as the new radio equipment, which is capable of operating many bands simultaneously. Both new and seasoned VIP Red Flag Patrol Amateur Radio operators enjoyed aiding

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) in fire prevention and look forward to the next call-out, which will most likely be when the dry winds out of the east (commonly known as the Santa Ana winds) return.

SCHOOLS RECEIVE NOAA PUBLIC ALERT RADIOS

ARRL and Citizen Corps are teaming up to assist local school districts (if they need the help) to set up and register their National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather All Hazard Public Alert Radios.

An August 19 news release says: "Federal agencies have begun distributing more than 182,000 Public Alert Radios to preschools, Head Start programs, K-12 nonpublic schools and nonpublic school central offices, K-12 school district offices and post-secondary schools. In two earlier phases, the federal government distributed radios to all 97,000 K-12 public schools across the country, bringing the program to a close this September with a lifesaving radio in every school in the nation."

Two years ago, in the fall of 2006, some ARRL members, affiliated clubs and Field Organization appointees were called upon to help when this project was in its pilot phase.

"The radios are distributed by the US

Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with funding from the Department of Homeland Security and assistance from the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services," according to the news release.

The radios are designed to signal different types of alerts ranging from weather emergencies to child abductions, and from chemical accidents to acts of terrorism. The radio acts as a sentry, standing guard 24/7, to sound an alarm when danger threatens.

If you, as an individual Amateur Radio operator, as part of an Amateur Radio club or as an ARRL Field Organization appointee, would like to help Citizen Corps in this project, please contact your local Citizen Corps Council to offer assistance. Where there isn't a Council, please contact local emergency management.

Contacts should not be made directly to local schools but, instead, should be made by Citizen Corps and Emergency Management to local school district superintendents' offices to ensure a coordinated plan. Assistance to schools will be provided at the request of, and in coordination with, the school district.

For additional information on the Public Alert Radios for Schools program, see the Web site at public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov. The general public can learn about these radios at www.weather.gov/nwr. 

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