

Introduction to Emergency Communications

What is a Communication Emergency?

A communication emergency exists when a critical communication system puts the public at risk. A variety of circumstances can overload or damage critical day-to-day communication systems. It could be a storm that knocks down telephone lines, a massive increase in the use of a communication system which causes it to be overloaded, or the failure of a key component in a system that has widespread consequences.

What makes a good Emcomm Volunteer?

Emcomm volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of skills and experience. The common bond that all volunteers share is the desire to help others and to work as part of a team.

Where do we fit in?

Amateur radio operators have been a communication resource in emergency situations ever since there has been radios.

Amateurs are known as immediate available communication experts.

Amateurs have the equipment, the skills and the frequencies necessary to create expedient emergency communication networks under poor conditions.

However, just having radios, frequencies and basic radio skills is not enough. Certain emergency communication skills are very different from those you use in your daily ham radio life. This course, will hopefully, help you fill that need.

The emergency management community recognizes these two skills. We must use these skills to help provide the information that needs to be passed quickly and efficiently. As trained communicators we are expected to pass it accurately, even if we do not understand the technology.

Regardless of the message format used, the procedures cannot be picked up solely by reading or studying. There is NO substitute for actual practice. Avoid the feeling that you will know how to operate when the time comes – you will not unless you do it frequently, with other operators whose style of operating you get to know.

Without specific emergency communication skills, you can easily become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

What you are not.

As important as what you are, is what you are not.

There are limits to your responsibilities. You are not a "first responder." Except on rare occasions, you will seldom be first on the scene.