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K5wth

## **AM I REALY READY**

Dealing with the “bureaucracy” or “red tape” of government emergency management organizations and agencies at any level, can often be very frustrating. The only thing worse is dealing with untrained volunteers who think they are indispensable during a disaster. The largest problem that amateur radio has is operators that go into an event and try to take over. A “know it all” attitude and lack of training and/or experience can cost lives.

Planning and training are an absolute necessity before a disaster occurs. On the job training when a disaster strikes is the absolute wrong time to learn about emergency communications and can be a separate disaster in itself. All participants who provide their emergency communications skills must be well trained before they should work for any organization or agency in charge of an incident. Knowledge of the types of support required and conducting training according to the emergency support plans will go a long way to enable emergency communicator’s to do their jobs quickly and effectively and help to minimize the loss of life and property.

The role of amateur radio operators during an emergency is to provide communications support. Our sole purpose in providing

emergency communications support is to send and receive information in an accurate and timely manner. This is our only function. We are not there to provide emergency management or coordination.

The skills necessary to participate as an emergency communicator are not difficult, but we need to practice them so they become second nature especially since they must usually be performed under stressful conditions. So, to ensure that we maintain our communications skills for an emergency, we, as amateur radio operators need to take part in practice sessions. I would suggest to the DEC's and EC's that they hold some sort of field training sessions Bi-monthly or a schedule that you and your members can live with. We have our Field Day's, SET's , Marathons, Walkathons and other public service events and these are excellent training methods, however these events seem to turn our being a social event in most cases. Those of you that have been involved in these events, have you ever had a debriefing at the end of the event and talked about what was accomplished, what went well, what went wrong and how to correct it, and any other conflicts or resolutions. Until we get our apples and oranges in a line, we are not **READY**.

Formal training is extremely valuable as it is discipline teaching in that it causes formation of important habits that can help avoid future problems. There is also experience gained in learning to interface with those experienced in the field of

emergency communications.

Experienced public safety managers dealing with emergencies know that effective communications is very important when it comes to saving lives and property. To aid in this effort, amateur radio operators have organized themselves to promote readiness and preparedness to respond in times of emergencies and disasters. To this end, everyone needs to take a good honest look at themselves and ask “AM I REALLY READY”?

Written by Tom Harris, k5wth