

“PREPARE IS THE WORD”

Preparation has many phases and we will only touch on those most important to your efficiency as an EMCOMM operator.

They include, but are not limited to:

1. Make a commitment. Amateur Radio is a hobby, Emergency Communication is a commitment. Your commitment will be the single most important item to you and the organization. It is only if you are willing to make a firm commitment to the organization that you become a contributing member. Please keep in mind that each of us will have different priorities that may include our faith, home, family and job responsibilities that must come before any EMCOMM commitment. With that said, if you are only able to commit to EMCOMM as number ten or fifteen on your priority list then you will likely not be very useful. However if EMCOMM is higher than number four then most will think you a fanatic. So there is a balance in priorities that need to be considered.
2. Learn how to operate your equipment. The person that has only an HT and doesn't know how to use it will detract from any operation he/she is in. NO you do not need every piece of equipment possible to be useful in EMCOMM but at least an HT, a mobile rig and portable antennas will help significantly. Make sure you know how to operate them! Someone that has to be shown how to enter a frequency, change an offset or add a PL tone slows everyone down. It is a good idea to carry a radio operations reference card and if you don't have one you can create your own.
3. Learn how to operate both voice and digital modes. There is far more to operating voice than just talking. You must learn to convey information as efficiently as possible; using the fewest words that completely describes the message. More and more of our served agencies want advanced digital support such as Winlink 2000.
4. Take training that is made available to you. The ARRL provides several courses and NIMS courses are free and available online to familiarize you with Procedures that served agencies and Emergency managers will be following during an EMCOMM event.
5. Practice. There are a few people that can learn almost anything simply by reading a book. Most of us do far better by reading the material and then using it. There are daily opportunities to participate in nets, handle message traffic, operate in digital modes and virtually everything else that you want, to help your learning. Use as many of these as you have time for. Some of the best practice is available in public service events such as bike-a-thons and walk-a-thons operated by charitable organizations.
6. Learn the ITU phonetics. A full copy is available online at several places including the ARRL.
7. Learn to teach EMCOMM material. People who do teach have found that they learn the most about a subject as they prepare to teach it. Once prepared you need to teach it to really have a firm grasp of the material.

8. Build yourself a "go-kit" of the equipment and supplies you will need to support activation. Lists are available online and have been the topic on this net and will be again on occasion. This subject alone can be very involved, the main thing is for you to research the subject and build a kit that will work for you.

9. The item that many overlook is the physical conditioning that we really need, to be able to handle the stress of emergency operations. Does that mean or imply that each of us must be ready to run a marathon? Hardly. There are a few simple guidelines we need to follow to be better prepared to physically support EMCOMM operation.

1. Eat properly - this means eat the foods that will help keep us healthy.

2. Get enough rest, Regularly! - Some people think that four hours of sleep will suffice. Most of us do better with six minimum and seven or eight is better yet. The second half of that equation is regularly. That means virtually every night. The occasional night with minimum sleep is not a problem, as long as it is occasional.

3. Exercise - Get regular exercise, appropriate in duration and type. Appropriate for someone twenty-five is probably not correct for someone who is seventy, but a little exercise will benefit most of us, and many of us probably need more than we get.