

“The Excellent Communicator”

Introduction

Training in EMCOMM groups should be a continual process, and preparation for an emergency is an important part of that process. Our goal should be to make each member an excellent communicator. But, what is an “excellent communicator?” We might consider ourselves an excellent communicator if we can send CW at 50 wpm on a keyboard. We may think that regularly checking into a traffic net qualifies us as an excellent communicator. We may even think that an EMCOMM van which has enough radio equipment to be considered a “mobile Voice of America” makes us an excellent communicator. The truth is that being an excellent communicator does include a properly set-up station that is properly adjusted, but communication is much more about using proper procedures and communication skills than anything else. Simply said, in an emergency, radios don’t communicate, people do. The following is not a lesson on Formal NTS messages, but rather emergency communications in general. Some concepts will however apply to formal traffic and others do not.

There are six elements to excellent communications. Whether it is simply asking for the time of day or a complex logistic transmission, all six elements should always be present in your emergency communication.

1) CONCEPT: We must determine exactly what it is we wish to transmit. This is not as easy as it sounds. We must identify and understand a need, clarify and simplify it, then reduce it to its most basic and immediate essentials. In other words we want to convey the complete and clear meaning of the message in the least amount of words.

2) DOCUMENTING: Once we have the concept, we must determine how to deliver it to the intended receiver. We must consider the vocabulary and expression to be used and find the best way to deliver the message in a simple form. Complex words or difficult phrases can better be understood if simplified.

3) TRANSMISSION: We then have to send the message through either speech, should we use formal message forms, CW or digital modes. We must provide alternatives when QRM becomes a problem, so be prepared to change frequency or even mode of transmission as required. The more options we have as means of communication, the better it is when it comes to Emergency Communications.

4) RECEPTION: The person who receives a message must not only receive it, but must receive it correctly. The relaying operator must also be able to legibly give the message to the intended receiver, thus minimizing the chance of error or misunderstanding.

5) INTERPRETATION: Here reception is not enough. The actual addressee should be able to correctly interpret the message as it was originally conceived.

6) FEEDBACK: There must be a specific way to indicate that the first five steps have been completed successfully. If you are the receiving operator, make sure you understand the instructions before action is taken. Most breakdowns in communications are owing to omission of one or more of these six steps in message communication. The best-conceived and transmitted message is worthless if directed to the wrong person or if the meaning of the original message was lost in the process. So, don’t be afraid to ask for a repeat or an acknowledgment if you think the message is not completely clear. If you can stick to these six elements, your might very well be An Excellent Communicator!