

## **Mecklenburg County ARES<sup>®</sup>**

### **When All Else Fails**

#### **Simply Put Ham Radio Works!**

Most of the time, things work fine. But despite the development of very complex communication systems — or maybe because they ARE so complex—ham radio has been called into action again and again to provide communications when it really matters.

#### **Why Ham Radio Works So Well.**

Telephones, cell phones, Internet, trunk lines, satellite phones — to get a message out they all have to go through many vulnerable choke points that all need electric power. Even if the system is functioning, these systems can be overwhelmed by the number of cries for help and families seeking information.

#### **Ham Radio is Different.**

While hams MAY use the Internet or a repeater system, they do not HAVE to do so! Hams can “go direct” and talk straight through to each other because each station is fully independent. Hams can operate just fine without other infrastructure. By selecting the right frequencies, hams can talk across town or around the world.

Ham radio operators by the hundreds volunteered for service to the devastated areas of the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and her sisters Rita and Wilma pounded a five state area and destroyed other communications systems. For their life-saving work, the hams received commendations from the President and Congress as well as international praise. It truly proved the saying, “When all else fails, ham radio works!”

Within minutes of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, ham operators communicated from emergency operations centers as other systems failed. The ham operations continued for weeks as the amateurs handled emergency and other important messages for disaster and government agencies as well as for displaced families.

Hams use all sorts of radios and antennas on a wide variety of frequencies to communicate with other hams across town or around the world. They use ham radio for personal enjoyment, for keeping in touch with friends and family, for public service communications and to experiment with radio technology. Big station or small and portable, hams enjoy the security of knowing they can get a message through in almost any situation without depending on a fragile infrastructure that can fail or be overloaded.

<http://www.mecklenburgares.org/pdf/When%20All%20Else%20Fails.pdf>

## News Items

### **Vulnerability of Communication Resources**

About 4,500 calls failed to get through during a six-hour Washington state 911 outage. A similar outage affected a small portion of Oregon state. The outage lasted from 12:36 a.m. until 6:26 a.m and effected 127 911 centers. The estimated 4,500 calls, which failed to reach local emergency centers for about six hours on April 10, were stranded because the Colorado complex that routes 911 calls to the appropriate places had reached its threshold.

<http://www.columbian.com/news/2014/apr/30/centurylink-report-explains-cause-of-911-outage/>

<http://www.komonews.com/news/local/CenturyLink-4500-calls-failed-during-911-outage-255262931.html>

NORTH ADAMS, Mass. — Two radio towers on Florida Mountain collapsed sometime between midnight and 3 a.m. Sunday morning March 30, 2014 because of high winds and heavy rain, causing disruptions in communications throughout North County. The cell towers hold the emergency communications relays for North Adams; the collapses also affected some of the countywide emergency communications. The damage has left limited-to-no cell phone service and the mayor urged citizens to use alternative methods of communications if they don't have a landline.

[http://www.iberkshires.com/story/46132/North-County-Communications-Affected-by-Radio-Tower-Collapse.html?source=most\\_read](http://www.iberkshires.com/story/46132/North-County-Communications-Affected-by-Radio-Tower-Collapse.html?source=most_read)

### **Amateur Radio during Emergencies**

Amateur Radio Credited in Rescue of Wayward Hikers: Authorities in Kern County, California, say Amateur Radio was responsible for the rescue of five adult hikers, who became lost in San Emigdio Canyon. The group had left Pine Mountain Club on the morning of Saturday, March 22, hiking to a vehicle parked near Highway 166 when they went astray.

"They had hand-held radios with them and called an Amateur Radio operator in Pine Mountain Club to report that they were lost," a Kern County Sheriff's Department summary said. "Air-1 quickly located the lost hikers in a dry creek bed, approximately 12 miles south of Highway 166, and a ground unit transported them to their vehicle." The sheriff's office said the hikers, who had plenty of food and water, "were extremely exhausted, but did not require medical aid."

<http://www.eham.net/articles/31989>

## **Amateur Radio Public Service**

More than 300 Amateur Radio volunteers provided communication to support this year's Boston Marathon. Amateur Radio communication support became critical in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, when conventional telecommunications systems, such as cellular telephone, quickly became overloaded and confusion reigned.

<http://www.arrl.org/news/view/more-than-300-amateur-radio-volunteers-support-2014-boston-marathon>

Complex communication systems can and do fail. They are an assembly of parts that make up the entire system and when one of these parts fails the systems usually fails also. Amateurs don't have these logistical issues. Amateur radio can communicate When All Else Fails.

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