

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 1

PREMIER ISSUE

MARCH 2001



EARTHQUAKE STRIKES INDIA



The Ultimate Line of Communication

At 8:46am local time on January 26th, as Republic Day Celebrations started throughout India, the earth shook violently, abysses formed and schools, homes and hospitals crumbled indiscriminately in a large part of Western India... Gujarat State.

Advanced high tech communications like satellites, the Internet, cellular phones and all else for that matter failed suddenly as has happened before during several other disasters in India. Ham Radio came to the rescue of Gujarat and linked it to the Outside World. According to VU3RSB, It was India's "Ultimate Line of Communication."

Widespread Calamity

Just imagine the following scene spread over roughly 22,000 square miles: fullscale power failure, telephone/communication lines cut, roadways caved in, bridges and railways damaged and bulldozers useless where buildings are in precarious positions.

Indian government reports described a horrible situation. Sixty percent of the area's population affected: 1,970,000 people to care for, including 166,000 injured, in over 7900 villages, towns and cities. In 21 counties, 400,000 homes were destroyed and another 900,000 damaged. The remains of over 25,000 people and more than 20,000 livestock to deal with. Survivors and relief workers have to be protected from the real threat of disease: dysentery, jaundice, fever, colera, typhus and conjunctivitis.

Based on Information Gathered Exclusively in India by Sara, VU3RSB

Information is the Key to Relief

Throughout history, lessons have been learned from repeated disasters and India, unfortunately, has had more than its fair share. As recently as 1999, the Indian government had to respond to a major disaster: the "Super Cyclone" that struck the eastern State of Orissa killing 10,000.

In general, the after-effects of earthquakes, hurricanes, cyclones, floods, etc. are well known and their consequences somewhat predictable. What is always the challenge is to quickly and accurately assess the specifics of a situation and accordingly allocate whatever resources are immediately available.

Amateur radio has always been in the forefront in this area... regardless of what country has been struck. Hams have the ability to fill a void and channel key information efficiently and, most importantly, in a timely fashion.

Indian Hams Respond. VU3RSB provides field reports from Indian teams on the scene...
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IS THIS OUR FIRST... OR LAST ISSUE?

Successful publications have well packaged, solid content. In a Club, on-going, quality content can only be generated only by the cooperation of ALL Club members. So I invite you, yes YOU, to think about an area in which you have a strong interest, some experience or expertise. Perhaps you made an antenna out of an aluminum mop handle, put together a hurricane season kit or can read the body language of hamfest vendors. Tell us about it...either write it or dictate it onto tape for us to include in our monthly publication. Only in this way will our publication continue.

I'd like to thank Bernie W2IDX for submitting the *first* member article. Dave KG4IQS unknowingly sent me an email worth reproducing. It's not often that a member moves out of state and shares their thoughts about the nature of your Club. They did a fine job and YOU can too!!!



Another tradition lost? WRC members enjoying the Lantana Free Flea: (l-r) Rob KG4BZF, Ken W9KEN, Larry KS4NB, Dick WB4CRB, Charlie N4JZK, Stu KM4GJ and Jack KG4FKY.

Ham traditions seem to be crumbling in Palm Beach County. It was announced that there will NOT be a West Palm Beach Hamfest in 2001! Jeff WA4AW, organizer of the quarterly Lantana free-flea, has publicly stated that the March 3rd event will most likely be the last.

This publication is an *experiment*. It *could* be a step in the growth of the Wellington Radio Club and hopefully an area tradition. However, this first issue of **OUR TOWERING TIMES** could also be the last. It depends on YOU... don't let another means of hams communicating with one another die. **Contribute stories, photos & ideas!**

Our Towering Times is the official publication of the **Wellington Radio Club,**

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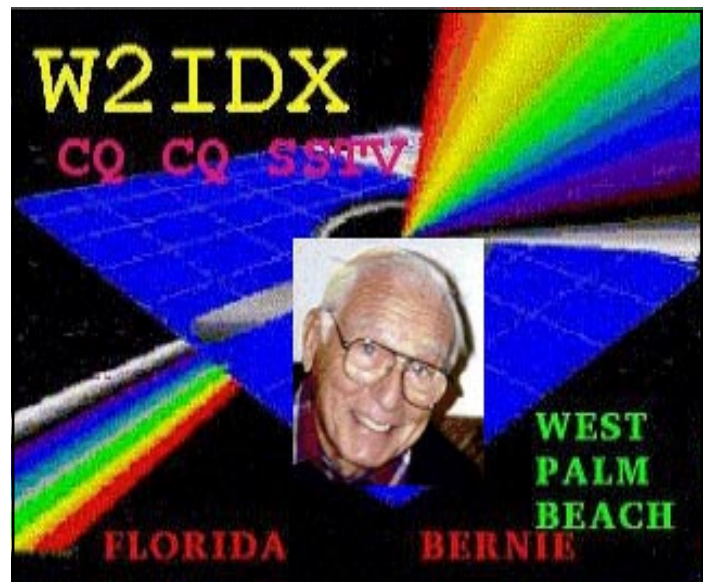
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SSTV NOTES By Bernie, W2IDX

What does that mean? It means **slow scan tv**. That is another mode available to us, just like cw, rtty or packet. Images are transmitted and with the advent of sound cards to the computer, we do not have to build complicated interfaces and black boxes any longer. The sound card has an analog-to-digital chip that does the work. So with a computer, transceiver and software program all the work is done. There are now many software programs available as shareware or freeware.

SSTV IS THE NEXT WRC MEETING THEME
Meet SSTV pros Bernie, Charlie & Ken on March 5th!

On the internet, some authors require a registration fee to their software, but then many add several bells and



Bernie's CQ Screen... Looks great even reduced to 256 colors!

whistles not available on the share/freeware versions. However, they are fully functional. For some really good technical info and tips, search the internet for John Langer's handbook. Just use any search engine and type SSTV.

With a little hunting you will enjoy a mode that is getting more popular each day. (EDITOR'S NOTE: Bernie... a job well done! Interfaces are for isolation... to keep RF, hum, surges and transients away from computers and radios).

You can share
"OUR TOWERING TIMES"
with your friends and
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**RACE ROSTER: DIRECTOR: AF4OR DICK
NET CONTROL: KG4FKY JACK***

**KB2BBG HOWIE
KC4YRR BOB
KD4GLO CATHERINE
KD4LXB JAIMEY
KE4JAR STEVE*
KF4FAJ REX
KF4OCC RACHEL
KG4CWD DICK**

**KG4GHM JOHN*
KG4KYB KEN
KG4JMO JOHN*
KG4ULA JOSH*
KS4NB LARRY*
N0RBR FRED*
N4UNT HERB*
N6YVW RICHARD**

ARTIE CONKLIN*- NON HAM VOLUNTEER

*** WELLINGTON RADIO CLUB AFFILIATED**

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Heard at breakfast during Orlando's Hamcation hamfest from Ray Johnson, WA2YGY...

"I worked so hard for that variance, that I want to be buried at the base of my tower!"

Dale W4OP and I nearly choked from laughter. Ray recently moved to west Lake Worth and had unbelievable experiences in dealing with County officials about a costly crankup tower. Ray, let's hope your community is annexed by Wellington... the chances would be excellent that you could at least *intelligently* discuss towers with the zoning folks there!

THE RACE FOR THE CURE DRAWS 17 HAM VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE 14,000 WALKERS, RUNNERS AND SPECTATORS!

This fundraising event for cancer research and treatment was expected to draw about 11,000 people; however, to the delight of its organizers, more than 14,000 attended! In preparation, Dick AF4OR, Central County Coordinator, had been recruiting volunteers for several weeks and the Wellington Radio Club was doing likewise. The WRC was looking forward to a large training exercise but little did we expect that the turnout would be so much greater.

Two days before the event, we were shocked to learn that the Race organizers had not reserved any space for us at the start/finish point. However, some quick thinking on Dick's part and a few telephone calls permitted us to locate at another key location... the race turnaround point.

The "Race" communications and "Lost Child" center was to be setup in the FHP Special Operations Van. Early Saturday morning, January 27th, the van departed from the Lantana Headquarters equipped with HF and 2 meter equipment on loan from the Wellington EOC and vital volunteer supplies... such as bagels, cream cheese and a coffemaker.

We expected ten volunteers but were flabbergasted by the turnout of seventeen... including nine from the WRC! Jack KG4FKY, WRC Activities Chairperson did a great job getting our people to participate. AF4OR led the operation assigning volunteers to posts and tracking Race progress. Jack was Net Control with Larry KS4NB as relief controller.

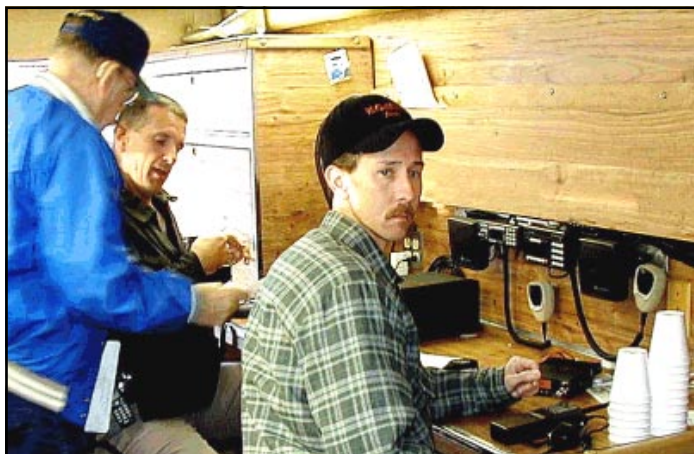
Rich W6YVW kept the Net posted even as he ran along with the crowds.

Other radio amateurs were at key posts alongside the Race directors, EMS and West Palm P.D. The rest were spread throughout path of the race participants. Their role was to spot fallen runners and others in need of assistance and report on the progress of the racing and walking groups.

The FHP van provided the additional preparedness that was believed needed to respond to incidents possible with this large size crowd. It adds to volunteer visibility, helps bridge the gap between public safety and amateur radio emergency networks and instills a sense of public agency support for the training efforts of volunteers. As in all past instances, the goodwill generated by the combination of emergency communications volunteers and a public asset, like this FHP Van, has been substantial.



"Rover," Rich W6YVW, reports while running with his family.



Operating positions inside FHP Van... HF rig on left, 2 meters left of cups and Public Safety radio control heads on wall. L-R: Dick AF4OR, Herb N4UNT and Net Control Jack KG4FKY.



The 13,700 runners and walkers could hardly miss the Lost Children and Communications Center at the Race midway point. Public Service and good PR can go hand-in-hand!

“TELL THE GUYS HELLO FOR ME ON THE NET”

(From DAVE KG4IQS near Raleigh, N.C.) “Larry, I just got finished reading the WRC email and you just don't know how much I miss being down there and participating in intellectual and stimulating QSO's with you and all the guys!!

Things here are going very well. The move was a breeze, if it hadn't happened to me I would never believe moving so far and so quick could be done. Susan and I are enjoying our new home. We are just on the outskirts of Raleigh in a town called Franklinton. Its reminds me a lot of Loxahatchee only with paved roads! We have 1.5 acres and some pretty tall pines that will serve well when I decide to stretch an antenna between them. That's when I will need your super skills with that "Golden Analyzer" Hahahaha. I NEED TO LEARN THAT 5 WPM and I will be set to catch you guys during the right conditions!

The HAM community here is alive and kicking, one group called the Raleigh Amateur Radio Society (RARS) is approximately 275 members strong!!!! I have been active on the radio trying to see where I fit in best, but it is difficult to set a place for yourself when there are so many people to talk with. Its really hard to catch conversations with Regulars if you know what I mean. I wish the WRC was here!! By habit I always listen for the familiar calls of my South Florida friends, maybe someday I will get lucky and catch you driving through.

Larry one thing I have come to realize is that the WRC group is quite unique. The club consists of residents of Wellington, and welcomes those who are not. The WRC has a bunch of wonderful people who serve their community and fellow members well. Seeing what size can do to the cohesiveness of a group, I think the WRC is medium in size but huge in quality...

Well Larry, I will go for now. I promise to stay a little more consistent with the Emails because I would love to continue to be a supporter and Long Distance member of the WRC. You guys have a wonderful group and let me know if I can ever lend a far away hand! I am also tossing around ideas for the newsletter!

Tell the guys Hello for me on the Net tomorrow night.
73... Dave KG4IQS

(Editor's Note: Dave, we don't know why you feel our QSOs are “intellectual and stimulating.” In fact, when four WRC Club members went to the shooting range this week, one was heard to say: “I sure wish Dave was here so I could make some easy money... ‘cuz he couldn't hit the side of a Loxahatchee barn!” Of course, they also asked me to lend them my bullet analyzer. Just kidding!!!

We really miss you too and can't wait for your input to the next OUR TOWERING TIMES!)

“YOUR QUOTE OF THE MONTH CAN GO HERE”

TIMELY TOWERING BRIEFS...

SKYWARN Certification Class: Eleven of the 33 attendees at the January session were WRC members or their guests. Melissa KE4WBQ, PB County SKYWARN Coordinator, and the WRC are working on a second class for Western Community public safety and Village personnel. Hopefully, between the two groups, we'll have enough for the Intermediate/Advanced Class to be held locally.

WELLINGTON EMERGENCY NET average participation reached 13 checkins during February. A great job was done by Jack KG4FKY as Net Control Station... thanks to all checkins and especially to Jack and Wil W4WLR for his Official Bulletins!

JACKSON R. CARTER - SILENT KEY

GLEEMED FROM THE INTERNET

Jackson R. Carter, described as a quiet but spunky 71 year-old, recently made headlines as the ham radio operator aboard the now famous ship LST-325. During the World War II landing ship's 4,350 mile journey from Greece to Mobile AL, Carter served as the Executive Officer of the 29 member crew. He kept the world abreast of the ship's progress by amateur radio and the Internet... and arrived home to a hero's welcome in January.

Carter died of lymphoma on February 20th. As a leader of a daring crew of average age 72, he obviously merited being a ham's hero too.

(Editor's Note: The QRZ database did not list Carter's callsign)

**Your Short Story or Photo Are Needed
Here For Next Month!
All Reader's are Invited to Contribute.
Deadline: March 16th!**

**GET READY... GET SET...
G...**



Spring... and Field Day 2001 are just around the corner!!! Above, shakers and movers take “photo opt” time. l-r: Jim W1OP, Wellington Mayor Tom Wenham and Gary KC4UDZ.

Special thanks to Steve KE4JAR for his contributions as OUR TOWERING TIMES's roving photographer.

The great photos accompanying the local stories covered in this issue are his.

All the poorly reproduced fotos are the Editor's work!



TECHNICIAN LICENSE COURSE

March 5, 6, 8 & 9 from 6PM-9PM

All welcome, the class is FREE, seating limited!

RSVP

Boca Raton Fire-Rescue Services Fire Station #5
2333 W. Glades Road, Boca Raton
(Across from the Cheese Cake Factory)

Required Book "NOW YOU'RE TALKING" \$17.00

RSVP CONTACT N3HV:

Hank VanSant, Electrical Engineering Dept., FAU
OFFICE (561) 297-3416 FAX (561) 297-2659

MARCH MADNESS... HAM EVENTS EVERY WEEK!

3/3 SAT 7-12 FREE-FLEA IN LANTANA AT THE PIZZA HUT EASTSIDE OF CONGRESS JUST SOUTH OF LANTANA RD

3/5 MON 7:30pm MEETING - WELLINGTON RADIO CLUB NEW COMMUNITY CENTER, FOREST HILL BLVD. N4JZK, W2IDX AND W9KEN ON SSTV TALK-IN: 147.285+

3/10 SAT 4PM TO 9:30 PUBLIC SERVICE EVENT - 1000s EXPECTED! WELLINGTON CELEBRATION DAY- BRING YOUR HANDHELD AND THE FAMILY. FREE KIDS AND GROWNUP ENTERTAINMENT NEW COMMUNITY CENTER, FOREST HILL BLVD.

THREE PEOPLE NEEDED FOR 4-6:30 AND THREE FOR 6:30-9:30 TO STAFF THE LOST CHILDREN AND COMMUNICATIONS CENTER.

3/12, 19 and 26th MON 7:30pm WELLINGTON EMERGENCY NET Net Control: John KG4JMO

3/17 SAT 8-3PM STUART HAMFEST, Martin County ARA MARTIN COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, TALK-IN: 147.060+ Map & Info @: www.qsl.net/martin/hamfest

3/24 SAT 7-12? MOTOROLA FREE-FLEA, DATE VERIFIED!!!! NE CORNER OF PLANTATION PARKING LOT GO WEST FROM SUNRISE EXIT ON TURNPIKE PLANT ON SOUTH SIDE OF SUNRISE BLVD. TALK-IN: 146.790- VENDOR SETUP @ 6AM

DAVID CLARK KB6TAM... THY NAME IS PERSISTANCE

Clark's belief is that *"Nothing is impossible for any of us if we want to do it enough to pay the price. The price being whatever it takes to accomplish the goal. Nothing pays off like tenacity, belief in yourself and enthusiasm."*

His goal is to be the oldest man to solo-circumnavigate the globe. And he's paying the price! His first effort to establish the world record as the "oldest" singlehander started in 1993 and tragically ended in 1995 when he was dismasted in the Indian Ocean. Fortunately, he was rescued.

Clark put his beliefs to the test again in December 1999 by making a second attempt in a steel boat, the "Mollie Milar". He maintained contact via ham radio while underway and was often on the 20 meter Maritime Mobile Net.

Heading home via Florida after 14 months at sea, just two days west of Capetown, he encountered a huge and violent storm.

Alone in the south Atlantic Ocean but with his radios, his second also boat sank. He lost everything including his beloved West Highland Terrier, Mickey. But once again he was rescued. This time because of his VHF marine radio. He was able to contact the nearby container ship, "Emonte."



Skipper Clark KB6TAM holds Mickey

Clark's son reported: "Upon reaching East London he was welcomed ashore with a warm and moving outpouring of support and interest. Representatives of the ham operator Working Group established by Matt Greyvenstein (ZS1MJJ) met him at the Emonte and he was then shown the wonderful hospitality of another member Trevor Foxcroft (ZS2BV). These gentlemen and others have provided money for clothes, food, shelter and the other essentials. They've vowed to help Dad complete his mission by assisting with the location of another boat.

This outpouring of support and love is beyond comprehension all of us. The family truly appreciates the warm-hearted efforts of the South African (ham) working group and others."

Stayed tuned to learn whether KB6TAM will be able to acquire another boat, reach his goal of solo-circumnavigation of the globe and wind-up in Ft. Lauderdale this May 17th... his 77th birthday!

UPDATE: KB6TAM FINDS REPLACEMENT BOAT!

Feb. 26th, South Africa: Clark raises \$10,000 for third boat and supplies needed to complete journey. He has new July goal. Seeks help and sponsors worldwide. Hams contribute heavily... needs \$20,000 more. (Editor's note: For updated information and how you can help... See www.dclark.com).

INDIAN HAMS PROVIDE VITAL LINK FROM DEVASTATED QUAKE AREA TO OUTSIDE WORLD

THE OVERVIEW

There are only about 15,000 licensed amateur radio operators in all of India, of which 500 are believed active. With the sub-continent as huge as it is, it easy to picture how thinly spread its ham population is. But despite the low density of hams, there are a relatively large number of radio clubs and societies. They bind together the active hams and form the core of the active training and emergency nets. That fact coupled with high motivation, meant a great many Indian hams were prepared to go at a moment's notice wherever they were needed.

Secondly, reports from the India indicated that radio equipment was available for use in the field... either stockpiled or personal rigs brought by the volunteers.

These major factors enabled the radio amateurs to rise to the occasion.

THE OBSTACLES

The emergency teams' reports shed light on problems that radio amateurs have faced in the past in many countries. With teams equiped and ready to go within a few hours of determining the quake's epicenter, difficulty was encountered in getting them to the disaster area. More than once it seemed that good luck guided them to their destiny.

Moreover, once they were there, they were like Napoleon's army trapped in Russia... doing their job but without shelter and quickly running short of food, water and supplies. In other words, logistics seemed to hinder operations that were otherwise going smoothly.

It is a great tribute to Indian radio amateurs that they were successful in their missions under those conditions. It was reported that for four days, before telephone and mobile services were partially restored, that the amateur radio networks were a major quake zone link to the outside world. They helped provide the crisis information needed for decision making about relief management.

A summary of one emergency team report follows. No doubt other teams had very similar experiences.

VU2MYH'S REPORT ON THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR RADIO TEAMS

Ram Mohan VU2MYH, a computer engineer, was among one of the largest groups, 25 operators, to serve in the earthquake area. By chance his group encountered a cooperative Indian Airlines employee. He arranged for the first team of five volunteers under the leadership of S. B. Ram VU2LIC, NIAR Manager, to fly to Ahmedabad in the first morning flight from Mumbai in early hours of the 27th. The others had to await later flights.

Again coincidence aided the group. They met an influential political party leader at the Ahmedabad airport who arranged for VU2MYH and K. Ravi VU3RBN to join the



Typical Village Destruction - Indian Government Photograph

Gujarat Chief Minister's convoy to Bhuj near the epicenter.

While travelling to Bhuj by helicopter they saw the horrifying scenes of devastation caused by the earthquake. Some villages were completely raised to ground, destruction was near 90%. Hardly any activity in villages nor movement of the people could be seen. In several areas deep cracks on the earth's surface were spotted.

"Everything here is panicky! Everything has collapsed!" That was one of their first messages out of that large devastated area.



About **OUR TOWERING TIMES'** Correspondent in India: "Sara", Rayaprolu Sarath Babu VU3RSB

Researching earthquake related happenings in India was like trying to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. After days of surfing the Net and being very frustrated, I sent Sara an email requesting help. One of his websites had great coverage of the 1999 Super Cyclone disaster... but not much about January's Gujarat earthquake.

Bing-Bam, within 24 hours he made available to us a wealth of information upon which a good part of our coverage is based.

*Sara is an extraordinary, 26 year-old ham dynamo. Active in many HF and VHF nets, a skilled emergency communications volunteer, a motivator of hams and a promoter of our great hobby, he is shown receiving his **second RAJIV GHANDI AWARD** from Sonia Ghandi VU2SON. He represents the best of the internationally recognized **Amateurs Code**:*

"Station and skill always ready for service to country and community."

"We can't count the bodies. There are too many. It's impossible to count. Everything is buried under debris," reported the two distraught hams.

(Editor: See Data Box. The quake caused significant damage as far away as 200 km, about 150 miles. Think



of South Florida... say West Palm to Orlando and coast-to-coast! This is **not** an unusually large area for an earthquake, the 1970 Peruvian quake, killing 70,000, extended over roughly the same size area).

Before supplies could reach them, Mohan and Ravi ran out of drinking water. They had enough to last for two days and then had to survive on biscuits.

In the meantime, Ram VU2LIC and the others made their way to the capital city, Gandhinagar, 200 miles east of Bhuj. They immediately setup an emergency communications center in support of the Gujarat state government operations. Hundreds of messages were received on the first day on the HF bands from Bhuj requesting doctors, medicines, ambulances and heavy earthmoving equipment such as cranes.

By the evening of 27th another team of 10 hams went to Bhuj from Mumbai taking a treacherous journey by road for nearly 20 hours. They later took positions in interior places like Anjar, Bachau, Gandhidham and Jubilee ground in Bhuj. The communication network to interior areas was established and messages started flowing in and out of these locations.

The alert calls made by NIAR from 26th on 20 and 40 meters to all amateurs in India to participate in relief efforts was well received. Teams from Bangalore and other places also reached Gandhinagar to support the operation.

By the evening of the 29th, another batch of ham operators with NIAR's equipment landed in Gujarat in aircraft sent by the Andhra Pradesh State Government with relief material. They were in position by the evening of the 30th.

Within days, some 40 radio amateurs came from all parts of India to the worst struck areas. Over 20 stations were setup and manned in field hospitals and relief camps.

The operators traveled with aid groups to remote villages to contact people in affected areas and send information

to government and relief agencies about needed supplies.

"They slept on the road with blankets on the first two days because there were no tents," Ram said.

Ramola Talwar Badam of the Associated Press

QUAKE AREA DATA AND INFORMATION

Most recent information from the Times Of India, the Indian Defense Ministry and other Agencies via the Internet:

ESTIMATED DEATHS: 25,000 - 100,000

HOMELESS: 1,000,000

**Learn how you can help...
Visit Indian websites about
the Gujarat Quake.**

<http://www.qrzindia.net/>

<http://niar.homepage.com/main.html>

<http://www.qsl.net/vu3rsb/ih.html>

noted that Indian ham operators complain that since amateur radio is categorized as a hobby, policy makers don't take them seriously. The amateur radio operators have come through in disasters before. He reported that when a supercyclone that killed 10,000 people in eastern Orissa state hit in 1999, ham operators made their way to the chief minister's house in the capital, Bhubaneswar, and enabled him to tell the federal government in New Delhi that the storm had devastated the state.

(Editor's Note: Those remarks sound very familiar. Indian hams are often taken-for-granted like those of many countries. Fortunately, the Wellington Radio Club can report a different story about our relationship with our local authorities!

By the way, we think we're roughing it when we volunteer for a shelter or EOC assignment... how would you like to live on just "biscuits" after running out of water?

Get your hurricane kits in order!)

Those who have been through major disasters and their aftermaths can appreciate the role of amateur radio emergency networks. The resources provided by India's different governmental levels, private agencies, companies and individuals could not have been as efficiently allocated had it not been for the information passed by the great many Indian radio amateurs that volunteered their services.

Western India is now in reconstruction. The need for communications might not be as pressing as before. Nonetheless, the few restored communication channels usually have to be supplemented by amateur radio networks.

IN OUR NEXT EDITION:

**Hams at Emergency Operations Centers,
daring accounts of other field operators,
activities during reconstruction and
how our State of Washington fared
compared to Western India.**