

Public Service Communication

The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away from you

1. Public Service Communications is communications services amateur radio operators provides to non-profit organizations sponsoring a public event that require self-equipped radio communicators.

Key elements to public service communications are:

- The served agency must be non-profit or the event must have significant public safety elements. The Amateur Radio Service and amateur radio operations cannot support public service communications for a for-profit organization unless there is no other communications available **and** there is significant public safety concern. For-profit organizations and events needing communications services should rent or purchase commercial radios (which operate in a commercial radio service), which amateur radio volunteers can operate and use for the for-profit event.
- The event is a public community event, such as a parade, marathon, fun-run, block party, search-and-rescue operation, etc.
- Usually requires amateur radio operators to provide their own personal radios to be used during the event.

2. The role Amateur Radio serves

- Provides a community reserve of operators and technicians that are trained and equipped in the art of radio communications.
- Sometimes provides communications where no cellular, wireline or wireless phone service exists.
- Advances the general welfare of the community and public interest by volunteering in support of a larger cause.
- Visible community service by amateur radio volunteers within the community. The amateur radio organization providing Public Service Communications often has it's name acknowledged in the credits of the event.

3. Similarities to Emergency Communications

- Often uses the same equipment (mobile, portable and foot-mobile stations).
- Often uses the same operating techniques (controlled nets, informal and formal nets).
- Usually involves deployment and operations at multiple locations.
- Provides an excellent simulation of conditions and techniques found in emergency communications situations.

4. Differences with Emergency Communications

- It is scheduled, as opposed to an unscheduled emergency event.
- Does not require activation by an emergency management agency.
- Does not exercise an activation tree and the related deployment.
- In contrast to emergency events and emergency management agencies, usually does not

require reporting to and coordinating with more than one lead organization. There may be many organizations participating in the event, but the sponsoring organization usually has the key, lead role.

- Often, amateur radio operations takes operator sign-ups several days in advance, assigns them to operating locations, and provides the master list to the sponsoring agency for their records/actions. This does not happen during emergencies.
- May not require wearing a visible ID badge.

5. Types of events and their unique requirements

a. Parades

■ Operations

- Multiple fixed operating locations. Be prepared to deploy 50 watt mobile radios with deep cycle, gel-cel batteries and a mast-mounted antenna if the parade route is more than 1.5 miles. Sometimes may need repeaters to provide end-to-end coverage.
- Some mobile stations on bicycles may be needed.
- May need to shadow key parade officials.
- Need to show up ahead of parade time to assist in the organization of the parade.
- Stations may be dismissed once the end of the parade passes their location.

■ Traffic

- Most of the traffic is tactical/informal in nature.
- Often need to relay changes in the parade line-up (participating or non-participating parade units, order of the parade) from the starting position to all review stands announcing the parade units.
- It is helpful to have an ambulance dispatch radio at the communications command post for expediting the call-in of medical emergencies.

■ Logistics

- It is very important to plan and allow for: water, food, relief operators and restrooms. The longer the period of operations, the more attention is needed to logistics planning. Restrooms may be accessible at restaurants and other establishments along the parade route.
- Volunteering may result in a T-shirt, which serves as the uniform for the day. Need to coordinate T-shirt sizes.

b. Marathons, Fun Runs

- Similar in nature to parades, although it may be over a larger course and last longer. May require more fixed stations with higher powered base/mobile radios.

■ Operations

- The last runner is tracked and progress relayed so that each station knows when it can be dismissed.

■ Traffic

- Usually the first several runners are tracked and the progress is relayed to the race officials.
- Logistics
 - Aid stations are usually spaced throughout the course offering water, first aid and transportation. Portable latrines may or may not be available.
- c. Sporting events
 - Operations
 - Usually has a higher proportion of foot-mobile stations deployed to observe and assist the crowd.
 - Traffic
 - Traffic is usually routed to and from the communications command post.
- d. Search-and-rescue support
 - Operations
 - Usually has a higher proportion of foot-mobile and mobile stations, reporting to one or more operations command posts. Messages with the operations command posts are relayed to the central command post to guide the overall operation.
 - Traffic
 - May be tactical or formal in nature.
 - Logistics
 - May not have strong logistical support from the sponsoring organization. Since the search-and-rescue effort will be outdoors away from ready access to commercial areas, operators should be prepared to be self-sufficient.