Major Communications Groups
And Diverse Operational Procedures
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Chapter Two

SouthBears units need to have a basic understanding of other EmComm (Emergency Communications) groups. This is especially true of groups such as SATERN and the Red Cross because we have a Memorandum of Understanding with these organizations. SATERN is a communications organization for the Salvation Army and the Red Cross usually relies on the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) as their primary communications arm. In some cases they may depend on SouthBears for communications support.

SATERN has a heavy focus on providing for Health and Welfare type traffic along with tactical support for their relief operations. The Health and Welfare net is most often found on HF frequencies. Following Katrina, SATERN also used a database where information was entered via their website on the Internet and by sending information out of the impact area by nets and information was then entered into the system from points outside effected area. SATERN is also part of the SHARES program.

When people enter an emergency net and attempt to pass H & W (Health and Welfare) traffic they are usually directed to one of the SATERN HF nets. Traditional ways of passing H & W traffic doesn't work well when mass migration is a by-product of the disaster. When the ARRL Radiogram form is used the address listed for outgoing traffic may not be correct for those that may have to be sheltered in a new location. When people have been moved to a new location the return traffic addressed to them becomes undeliverable. Using a centralize database can help eliminate these problems. Keep in mind that in the early going of a disaster no one may be accepting H & W traffic. All communications is being used to support first responders in the early going. When additional communications resources arrive then Heath and Welfare may begin to be handled. In the early stages only outgoing H &W traffic will be accepted. Later incoming traffic will be accepted.

It is vital for communicators to know the frequencies that different nets are operating so if a request is given to you then you will know where to direct the traffic that falls outside the scope of your operation. If the SouthBears net begins to get a number of requests to care for communications that you are not in a good position to handle, you may want to appoint a liaison station to take this traffic to

the appropriate net and pick up any traffic that has been sent to SouthBEARS through that net.

The Red Cross will be relying on ARES to connect shelter to shelter and shelter to Red Cross chapter house or regional office. Much of their communications will consist of attempting to secure supplies or personnel needed to support their relief efforts. They will often send "shadows" (ham operators) to provide communications as the Red Cross damage assessment teams, feeding teams or other relief works enter the field. Shadows will often stay close to key Red Cross leadership. ARES is often registered with dual affiliation as ARES/RACES and would be called upon to supplement local emergency management and EOCs.

Any agency communications team may arrive on scene prior to other teams that have been task with handling the communications supporting first responders. This early arriving team's normal task may be different from the most pressing need of the moment. In such cases it is vital that the emcomm team shift their agenda and care for the most pressing needs. With the ICS system the Incident Commander has the oversight for the assignment for all resources at a disaster.

It is also good to be aware of the role and frequencies of nets such as the Hurricane Watch Net, (14.325 primary), the Old Dominion Emergency Net (3.947), the SATERN Net (14.265 primary), the Virginia Digital Net on 3.578 upper sideband with a +1300 Hz off set, Chip64 is the mode. The Virginia digital net for packet is on 145.73. The SouthBears national net meets on 7.260 and this is where traffic would be heard in the event of a major emergency. Make a note of your local emergency nets on VHF/UHF. If you have a modern 2-meter or dual band rig it most likely has a feature that will allow special announcements from the National Weather Service to switch your rig from the ham bands to the NWS broadcast automatically. Their weather transmitter activates this switching of your rig by a tone they transmit. The default on your rig has this feature turned off.

Remember to stay ready and be flexible.