

# **Disaster Activation or Deployment**

## **By**

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**How will you know when activation is taking place? It is vital that a good system of call up be devised and implemented. In situations where most infrastructures continues to be functional, the conventional means of communications can be used for call up such as a telephone calling tree, paging, listening to a predetermined net frequency etc. Email can also be used for notification but should not be considered the primary means of call up. During periods of known threats or when SouthBears has been placed in a “Standby Status”, all members should check their email very frequently to insure rapid notifications of changes in call up status. The Virginia SouthBears Training website will also keep call up status posted on the homepage.**

**Many emergency communications plans are set in motion due to weather events. The National Weather Service will post messages to “Weather Spotters” that they may be needed for an upcoming time when hazardous conditions are pending. If threatening weather is occurring, monitor your NTS broadcast and listen to your local designated Skywarn frequency. If a hurricane is threatening, then monitor the Hurricane Watch Net on 14.325. They will become active if a hurricane is within 300 nautical miles of an inhabited land mass in the western hemisphere. During the early stages of these kinds of events, review chapter 7 of this guide as part of your preparation.**

**How will SouthBears in Virginia be activated? The State Disaster Director would notify the State Communications Coordinator (Blue Hat) and the SCC would then put the notification or call up procedure in motion. If the event is slow developing the process may involve placing SouthBears in a “Standby mode”. This may later be changed into a deployment of communications resources or teams but it may move to a decision to stand-down when it is determined that a response is not needed at this time. “Standby Status” should be used as a time for preparing for deployment.**

**You have been notified, now what should you do? Gather as much information that you can to get a clear picture of what you may be expected to do. Make sure that your family is safe and that you have a plan for contact with your family while you are in the field. The Command/Communications trailer will be a good position to assist you in keeping in touch with your family. You may also need to have an arrangement with a ham near your home to assist with communications with your family. This plan should not be depending on cell phone service in calling home. Cell phones may or may not be functional from the field. If you are among the first to be called out, your first stop may be to a staging area. This could be located some distance from the impact area. In the early stages of a disaster, be prepared to wait.**

**You may arrive at a staging area and have to wait for a day or more for your actual assignment. This was the case in Hurricane Katrina. You may also be staging one or two states from your assigned area of service. Be prepared to be self sufficient for the first 72 hours if required. Fuel up and buy needed supplies prior to entering the impact area. The supplies that you take for granted at home may not be available many miles from the disaster. Don't depend on credit cards; the infrastructure may not be in place to handle these transactions. Much of this information applies mainly to major disasters that destroy much of conventional means for communications and community support.**

**Some key communicators may draw the assignment of bringing the Command/Communications Trailer to the site, setting up and operating from the center. This will be a high traffic area and will require two or perhaps 3 people (with the communications team) with two serving as operators and the third serving as a "runner". If possible careful consideration should be given to location to allow for the most effective communications possible. A number of administrative and tactical tasks will be taking place here in addition to communications. The center communications team should care for the recharging of battery packs for the HTs carried by field teams and educating those having problems understanding how to use them. This communications team would be task with maintaining communications and reporting to the Virginia Baptist Mission Board in Richmond, serving as a communications hub for Virginia Baptist Mission Teams working in the field and acting as liaisons with other disaster communications team working in the field especially those that have MOUs with SouthBears.**

**If you are serving at a site other than the communications center such as a shelter, feeding station, or other disaster response trailer, your role may be somewhat different. When you arrive on scene, check with the person in charge and introduce yourself. Ask that person where you should setup. Most often they will give you the option of selecting your operating location. If so, select an area that allows you to get your feedline outside. Take into consideration proximally to commercial power or an outlet feed by a generator. If you have a deep cycle marine battery, you may not be as dependent on AC power. Try to select an area away from heavy traffic areas. Be sensitive to the noise that you create with your operation and if you don't have a private area, use headphones. Get acclimated to wearing headphones prior to a disaster.**

**Get familiar with the forms and logs that you will be required to use. When you have slack time, use it for updating records that may need additional information that you didn't have time to fill in when things were busy. Take frequent breaks and rotate responsibilities at your operating position. When you have to be away from the operating position take your HT with you so that you can keep up to speed with what is happening. Remember the HT may not be an effective transmitter**

**(Twenty-Five)**

inside your building but your receive copy may continue to be solid so use it as a monitoring device. When you turn the station over to a relief operator take the time to bring the person up to speed before leaving. If you sense your relief operator may not be comfortable, stay with them for a period of time until they get up to speed.

If you are first on the scene at your location, you may need to setup or assist with the setup of your station. Be sure to place your antennas as high as possible unless you are intending to setup a NVIS antenna. Your antenna will be biggest factor in the effectiveness of your station. Make sure that you understand the controls on the rig that you will be using. If the rig is not one that you are comfortable using, check and see if there is a manual available that you can refer to when needed. Setup your two meter and UHF rig by programming into memory those frequencies that you plan to use on a regular basis. Most major manufactures post their operating manuals online in PDF format. You can find the model numbers purchased by SouthBears and print these off for yourself and study the manual prior to activation. Bring these with you during activation.

Keep in mind that we are supporting two communications services when we are in the field. The Amateur Radio Service is under Part 97 of the FCC rules and commercial radio is under part 90 FCC rules. There will be times that we may be operating in the field with a single net control that is handling both types of traffic. The rules concerning IDing is different. The Amateur Radio service requires that we ID every 10 minutes and at the end of the communications. Part 90 rules require IDing every 15 minutes and at the end of a series of exchanges. The Amateur Radio service must ID using their FCC call and the Part 90 rules require the ID with the FCC call (WQIX708) by the base station but portable and mobile units may ID with a tactical call. The base must keep a list of those tactical calls. Beyond the rule differences net procedures can be the same but the net control would need to be a licensed Amateur Radio operator. This system will allow work groups that are not supported by a ham, to continue to have reliable communications in the field. For this to be reality, it requires planning with hams supporting those work teams located at the greatest distance from the communications center. In the absence of ham support at these distant stations, the use of elevated antennas connected to their handheld units may suffice.

When a decision is made to close down at a location, the operator shall let net control know that he or she is closing the operation. Net Control may want to reassign the person if there is a need. The State Communications Coordinator in conjunction with the State Disaster Director would make the decision about closing down a field project.

(Twenty-Six)

