



Lake County  
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ®  
Amateur Radio Emergency Service ®  
1303 North Milwaukee Avenue  
Libertyville, IL 60048



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For Immediate Release

## **Lake County Ham Radio Operators Prepare for Crisis Dec 8<sup>th</sup>**

Libertyville, IL, Nov. 23, 2007 -- America was abruptly reminded in 2005 of the critical role of Amateur Radio as volunteer radio operators, often called “hams,” came from all over the country during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They provided emergency communications when the other regular systems failed. This year the work of the Amateur Radio operators continues by providing lifesaving services in many floods and wildfires around the country. Because of the complexity of today’s normal communications systems, even if they do remain functional, they are often overwhelmed in a disaster and many people can’t get through. These painful lessons are being reviewed again on Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup> as amateur radio operators around Lake County conduct their annual Simulated Emergency Test (S.E.T.).

Using emergency powered radios and working with local agencies, these hams will develop plans for radio communications networks which can be used should there be a failure or overload of normal services we have seen time and again around the country following many incidents. The ham radio operators provide the voice and data communications between the many government and volunteer agencies which are needed in disasters.

Organized into the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), these trained Amateur Radio operators from across the county respond to the calls for aid when needed. Despite cell phones and satellites, every year has seen many situations in which they have been called upon in critical times needing expert communications to keep an emergency from turning into a disaster. They provide their services and equipment freely to their communities. They are “Amateurs” only in that they are not paid, but their service in a crisis can be priceless.

Again this year, the Lake County Amateur Radio operators, working to support the Lake County Emergency Management Agency will be replicating many scenarios which have crippled normal communications in the recent past. These include flooding, wildfires, ice storms, hurricanes and severe weather alerts. Something new being considered for future reference are plans for responses in case of pandemic flu and the probability that large populations will need to shelter at home and avoid public contact. The hams have the slogan, “When all else fails – Amateur Radio works!” According to Don Whitney, Amateur Radio operator K9DRW and Emergency Coordinator for the Lake County ARES group, “We take that saying very seriously.”



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For more information on the Lake County Emergency Management Agency, see their website at:  
<http://www.co.lake.il.us/sheriff/divisions/emergenc.asp>

For more information on the Lake County R.A.C.E.S. /A.R.E.S. group, please see their web site at:  
[www.races.org](http://www.races.org), or by email at: [information@races.org](mailto:information@races.org)

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**See attached backgrounder on Amateur Radio**



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## **Backgrounder on Amateur Radio**

### What do Amateur Radio operators do during and after disasters?

Amateur Radio operators set up and operate organized communication networks locally for governmental and emergency officials, as well as non-commercial communication for private citizens affected by the disaster. Amateur Radio operators are most likely to be active after disasters that damage regular lines of communications due to power outages and destruction of telephone lines.

### How do Amateur Radio operators help local officials?

Many radio amateurs are active as communications volunteers with local public safety organizations. In addition, in some disasters, radio frequencies are not coordinated among relief officials and Amateur Radio operators step in to coordinate communication when radio towers and other elements in the communications infrastructure are damaged.

### What are the major Amateur Radio emergency organizations?

Amateur Radio operators have informal and formal groups to coordinate communication during emergencies. At the local level, hams may participate in local emergency organizations, or organize local "traffic nets" using VHF (very high frequencies) and UHF (ultra high frequencies). At the state level, hams are often involved with state emergency management operations. In addition, hams operate at the national level through the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) which is coordinated through the American Radio Relay League and its field volunteers, and through the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) which is coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In addition, in areas that are prone to severe weather, many hams are involved in SKYWARN, operating under the National Weather Service.

### Is Amateur Radio recognized as a resource by national relief organizations?

Many national organizations have formal agreements with the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and other Amateur Radio groups including:

- Department of Homeland Security - Citizen Corps
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Communications System
- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- National Weather Service
- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials



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Disasters where served agencies used Amateur Radio?

- Wildfires in Southern California—2007
- Earthquake in Hawaii—2006
- Flooding in Northeastern States—2006
- Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma—2005
- Wildfires in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico—2005
- Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne—2004
- Tsunami in Asia—2004
- Earthquake in Central California—2003
- Hurricane Isabel—2003
- Northeast Blackout—2003
- Shuttle Columbia Recovery Effort—2003
- Wildfires in Colorado—2002
- Flooding in Kentucky—2002
- World Trade Center, Pentagon and Western Pennsylvania Terrorist Attacks—2001
- Tropical Storm Allison—2001
- Fires in Los Alamos, New Mexico—2000
- Hurricane Floyd—1999
- Flooding in Texas—1998
- Hurricane Georges—1998
- “500-Year Flood” in N.D. and Minn.—1997
- Western U.S. Floods—1997
- Hurricane Fran—1996
- TWA Plane Crash—1996
- Oklahoma City Bombing—1995

To Learn More:

The best way to learn about Amateur Radio is talking to hams face-to-face. To find out how to get started and who to contact in your area, call or write:

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1303 N. Milwaukee Avenue  
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Email : [information@races.org](mailto:information@races.org)