

Amateur Radio Disaster Preparedness

You must make sure your personally prepared for a disaster before you can even consider helping with Amateur Radio. If you are preoccupied with personal matters, you won't be able to help us. To be ready for disaster communications, do the following:

1. Train regularly with your local ARES group. You play like you practice.
2. Think about how you might best be able to help during a disaster. Some of us are good at installing antennas and equipment, others of us are better at operating on the air. Not everyone is suited to doing every job. Sometimes just having helping hands, spare equipment or supplies can be helpful even if you cannot operate the radios yourself. Generators need fuel, operators may need help with some tasks, stations need to be set up. Figure out where you best fit in. Decide how you can help out if:
 - a. You stay home. Can you deploy at a shelter or EOC for a few hours? Operate from home?
 - b. Must evacuate. Can you deploy from where you have evacuated to, such as a shelter?
3. Have all resource materials you need in printed form. Don't depend on computers, PDAs and so forth as they may not work in a disaster, require electricity and are relatively fragile.
4. If you use a computer regularly in your on-the-air operations, make sure you practice doing things such as calling nets and handling traffic the pencil-and-paper way once in a while. Remember, you are you may not be able to spare the amp-hours or the table space to run a computer.
5. Have an Amateur Radio ready kit to supplement your personal ready kit. Some items to include:
 - a. Portable radio, antenna and power supply or batteries (2 sets)
 - b. Headset or earphones (you may be operating in a noisy area)
 - c. Any cables you could possibly need
 - d. Pencils and Paper
 - e. Clipboard (firm writing surface, you may not have one otherwise)
 - f. Radiogram forms (helpful but not absolutely required)
 - h. Operating aids (pink card, Field Resources Manual, list of ARRL numbered radiograms, and anything appropriate for your local area)
 - i. Small tools (multi-tip screwdriver, multitools, etc.)
 - j. ARES Identification Card, if appropriate
 - k. Important phone numbers and frequencies
 - l. Map of the area
 - m. Flashlight
 - n. Poncho - very small to store, only around \$2 and can be useful when you least expect.

If carried in lieu of a personal ready kit, a few other items may be helpful:

- For a short deployment, a bottle of water plus some crackers or something to eat requiring no preparation could make things much more bearable for you
- Medicine
- Toilet paper - small packets from MRE kits are very handy and don't take up much room.
- Moist towelettes