

NEIGHBORHOOD RADIO WATCH INITIATIVE FAIRFIELDS, AMERICA

TO: Residents of _____
FROM: Joe Amateur NA1HAM
10 Suburban Street
Email: radiowatch@ourtown.org
DATE: 10/26/2012
RE: Neighborhood emergency communication

I am the FCC licensed owner and operator of Amateur Radio station NA1HAM. I'm organizing a "neighborhood radio watch" program and ask for your help and participation.

In the event of a disaster in our neighborhood, I propose monitor FRS channel 1 for emergency calls, so they can be relayed to the larger Amateur Radio community in our region. Amateur Radio has strong ties to the public service community and traditionally provides "When all else fails" communication in widespread disasters.

Please do not use channel 1 for any other purpose. It is imperative to keep that channel clear for true emergencies as FRS has an extremely limited range.

Refer to the back of this sheet for ideas on properly utilizing FRS and GMRS radios for use in a "neighborhood radio watch" program.

DEFINITIONS:

- *Emergency* means "life-threatening" and ordinarily means a call to 911.
- *Non-emergency* means requests for food, clothing, medical supplies, etc.
- *FRS* is the Family Radio Service, which many people know through the ubiquitous walkie-talkies available at Wal-Mart and Radio Shack.
- *Relay* means I'll make a best effort attempt to raise an Amateur Radio operator in an unaffected area, who would then call the authorities on our behalf.
- *Amateur Radio* is a federally licensed, international radio service regulated in the USA by the FCC.

Keep in mind this would be an emergency response of neighbor helping neighbor -- there are no guarantees, especially if this becomes as devastating as some TV weathermen claim. However, we have a lot of resources between us that might make a real difference if the worst comes to pass.

Please email me with questions and requests for additional information. I'll try to get back to you as soon as possible while I make my own last-minute preparations.

NEIGHBORHOOD RADIO WATCH – OPERATING PLAN

EMERGENCY CALLS

FRS channel 1 will be monitored on a volunteer basis for the duration of the event. If you have a life-and-death emergency and cannot reach 911 by telephone, here is what to do:

1. Turn your FRS radio to channel 1.
2. Deactivate/turn off all “privacy codes” (PL tones)
3. Press the transmit button (“Push to Talk” or “PTT”) and speak in a clear, evenly paced voice, **“EMERGENCY EMERGENCY EMERGENCY. EMERGENCY EMERGENCY EMERGENCY. THIS IS (your real name). PLEASE RESPOND.”**
4. Release the PTT momentarily and listen five seconds or so for a response.
5. If no response is heard, press the PTT again and repeat Step 3 as necessary until you receive a reply or take alternate action.
6. Non-emergency traffic should be moved to FRS channel 8 or higher.

RECOMMENDED CHANNEL PLAN

Channels 1-7 should be used for Emergency communications relays, as they are universally accessible by the more robust General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS). FRS channel 1 should be reserved for 'General' emergencies common to all areas, allowing emergency services, agencies or organizations to receive information and channel assignments for the area. Other neighborhood communication should be assigned FRS channels 8-14.

- Channel 1 – RESERVED FOR GENERAL EMERGENCY TRAFFIC
- Channel 2 – Emergency messages to be relayed to the neighborhood coordinator/ham operator for retransmission to regional networks
- Channel 8 – Intra/Inter Family Communications
- Channel 9 – Neighborhood light search and rescue efforts
- Channel 10 – Evacuation/Relief/Health/Welfare efforts
- Channel 5 – Secondary Emergency Message Channel (Relay 1)
- Channel 6 – Secondary Emergency Message Channel (Relay 2)

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

NEANS recommends the Midland Company’s FRS/GMRS radio products to facilitate cross training and battery interchange. However, all FRS radios operate on channels 1-7 at minimum and that’s enough for basic communications. For an event that lasts more than 72 hours, here is what you should have on-hand to maintain reliable communication:

- Two or more walkie-talkies for your family, one to monitor the rest to use
- Alkaline batteries to match your radio. NiCad and NiMH batteries have their place, but they will not power your radios half as long as alkaline batteries and, without AC mains, there is no way to recharge them. Store your batteries in the freezer to extend their shelf life. Rotate them regularly.
- Plastic zip-lock bags to protect your radios from rain or standing water.
- AM/FM portable radio with spare batteries
- NOAA All Hazards/Weather Radio with spare batteries (sometimes built in to a standard AM/FM).
- Flashlight with spare batteries
- DC car adapter for all the above, which is also a way to recharge NiCad batteries if necessary.