

MUTUAL AID COMMUNICATOR (MAC) TRAINING, 21-OCTOBER-2006

INTERACTION WITH SERVED AGENCIES

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The items below represent the original handout for the *"Interaction with Served Agencies"* session plus additional information which resulted from discussions during the sessions.

- **Check-In:** The first thing to do when reaching a served agency is to check in. Check-in is usually the responsibility of the ICS Planning section. (Check-in should tell you who your supervisor is and where to report to him. You will work for him.)
 - When you report to your supervisor, identify yourself and explain that you have been assigned to set up communication.
 - Inform him that you would like to set up your equipment and get on the air. Ask if there is another communicator that has already arrived and find out if there is a preference for the comm station's location.
 - If you are the first communicator to arrive, be prepared to suggest a location that is compatible with available power, antenna location, and isolated enough from the command center to avoid disturbing each other.
 - Ask if there are any hazards or considerations in the immediate area that you should be aware of, or cause you to relocate later.
 - Ask your supervisor to brief you on what he expects from you as a communicator and explain what service you can offer. Ask to see the Incident Action Plan. This will offer incite as to your expectations as well as the agency's.
 - **Tell your supervisor that you welcome suggestions to make the system work even better.**
- **Your job** as a communicator is to meet the needs of the served agency (don't try to impress them with your fancy equipment).
- If you are unable or unwilling to comply with the agency's requests, explain the situation and work with the agency or your AEC or DEC to find an alternative. Do not exceed your ability or the limitations of your license.
- Do not be offended if there appears to be a "distrust" of you as an outsider. It may take time to prove yourself and for a positive working relationship to develop.
- It is suggested that you make a sign for your Go-Kit, that has the words "RADIO COMMUNICATIONS" and post the sign at your communication station. Leave the word "Amateur" off of it, since some people may interpret that as "not professional" instead of "not paid".
- You may be asked to handle communication in addition to Amateur Radio. Make sure you understand the parameters of the tasks in these cases. If you are asked to do a task that takes you away from the specific frequency for which you had originally been assigned, make sure you notify your net control operator that you will be off the air for awhile. You should also remind your supervisor that if you are assigned another task, that you will not be able to provide your originally assigned communications task.
- NEVER talk to the press/media unless you are specifically instructed to do so by your supervisor and the interview has been approved by the PIO. Press relations are the job of the Public Information Officer (PIO). Suggested responses to a media person would be: *"Thank you for your interest, but it would be improper for me to comment on that issue. That is the job of our Public Information Officer."* Or: *"Thank you for your interest, but I am really too busy (or involved) in a communication issue at this time to provide an interview. I suggest that you talk to our Public Information Officer."*

- Show your supervisor and others our standard message form and ask them to write out messages to be transmitted on that form (and be brief). It may be that the agency you are helping has their own message form. It might be best to adapt to that form. In any case, make sure that messages going out or coming in have a specific addressee and that if appropriate, that addressee be the tactical addressee (like "Planning") instead of a person since that position may change personnel.
- Be sure to Log all major messages transmitted and received in a serial, time stamped log. It is suggested that you also keep an "Active Message" log which contains a list of those messages that will likely have a reply message either sent or received. The "Active Message" log should reference the serial log by time stamp or message number.
- If you want to be treated as a professional, act and look like a professional.
- Remember that you are NOT in charge.
- Keep quiet except when you have something to say that contributes to a solution for the problem.
- Be prepared to be on your own.
- **Dealing with stress and stressful situations:**
 - It should be noted that you will likely be entering an already stressful situation, so try to stay cool while you settle into your new assignment.
 - Take a few deep breaths and relax, gather your thoughts and move on.
 - Prioritize your actions - the most important and time sensitive ones come first.
 - Delegate some of your responsibilities to others. Perhaps someone from the served agency of if you are at a shelter, someone from the shelter can assist you in logging calls. Make sure you coordinate this with your supervisor.
 - Do not take comments personally - translate "personal attacks" into "constructive criticism". The comment may be a signal that something is being overlooked.
 - Watch out for your own needs - food, rest, water, medical attention.
 - Do not insist on working more than your assigned shift if others can take over.
 - Take a moment to think before responding to a stress-causing challenge. If needed, tell them you will be back to them in a few minutes.
 - If you are losing control of a situation, bring someone else in to assist or notify your supervisor. Do not let a problem get out of hand before asking for help.
 - Keep an eye on other team members, and help them reduce stress when possible.

Most of this information has been taken from the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Communication Courses.