



Office of
National Preparedness

Smart Practices Spotlight

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Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Bossier City, LA Marshals Office

Summary: *After witnessing the difficulties in emergency communications during 9/11, Major Rick Ware of the Bossier City Marshals Office devised a way to supplement emergency communications in his region. As an amateur radio operator, Ware created a communications team to facilitate long-range communication in the event of a disaster or emergency.*

During 9/11, many were surprised at the difficulty of communications during the immediate emergency response. Major Rick Ware of the Bossier City, LA Marshals Office was no exception. An amateur radio operator for over seven years, Major Ware believed his hobby could offer a solution. "I started thinking how amateur radio operators could really serve the community," he said. "There was a group of amateur operators around Bossier City. I started talking to them over the radio, and singled out those with the most expertise. Then I approached them with my idea."

The idea was simple – a small but highly qualified team of amateur radio operators would volunteer their time and effort to supplement emergency communications during a crisis. Major Ware was determined not to try to replace the existing structure, but augment it by providing long-range wireless communication. In the event of a disaster, the amateur radio operators based in the City of Bossier, he reasoned, would be able to communicate with people virtually anywhere in the continental United States, and even overseas. "Even if phone lines and cellular communications were disrupted, we would have a link to the entire country," he said. The team is comprised of individuals with different kinds of expertise, such as radio electronics, continuous wave technology, legal regulations and medical backgrounds.

The team undergoes a training session every two months, with experts instructing team members in subjects such as emergency field medicine and weapons of mass destruction. The team also participates in three exercises a year in which mobile field units are deployed. Currently, Major Ware is attempting to set up similar teams in nearby communities. "Amateur radio can play a vital role in homeland security," he said. "Anyone with a particular specialty that can contribute to preparedness should become involved."

Thinking Locally:

How can you supplement your emergency communications strategy?
Who could you utilize as a resource?

To submit a 'Smart Practice' for consideration or subscribe to Spotlight on Smart Practices send an e-mail to SmartPractices@fema.gov

Spotlight on Smart Practices highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact Major Rick Ware, Bossier City Marshals Office at warer@bossiercity.org, at (318) 741-8835, or via his HAM radio call sign, K5VXT.