

FW: Amateur Radio Lessons Learned from the Oso disaster.

Hello everyone -

below is an email from George Boswell, K7YHB, who worked the Oso Landslide as ARES team member.

He has written some "lessons learned" that I thought you might like to read and learn from it..

Chuck W5KAV

For Information Only...

George Boswell, K7YHB, is a Member of ARES/ACS in Snohomish County, as the Snohomish EC and District 1 DEC. He was a volunteer in the Snohomish EOC during the Oso event, working 12-hour shifts for several weeks. The following is his response regarding Lessons Learned, which are definitely worth sharing:

Here are some of those lessons learned concerning amateur radio in this context:

1. Don't plan on using just amateur radio. There are other forms of communications. Although we did use amateur radio for Comms between the ARC shelters in Arlington, Darrington and the ARC Headquarters in Everett. Also for a short period of time we were using amateur radio for communications to one of our command vehicles located in Darrington during the first two weeks while it was at the Ranger Station. Most of our communications were by means of the 800MHz trunked radios and cell phones, once the lines were replaced and temporary cell towers were setup between Oso and Darrington. Most of our duties were in monitoring a dozen or so different frequencies, both amateur and government, and documenting what was reported from the field.
2. Notification of our membership could have been handled a little differently, but the online roster that Scott, N7SS came up with proved to be of great benefit by the end of the first week of deployment. This means of scheduling personnel worked very well. We currently use MyStateUSA for a call out, but some have said the wording was inadequate.
3. We learned that we can count on only about 15% of our members responding to an initial call out and were scheduled within the first 7 to 10 days. Only 27% of our members responded during the 5 week period we were operational. If the incident goes beyond one week, it is best to ask for outside assistance, from neighboring counties.

Some of the responses we got from our membership to the call out were:

- I have a job and can't get away.
- I have family responsibilities.
- I have job responsibilities.
- You expect me to tell my boss I can't make it in, maybe if you could schedule 3 or 4 weeks out I might be able to find some time to help out.
- If the disaster occurs in my neighborhood, give me a call.

I'm not sure how much help this will be for your group, but to sum it up in a nut shell, plan on using any form of communications available to you to accomplish the job, not just amateur radio. Train your people in all forms of communications equipment, government radios, phone communications, fax machines, email, and of course amateur radio. It isn't enough to know how to operate a radio, you need to do so efficiently.

Make sure you have an operations plan/guide and that your members read and understand it.

Practice your teams communications skills, then practice some more. Learn to handle tactical as well as routine messages. Don't limit yourself/team to just one form, use them all. After all, to our served agencies, we are auxiliary communicators, which means we do whatever it takes to communicate. We are here to assist our served agencies, and we do what is requested of us.

I apologize in advance if this seems like preaching.

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