



OREGON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Oregon Emergency Management and Amateur Radio volunteers are READY!

The winter storm of 2007 is sometimes called the Great Coastal Gale. The devastation on coastal communities was caused by high, sustained winds and record rainfall. People were evacuated from their homes and valuable infrastructure was destroyed.

Oregon Emergency Management's (OEM) ways of communicating with counties by land lines, cell phones and computers were unavailable. County emergency managers needed to get messages to the state. The state needed to know what the counties needed so resources could be provided.

How was this communication completed with the phone lines down and no cell service? Volunteer Amateur Radio Operators, often called HAMs, stepped up and were able to communicate between the counties and the state. Often using their own equipment to pass messages back and forth, HAM operators working at OEM and at the county emergency operations centers (EOCs) really were the heroes of the storm.

Once things returned to normal, Governor Kulongoski realized that updated equipment was needed at OEM and in each of the counties should this every happen again. He provided Oregon Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) a grant of \$250,000 through OEM to be used to supply a digital communication system to each EOC.

This new system uses Amateur Radio frequencies and can provide email type messages in and out of areas impacted by natural or man caused disasters in addition to giving access to weather bulletins, tsunami alerts and weather forecasting tools when the Internet is unavailable.

ARES volunteers under the direction of OEM's communication coordinator researched, purchased, set-up, trained on, and tested the new equipment in the 33 participating counties.

Oregon HAM volunteers can now use a combination of different radio equipment, computers, and the Internet to provide a robust back-up communication system in times of disaster. OEM and Oregon ARES leadership worked together as a team to develop and implement this project. The equipment is ready to be used in the next disaster.