Introduction

Before you begin the technical material involved in earning a certification in Emergency Communications (EComm) it is imperative for you to understand that your knowledge in EComm is not actually as important as your attitude during emergencies.

Yes, technical ability will enable you to do a far better job of communicating. But your attitude will determine the success of the overall *REACT* emergency communications effort. The person who brings a "know it all" or "I'll really show you just how good I am" attitude will only hamper the relations with served agencies.

The people you will be *serving* (remember that word) are professionals who have seen far too many people who are more interested in impressing someone than in getting the job done. You will actually impress them far more by being as quiet as you can and doing your job in the best way possible. Results - without interference to served agency people - will cement relations with your served agency.

Please consider these definitions:

> Attitude: manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, esp. of the mind

> Service: an act of helpful activity; help; aid

> Positive: explicitly stated, stipulated, or expressed

Or, more simply, an explicit mental commitment to help others.

Please read that again: "A commitment to help others." Are you really ready to commit yourself to this effort? It will take time, a lot of time, if you are to be successful. If you are willing, then WELCOME!

Please remember the following:

> Experience is the *worst* teacher; it gives the test before presenting the lesson

*REACT*ers are patriotic, independent people and we are volunteers. There is an attitude among a few that, "Volunteers don't have to take orders." That is absolutely correct. We don't have to take orders. But if you are not ready to follow instructions, you may want to do something outside of *REACT* and especially outside of emergency communications.

And, one more general comment right from the start:

Never adjust, play with, or fiddle with any piece of equipment in use for an event, during that event, unless it is malfunctioning and you are the one responsible for its operation.

What is a Communications Emergency?

The easiest way to think about a communications emergency is to begin by using the definitions in the Incident Command System (ICS): "We will define an incident as any planned or unplanned occurrence or event, regardless of cause, which requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources."

We can see that during a large scale event it would be possible to have enough information (traffic) flow that the emergency service communications could become overloaded to a level that it would fail to function as required by the incident.

What Defines a Communications Emergency?

When normal communications processes are inadequate to handle the information flow required to service an incident as defined in the ICS

The Role *REACT* Serves:

Our primary role is to support the emergency management community (responders, relief and recovery agencies) with communications during times of emergency and disaster when normal communications are unavailable or overwhelmed.

Please understand that we are *not* a direct emergency response agency. If you happen upon the scene of an emergency just as the sirens are quieting, keep your mouth shut and get out of the way! Follow instructions – including clearing the area if so directed. We provide communications support when public service systems are overloaded. We do not provide first aid, transport victims, provide traffic control or any other function normally provided by public service agencies, unless specifically requested; and even then our ability to provide such additional services will be based on training, equipment, personnel, and whatever arrangements have been made with the appropriate authorities.

If you find yourself at the scene of an emergency when the appropriate response agency is not there yet, initiate the call and provide whatever immediate assistance you have the training to provide. Keep in mind that in doing so you are acting as an individual citizen and have no official status. As an individual, you may or may not have any legal protection depending on the laws in your state. You should be aware of the laws covering "Good Samaritans" in your particular area and conduct yourself accordingly.

REACT Teams provide services to government agencies and non-government organizations in accordance with specific requests from those agencies or organizations. In many cases there may be standing agreements covering specific situations where our support is thereby requested in advance. But in all cases, support is provided only when and as requested. Even the Skywarn group does not activate until the National Weather Service or local emergency management agency has requested our help.

In many cases, we will do more than "just" communicate. You are free to do any work for the served agency that they request of you, so long as you are comfortable that you have the training and ability to do that work. Generally you should limit other work so it does not hinder your ability to communicate. What other tasks are reasonable will depend on where you are working and what function you have been assigned. There will occasionally be tasks that *everyone* present is expected to pitch in – you should do so cheerfully, unless it interferes with your assigned function.

Some operators think of *REACT* as a simple extension of the talk time in the radio hobby. This is not true. *REACT* is an organization that continually needs more trained operators who are willing to learn to communicate rather than just talk. Do you have the time and the drive to do it well?

It's not just that the trained operators are willing to learn to communicate. It's that the trained operators *have learned* to communicate – accurately, in a timely fashion, regardless of the obstacles in the event.

Why *REACT* and Amateur Radio Both Work When Other Methods Don't

Since radio equipment does not rely on wires and communications facilities provided by common carriers and phone companies, it is immune to disruptions within the telephone system.

REACT is a "multi-mode, multi-service" organization. It includes Citizens Band (CB), General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS), Family Radio Service (FRS), Multi-Use Radio Service (MURS), Amateur, and other radio services. Not every *REACT* Team makes use of every service or mode, but Teams that are well prepared for the emergency communications mission must be ready to use the modes, services, and frequencies appropriate to the missions they expect to perform. Amateur Radio enthusiasts use a wide range of radio bands, each one with its particular strengths and weaknesses in overcoming the barriers to radio communications.

VHF (Very High Frequency) and UHF (Ultra High Frequency) radios are small and portable with lots of channels to handle a multitude of short-range communications. GMRS, FRS, and certain other radio services operate on UHF frequencies. MURS and some other radio services operate on VHF frequencies. These radio services provide performance very similar to UHF and VHF Amateur Radio, although generally with somewhat less flexibility in some radio services due to regulations about specific frequencies and modes.

Amateur HF (High Frequency) can propagate over mountains and valleys and between islands to provide coverage beyond VHF and UHF. While CB operates near the high end of the HF spectrum, the limited power and the technical specifications of CB radios generally make them inappropriate for long distance communications. Some military units and a few government agencies still maintain HF radio capabilities, but most have either eliminated long range radio entirely or rely upon satellite communications for their long range radio communications needs. In many situations, if long distance radio communications are needed, Amateur Radio is the only logical solution readily available.

Amateur Radio operators can use a wide range of communications modes, whether it's TV, data, voice, or Morse code to exchange messages. The very nature of the Amateur Radio service encourages amateurs to learn how to make contacts, regardless of the challenges that may abound. Many *REACT* members are Amateur Radio operators.

Operator availability may be a major concern, especially if an emergency lasts more than one or two days. Neither *REACT* nor organized Amateur Radio (ARES/RACES) generally has enough trained operators to maintain a major communications capability beyond the initial period. In a prolonged emergency, additional radio operators will be needed. Any organization planning to provide emergency communications must be prepared to meet the need for replacement operators.

One source of additional radio operators is Mutual Aid from similar organizations outside the area of the immediate emergency. With proper prior planning, Mutual Aid can be a source of trained operators who are ready to perform expected functions. Without detailed prior planning, Mutual Aid may still be an essential source of additional operators, but those additional operators will be less well prepared.

The second potential source of additional operators is cross-leveling within and among the organizations already involved in the emergency response mission.   In areas where several organizations are involved in providing radio operators, some groups will run short of operators before others. Also other (non-communications) groups may have individual members who are trained radio operators. Many disaster volunteers are members of more than one group. Each group's leaders should be aware of these members, both to avoid double-counting them in planning and to make them available for cross-leveling when necessary. This sort of interagency cross-leveling is one of the most difficult tasks to carry out because each organization typically views its missions as the most important and wants to guard its resources, but it is very effective if the groups are really committed to working together to support the community. Remember, there is no room for "turf battles" in emergency services. Interaction between agencies prior to an emergency goes a long way to smoothing the process of working together. One structured forum for this sort of interaction is the state or local chapter of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). *REACT* and ARES units should participate in the appropriate VOAD if one is active in their area.

Finally, the most common (and least satisfactory) source of replacement radio operators is additional local volunteers. As a "multi-mode, multi-service" organization, *REACT* theoretically has a much broader base from which to draw local volunteers compared to ARES or RACES, but in practice the difference is not great. Amateur Radio operators are distributed throughout most communities. They are already near the scene of the event and can respond. Licensed amateurs are generally the most available radio operators who have their own equipment. Regardless of license class or other experience, local volunteer radio operators who have not actively participated in an emergency communications organization should be considered at best only *partially* trained regardless of their technical skills.

Regardless of the specific brand and model of radio equipment, amateurs who use the same frequency and mode can communicate with each other. This is different from private companies and government, where communications are generally limited to each entity by their FCC license or their equipment. *REACT* Teams providing emergency communications support need to consider equipment capabilities and license limitations when assigning operators to various locations and functions. Although there are some limited exemptions in the FCC rules for each service concerning emergency operations for the *immediate* safety of life and protection of property, these exemptions are very narrow, only apply within each specific service, and generally apply only to stations licensed in that specific service. There is no generalized waiver of the FCC rules for "emergency" situations.

Amateur Radio operators are licensed and authorized to communicate internationally which may be an important consideration in some locations.

Amateur Radio operators are allowed to run higher power than other licensed and unlicensed personal radio services such as CB, GMRS, and FRS and have more flexibility with the equipment. When appropriate equipment is available, they can communicate over great distances.

REACT radio operators use their equipment regularly, which verifies that it's maintained and operational. Some of the equipment includes handheld portables and mobiles installed in vehicles. *REACT* radio operators are familiar with the operation and capabilities of their equipment, and how to overcome obstacles to radio communications that may be within their neighborhood.

Why the Phone Company May Not Operate During Emergencies

Communications between agencies and the general public are handled by common carriers such as telephone, paging, and Internet companies. Phone companies invest large amounts of money in equipment that generally provides reliable phone service, including durable and secure buildings, highly reliable phone switches, diesel generators, and large banks of batteries. Cellular, paging, and Internet companies in turn rely on communications services provided by the phone companies.

For business reasons, these phone systems are sized for the peaks in regular daily usage, not the more extreme peaks in emergency usage. Telephone systems usually rely on copper or fiber optic cables that are often exposed and prone to damage during high winds and storm conditions. Phone systems are usually not portable and reliable enough to respond to the demands of the emergency. These are the most common reasons why normal public communications needs are not met during emergencies.

How Does Emergency Communications Compare with Other Radio Activities?

Both use basic skills and activities as a foundation. Operators will find that much of emergency communications borrows from existing aspects of the pastime. For example, each operator is authorized to operate under specific federal regulations and routinely uses that privilege to practice and build upon the ability to communicate via radio. These same rules generally apply in emergencies with only specific limited exemptions clearly defined in the rules for each radio service. Both monitoring and operating non-emergency public service events offer skill sets for receiving and passing traffic efficiently and accurately. Many *REACT* Teams participate in local drills that may offer the chance to practice operating in simulated emergency conditions. Public service events let us practice flexible communications practices while walking around serving a public event. These are some of the ways that regular *REACT* Team radio activities resemble skills used for emergency communications.

Emergency Communications extends upon this foundation. Emergency communications builds upon and extends this foundation in ways that normally do not occur in regular daily living, and are present only during times of emergency or disaster.

Unlike supporting public service events that are scheduled and planned in advance, emergency communicators are often activated with little or no previous warning to organize and coordinate field operations.

Unlike supporting public service events where the communicators serve primarily under the direction of one lead organization, emergency communicators often must handle several key organizations simultaneously.

Unlike repeaters and tower installations, emergency stations often must be portable and must be set up and operational in a matter of minutes or at most a couple of hours. Teamwork rules the day.

Unlike drills where one can plan on a single day of operation, emergency operations are likely to continue for several days.

Unlike hobby radio activities, emergency operations happen in real time. Things can't be delayed.

Unlike general *REACT* Team radio activities, which involve primarily other members of the same Team, emergency communications involves members and non-members alike, along with users in various radio services.

Unlike commercial communications solutions, where there is usually no reserve for handling a massive increase in communications needs, emergency communicators <u>must</u> have the equipment, skill, and knowledge to provide additional communications capacity in very short order.

In all this, leadership, teamwork, and initiative are key factors to success. Simply put, emergency communications offers a very rich, challenging, and rewarding environment to apply radio knowledge and skills in unique situations where no one else has a viable solution. *REACT* radio operators who have that knowledge and those skills have truly earned their certification.

Public Service Communications

Public Service Communications refers to communications services that radio operators provide to organizations sponsoring a public event.

Key Elements to Public Service Communications:

The event is a public community event, such as a parade, marathon, fun-run, block party, search-and-rescue operation, etc.

The purpose of the communications must be for the benefit of the public. *REACT* does not provide communications for hire. The status of the event sponsor is not the determining factor for *REACT* public service communications. The sponsor may be a non-profit organization, a unit of government, or even a commercial business. Even the purpose of the event itself may not be the determining factor. The event might be a community celebration, a charitable fund-raiser, or even commercial in nature. The critical element for "Public Service Communications" is the purpose *of the communications*, which may not be the same as the purpose of the event itself. A large commercial event may well create a need for public service communications for activities such as crowd management, first aid, lost children, etc., which are really independent of the commercial purpose of the event.

The rules concerning the use of Amateur Radio to support public service events are more strict than those for most other radio services. The rules for the Amateur Radio Service are often misinterpreted and those rules changed several years ago, but many amateurs still support the old stricter rules. There are many situations where Amateur Radio cannot be used to support an event that may be completely acceptable for other radio services. *REACT* Teams that utilize Amateur Radio as well as other radio services must be aware of the differences in the rules governing these different services and take care to ensure that each service is used only in accordance with the applicable regulations. Note also that these rules apply to the radio service (frequency) being used, not to the person performing the communications. When a licensed Amateur Radio operator is using a commercial radio on an appropriately licensed business band frequency, only the rules for the service actually being used apply.

Public service events usually require radio operators to provide their own personal radios to be used during the event.

The Role *REACT* Serves

- Provides a community reserve of operators and technicians who are trained and equipped in the art of radio communications.

- Sometimes provides communications where no cellular, wireline, or wireless phone service exists.

- Advances the general welfare of the community and public interest by volunteering in support of the public good.

- Provides visible community service by volunteers within the community.

Similarities to Emergency Communications

- Often uses the same equipment (mobile, portable, and foot-mobile stations).

- Often uses the same operating techniques (controlled, informal, and formal nets).

- Provides an excellent simulation of conditions and techniques found in emergency communications situations.

Differences from Emergency Communications

- It is scheduled, as opposed to an unscheduled emergency event.

- Does not require activation by an emergency management agency.

- Does not exercise an activation tree and the related deployment.

- Usually does not require reporting to and coordinating with more than one lead organization. There may be many organizations participating in the event, but the sponsoring organization usually has the key, lead role.

- Often, the Team takes operator sign-ups several days in advance, assigns them to operating locations, and provides the master list to the sponsoring agency for their records/actions. This does not happen in advance during emergencies.

- Usually does not require wearing a visible ID; however, the wearing of appropriate ID should always be highly encouraged.

Some Types of Events and Their Unique Requirements

Parades

  Operations
  - Multiple fixed operating locations are usually required. Be prepared to deploy high power (25-50W) mobile radios with deep cycle, gel-cell batteries and a mast-mounted antenna, if the parade route is more than 1.5 miles. Sometimes repeaters may be needed to provide end-to-end coverage.
  - Some mobile stations on bicycles may be needed.
  - May need to shadow key parade officials.
  - Operators need to show up ahead of time to assist in the organization of the parade.
  - Some stations may be dismissed once the end of the parade passes their location.

  Traffic
  - Most of the traffic is tactical/informal in nature.
  - Stations often need to relay changes in the parade line-up (participating or non-participating parade units, order of the parade) from the starting position to all review stands announcing the parade units.
  - It is helpful to have an ambulance dispatch radio at the communications command post for expediting the call-in of medical emergencies.

Logistics
- It is very important to plan and allow for: water, food, relief operators, and restrooms. The longer the period of operations, the more attention is needed to logistics planning. Restrooms may be accessible at restaurants and other establishments along the parade route.
- Volunteering may result in a T-shirt, which serves as the uniform for the day. Someone will need to coordinate T-shirt sizes.

Marathons, Fun Runs - Similar in nature to parades, although they may be over a larger course and last longer. May require more fixed stations with high powered radios.

Operations
- The last runner is tracked and progress relayed to the race officials. Stations are often released individually when the last runner has passed their location.

Traffic
- Usually the first several runners are tracked and the progress is relayed to the race officials.

Logistics
- Aid stations are usually spaced throughout the course offering water, first aid, and transportation. Portable toilets may or may not be available.
- Transportation may or may not be provided for participants who are unable to complete the course.

Sporting Events, Block Parties and Community Gatherings.

Operations
- Usually have a higher proportion of foot-mobile stations deployed to observe and assist the crowd.

Traffic
- Traffic is usually routed to and from the communications command post.

Search and Rescue Support

Operations
- Usually have a higher proportion of foot-mobile and mobile stations, reporting to one or more operations command posts. Messages with the operations command posts are relayed to the central command post to guide the overall operation.

Traffic
- May include a mix of tactical and formal message traffic.

Logistics
- May not have strong logistical support from the sponsoring organization. Since the search-and-rescue effort often will be outdoors, away from ready access to commercial areas, operators should be prepared to be self-sufficient.

Organizations to Meet Communications Goals

The Local *REACT* Team

The basic unit of *REACT* emergency communications is the local Team. The local Team is a source of expertise in many areas of radio communications. By being actively involved with your local Team, you will meet and get to know the other operators in your area and you will learn their operating habits. The local Team also serves as a major point of contact with the public and many Teams are heavily involved in providing public service communications. Getting involved with your Team's public service activities allows you to make sure that your equipment is working properly and that you are practiced in operating in a net environment. These are two fundamentals to effective emergency communications work.

The Council

Councils are an optional organization level within *REACT*. Councils are formed by the local *REACT* Teams throughout a geographic area (usually an entire state). The function of the Council is to provide a structured forum for the Teams within the area to work together. Councils are usually not operational entities in that they generally do not provide services either directly to the public or directly to other organizations. The Council may work to coordinate mutual aid among its Teams and to provide other services to the Teams. Councils serve as the point of contact between *REACT* and state level agencies and organizations, such as the state Emergency Management Agency, state VOAD, and Red Cross lead and key resource chapters.

The Region

The Region is an established element in the organizational structure of *REACT* International, Inc. The Region is simply a geographic area that forms the election district for each individual on the Board of Directors. If there is no Council in a particular area, the Director elected from the Region that includes the area will generally attempt to provide some of the assistance otherwise provided by a Council. Obviously a single Director cannot duplicate the services that the Teams within a Council would collectively be able to provide.

REACT International, Inc.

The parent organization, *REACT* International, provides the basic structure and overall guidance for the organization. The Board of Directors sets policy and appoints the officers who manage the daily affairs of the corporation and establishes committees that perform various functions in support of the entire organization. Through this system, *REACT* International makes available many services, including training materials (such as this EComm Certification program).

Other Organizations to meet communications goals

Local Amateur and CB Radio Clubs

Radio clubs can be a valuable resource to turn to when we need to establish emergency communications systems. Clubs are a potential source of radio operators. Even more importantly, clubs provide a structure that may support both recruiting and training emergency radio operators. A local club may be a source of expertise in many areas of radio. By getting involved with your local radio clubs, you will meet and get to know the other operators in your area and you will learn their operating habits.

Working with Amateur Radio Organizations

The simple reality is that in most parts of the United States there is a lack of understanding between Amateur Radio organizations and organizations using other radio services. No amount of "top down" information is going to completely resolve this lack of understanding or change the attitudes of some individuals on either side.

Despite the negative attitudes of some individuals, *REACT* Teams and local Amateur Radio organizations *can* work together effectively, provided everyone is prepared to put aside their misconceptions and prejudices.

No amount of talking is going to change anyone's mind on either side, but shared goals and a positive attitude will open the door to cooperation and demonstrated performance will make that cooperation a reality.

The primary Amateur Radio organizations involved with emergency communications are the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES).   In some locations these are combined as a single organization. In other areas they operate separately.

ARES and RACES – Two Organizations: How Do They Differ?

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is an organization sponsored by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). ARES consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization, is eligible for membership in ARES. The only qualification, other than possession of an Amateur Radio license, is a sincere desire to serve. Because ARES is an amateur service, only amateurs are eligible for membership. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but is not a requirement for membership.

The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a government program, administered by local, county, and state emergency management agencies, and supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the United States government. RACES is a part of the Amateur Radio Service that provides radio communications for civil-preparedness purposes only, during periods of local, regional, or national civil emergencies. These emergencies are not limited to war-related activities, but can include natural disasters such as fires, floods, and earthquakes. As defined in the rules, RACES is a radio communications service, conducted by volunteer licensed amateurs, designed to provide emergency communications to local or state civil-preparedness agencies. It is important to note that RACES operation is authorized by emergency management officials only, and this operation is strictly limited to official civil preparedness activity in the event of an emergency communications situation.

Although RACES and ARES are separate entities, the ARRL advocates dual membership and cooperative efforts between both groups whenever possible for an ARES group whose members are all enrolled in and certified by RACES to operate in an emergency with great flexibility. Using the same operators and the same frequencies, an ARES group also enrolled as RACES can "switch hats" from ARES to RACES and RACES to ARES to meet the requirements of the situation as it develops. For example, during a "non-declared emergency," ARES can operate under ARES, but when an emergency or disaster is officially declared by the local, state, or federal authority, the operation can become RACES with no change in personnel or frequencies. Likewise as a situation winds down, RACES operation will normally cease when the EOC stands down, but ARES may still be needed to support additional disaster recovery work such as Red Cross shelters that may still be open. This situation is still not well understood and accepted in some areas. In such areas, both ARES and RACES still exist separately and may even be seen as competing.

To add yet another acronym to the situation, California and some other locations are moving from RACES to a more broadly-based program called the Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS). As first created by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, ACS is a government program that includes the existing RACES operation but also provides for use of volunteer operators from other radio services and recognizes affiliation by other organizations in support of emergency communications.

Other Amateur Radio Organizations:

The National Traffic System (NTS) is an ARRL program for systematizing amateur traffic handling facilities by making a structure available for an integrated traffic facility designed to achieve the utmost in two principal objectives: rapid movement of traffic from origin to destination, and training amateur operators to handle written traffic and participate in directed nets. These two objectives, which sometimes conflict with each other, are the underlying foundations of the National Traffic System.

NTS is not primarily an emergency communications system, but emergency traffic does take priority when it is passed within the NTS system. One aspect of NTS that has had a significant influence on emergency communications is the standardized format adopted by NTS for handling formal message traffic.

While NTS includes a local net component, its structure focuses on the capability to move traffic on a national basis. It is rarely involved with local emergency traffic, but NTS frequently handles significant amounts of "Health and Welfare Inquiry" traffic related to disasters and other emergency situations.

Although NTS is not directly involved in most local emergency communications, NTS operators may be an excellent resource for local emergency communications programs.

The Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) is a Department of Defense sponsored program, established as a separately managed and operated program by the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The program consists of licensed Amateur Radio operators who are interested in military communications on a local, national, and international basis as an adjunct to normal communications. MARS operations are similar to the NTS but focus on handling traffic to and from US military personnel both in the United States and overseas. MARS operations are performed by licensed Amateur Radio operators but are not conducted on Amateur Radio frequencies. MARS uses government frequencies just outside the amateur frequency allocations. Like NTS, MARS is more likely to handle health and welfare inquiry traffic rather than local emergency communications. And, again, MARS operators may be an excellent resource of operators who may be recruited for local emergency communications programs.

Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN) is a group of Amateur Radio operators who provide emergency communications support for Salvation Army operations in local, regional, and international disaster and emergency situations. SATERN has active groups in many locations as well as individual members in other locations. In an emergency where the Salvation Army is involved in the response effort, you may be working alongside or communicating with SATERN members. In a situation where the Salvation Army is not directly involved in the emergency response, SATERN operators may be available to augment other communications capabilities.

Several other emergency response organizations have programs for their own members who are amateur radio operators. These organizations include the American Red Cross as well as various faith-based denominational organizations such as Adventist Community Services, Baptist Disaster Relief, and others.

Who Runs the Event? - The Primary Served Agency

When you are working any event, please understand that you are there to help the served agency with a communications shortfall. This, in and of itself, is embarrassing to some agencies. If you keep that fact in mind, you can eliminate confusion and problems by acknowledging that the served agency runs the event. Not just by your words, but by your actions.

The largest problem for any organization is operators who go into an event and try to take over. Cowboy and "wanna-be" behavior *will* discourage the served agency from ever using your services again. In some cases it has resulted in the radio operator involved being arrested and removed from the scene.

Most, if not all, public service agencies use some form of the Incident Command System as the model for operations during an emergency or major event. You will help your served agency and your Team if you understand how the ICS works.

In any emergency response situation, some**one** is always in charge (even if it doesn't look that way). Each individual radio operator assigned to work in any event must know who is in charge of his function and who is in charge of the location (these may not be the same person, or even the same organization). Sometimes the chain of command may break down and even the people you are working for may not seem sure who is in charge but the one thing that you can be absolutely sure of is that *you are **not** in charge.*

Who Talks to the Media? - the Primary Served Agency PIO

Dealing with the media/public: During an emergency, do *not* make any statements to the media or public about the emergency! The Public Information Officer (PIO) for the agency being served will make *all* statements. You can discuss general information about *REACT* and your radio, if someone asks and you have time. Do *not* include mode, frequency, or information about the amount or kind of communications traffic.

If you encounter some very persistent media people, the following statement may help. Teams should check with your served agency before you use this statement. If you ask during coordination prior to an emergency, the agency PIO can often assist you in preparing a generic statement similar to this. One designated individual from the Team should coordinate with the PIO during the emergency to determine what (if any) information may be released.

> "*REACT* is the Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams. We are an organization of volunteer radio operators who are assisting [agency] with the current situation. We currently have [##] operators in locations where additional communications are required."

How You Can Get Involved

As a member of a local *REACT* Team, you should let the Team leadership coordinate with any agencies to be served. Make sure your Team officers know what training you have and what sort of functions you are (and are not) willing to perform. You need to be trained in the methods needed for appropriate communications. Specific agencies may require or recommend particular training. Often these agencies can provide training for the Team. Training in Emergency Communications *before* you are needed will help you develop the skills necessary to be an effective communicator.

During an event do your best to maintain a courteous, professional image. You may be working with several agencies including police, fire, first aid squads, National Guard, etc. Extend every possible courtesy to members of these groups. Make sure they know who you are, and what your communications capabilities are. But remember we are only there to communicate, not to tell them how to do their job. Avoid offering advice or offering assistance with other functions unless asked.