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# IARU Region 3 Report GAREC-2014

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*Disaster Communications Committee***

The Asia-Pacific region is arguably the most disaster prone. The recent 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Bangkok, Thailand, was told of the lives lost and economic impacts of many adverse weather-related catastrophes and earthquakes.

Earlier conferences have made recommendations or taken regional actions following the disastrous Indian Ocean tsunami on December 26, 2004. Ultimately, there will be a new global agreement on disaster risk reduction.

Among the major disasters reported were:

- November 2013 - Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) struck the central Philippines on November 8, 2013. The Philippines Amateur Radio Association (PARA) was ready with its HERO (Ham Emergency Radio Operations) Network.
- October 2013 - Cyclone Phailin headed towards India's Bay of Bengal as authorities evacuated dangerous areas. The Amateur Radio Society of India was set to go with trained radio amateurs. They worked around the clock passing essential messages and doing what they could to help. In the same area a cyclone 14 years earlier killed 10,000 people. This time about 21 people died.
- October 2013 – Crews were cleaning up Typhoon Santi debris, as a 7.2 magnitude earthquake occurred in the Bohol Province causing numerous casualties and damage. Frequencies were kept clear for emergency traffic.
- September 2013 - Pakistan hit by an earthquake measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale. Pakistan Amateur Radio Society members have been prepared to provide some emergency communications support to the disaster relief operation in the remote and thinly populated area.
- August 2013 - Typhoon Labuyo in the Philippines causes activation of the HERO emcomm net.

The Amateur Radio emergency communication facility was used to help authorities and relatives during the search for a missing Malaysian airliner (March), and were on standby during the Pacific's tropical cyclone Ita (April).

Other events were handled by local authorities or in remote areas inaccessible to radio amateurs.

During Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in the Philippines there was limited media coverage of ham radio, but it did open and renew PARA negotiations with the combatting and responding authorities.

That major disaster again reinforced that emergency communication infrastructure can be given by trained and prepared volunteers.

While radio amateurs continue to prepare for a role during disasters with some joint training days with other agencies, it varies across the region. Some radio amateur organisations seem limited by current domestic regulations.

A few areas like most parts of Australia and New Zealand, you can find that combatting authorities have equipped themselves (after earlier disasters and supported by government), that they have little need of radio amateurs.

The emergence of CoW (cell on wheels) technology means that telcos can quickly restore mobile phone and Wi-Fi access. Central and local governments, power companies and the like have emergency plans and resources in place should a disaster occur.

It remains important to be listed in those plans, have radio amateurs trained, prepared, equipped and multi-skilled. That skill should be transferable when needed to enable radio amateurs to use agency-owed communications equipment.

This means a lot of effort, liaison with government, authorities, aid agencies, plus appropriate media publicity during the preparedness and disaster stages.

The volunteer role of Amateur Radio in recent regional disasters was noticed and it is up to us to prepare for the best possible use of our valued resource.

*- Jim Linton VK3PC, chairman of the Disaster Communications Committee.*