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Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Do we really need Amateur Radio Emergency Communication in the middle of Europe?

What happens, when communication fails and all totally disrupts; also in our highly technical world?

In Europe, the consequences of disasters, like earthquakes, floods, avalanches and even volcano eruptions can be brought under control relatively quickly, but this needs not always to be the case and in such situations Radio Amateurs can synchronize with Government Agencies, like the Police, Red Cross, the Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster assistance; and even the Military.

The Authorities and Community Services appreciate that Radio Amateurs can be called upon to assist with their telecommunication know-how for the relief of distress, helping to save lives and the rapid exchange of information and for required goods and medical supplies.

Close coordination between the regular telecommunication services and the back-up of the Radio Amateur Emergency Communication networks arises following the possible- following scenario:

May I ask to please close your eyes, and imagine the following situation. You are at your place of work, or on your way home, or you have just entered the elevator to have a drink or discuss a book project on the 32nd floor. Suddenly the electricity goes out.

Some of you may say “don’t worry, before long we will have power again”. Others will just adapt to the new situation and go home earlier; others will get excited and still others will reschedule, that undone work will be made the next day. However, what; if the electric power does not come back at all?

Because of just Software faults in an Electric Power Control Centre, the power supply network starts to become disabled in parts of Southern Germany and Switzerland. Because of automatically detected Voltage- and Frequency irregularities, gradually all High Voltage power supplies are cut-off for everybody from the Electric Power Generation Plants.

Everywhere, trains underway, just stop. Elevators stop. Thousands of people are trapped. All financial businesses, money withdrawals, credit card payments and Cash-Points are disabled.

Within half an hour, the mobile telephone- and data systems, on which our lives seem to depend on; stops.

Within 1 hour, the regular telephone network, despite operating with huge battery back-ups, stops.

The fuel pumps at car filling stations they stop.

Within 24 hours most of the animals giving milk have to be killed, since the electric milking-system needs electric power, otherwise the cows die a painful death if they are not relieved of their milk.

Within 48 hours food in cold-stores and refrigerators will deteriorate. In hospitals, many operations can no longer be performed, patients will die.

Food production will become very difficult and the distribution of food is almost impossible.

Anarchy will break out, people think they have to fight for their survival. In many cities, even countries, a state of emergency will be announced, possibly also martial law. People will withdraw into their homes or will be attracted to every light, like flies, hoping to get information and food.

To avoid and limit best these scenarios, Power Utility companies and the Authorities need reliable telecommunication services, which no doubt, they have.

In Switzerland and no doubt in other countries, The Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance and the Military can also provide telecommunication back-up service.

So, why do we also need Amateur Radio Emergency Communication back-ups ? Well, the general public, especially in remote and cut-off parts of a country, have fundamental communication needs with the outside world.

Here, in Switzerland, there are some 4000 Radio Amateurs. They are, and in the future more will be trained, to establish Information Points at local centers of their communities, establishing communication with other cities

so enabling the exchange of messages given to them, or putting their radios at the disposal of an authority. Also, the exchange of welfare messages can be such a relief to anxious relatives.

Today, in our modern age of High Technology Telecommunication, which we take for granted to work, it is therefore imperative, that we have Emergency back-up communication.

To state an example of the relief work done by Radio Amateurs, was after Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, when a thousand Amateurs came to the Gulf Coast in an effort to provide emergency communications assistance. Subsequent Congressional hearings in the United States highlighted the Amateur Radio response as one of the few examples of what went right in the disaster relief effort.

Help of Amateurs in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Japan during Tsunamis- and the Fires in Australia, are other examples. In fact, on all Continents Radio Amateurs have always made valuable contributions in Emergency communication, most recently in Italy.

It is interesting to note, that many of the relief messages were relayed by Amateurs also on Shortwave in the 80, 40 and 20 meter Bands. Shortwave radio communication is a specialty of Amateurs and has to be used to overcome large distances of hundreds of Miles, since the range of VHF and UHF communication is limited and more so when the radio repeaters are also no longer working.

Radio Amateurs will always be able to provide communication with their mobile and fixed Radio Stations, if necessary independent from the Electrical Mains supply but working on batteries, recharged with small generators.

But today, it is no longer so simple just to communicate by voice or even telegraphy, since the amount of data to be transmitted has become much larger. Also, the organization of communication channels has to be adapted to existing circumstances. What new possibilities we have today to transmit large amounts of data in the Amateur Radio Service, you shall hear today in the next hours from our speakers with their presentations.

Also, we shall hear how experienced Operators meet the challenges of large amounts of data to be transmitted.

I come to the End

We are here at the 12th yearly Global Amateur Radio Emergency Communication Conference for the exchange of Information, Coordination, Implementations and Practical Demonstrations. Let us share our knowledge and also learn from others.

The input of your ideas and experiences are surely very important to us all. The way forward needs endurance and continuity; and thinks Global but act also locally.

Amateur Radio is not just a scientific Hobby, but assists and contributes also to relief in case of need.

I wish you all a fruitful conference.

Thank you