

SUMMARY REPORT of the Ninth

GLOBAL AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

CONFERENCE (GAREC-2013),

Zurich, Switzerland , 26 -27 June 2013

The ninth Global Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Conference,

GAREC-2013, took place in Zurich, Switzerland hosted by the Union Schweizerischer Kurzwellen-Amateure and was attended by 45 delegates from 14 countries. The theme of the conference was 'Do we need emergency communications in the 'first world"'.

Presentations were received on;

- The effects of a loss of electrical power on a countries infrastructure and how amateur radio could provide support.
- The role of the International Telecommunications Union in promoting emergency communications.
- The structure of amateur radio emergency communications groups in India and Italy.
- Three different methods of providing digital communications structures for emergency email and file transfer.
- In an open session the conference also considered the problems of convincing both the amateur radio community and our regulators of the value of emergency communications activities. While solutions may not be easy to find, sharing the problems and allowing individual countries to recognize that they were not alone provides valuable support to the Global community.

A directed exercise was also held where the delegates were asked to work together as one team, providing emergency communications for a fictional country and event. This encouraged the delegates to consider what their ideal network and license conditions would look like as well as enhance the inter-personal relationships between the delegates helping them to work together more efficiently in future.

Certain themes began to emerge through the activities.

- The importance of data modes and packet radio as part of the emergency communications toolbox.
- The importance of practicing with different modes so skills are kept up to date. This should be frequently as the best system is one you already use.
- An increased awareness of the vulnerability of infrastructure to loss of power and utilities and the possibility that we may be asked to support other groups.
- Every country has different disaster response needs reflecting their situation and there is no one way of working. But there are methods which we can adapt to our needs.
- We are all volunteers and are always learning and always seek to do the best for our communities within our means.

- There was increased understanding of the restrictions placed on Radio Amateurs in different countries in emergency response.
- Good operating practice is key to efficient emergency communications. The production of IARU training material for emergency communications is encouraged. Local training is always required to meet local government needs.

The next GAREC will be held in Huntsville, USA in August 2014 and all groups and organizations involved in amateur Radio Emergency Communications are invited to attend to share their knowledge and learn from others.

The venue for 2015 is currently planned to be Tampere, Finland.

The delegates wish to record their thanks and appreciation for the generous hospitality of USKA and our Swiss hosts for this successful conference.