Cook County ARES Net
2011/01/26
Training Segment

Organizing Radio Channels into Banks for Emergency Communications

Many hams have several radios that they may use in an emergency communications response or a public service event. Typically these radios have overlapping frequency coverage in the VHF and UHF bands. So, for example, among radios with capabilities in the VHF and UHF bands typically used for tactical emcomm responses, one might have a base station radio, a mobile radio in each vehicle, and a few HTs that they have acquired at various times in their ham radio career.

Here are a few suggestions for managing memory channel assignments and programming in your radios to maximize your readiness for emcomm response and public service.

1. Devote a few of your radios' memory locations to organize the channels you are most likely to use in emcomm responses and public service activities into "banks" according to your served agencies and the public service activities in which you participate.

   If you volunteer with several agencies that do not use identical frequency plans, devote a bank or group of memory locations to each agency. For example, the channels used by a first agency might be assigned to memory locations 10-19, and the channels used by a second agency might be assigned to memory locations 20-29.

2. I suggest including the principal channels used by each agency or event in its corresponding bank of memories, even if that requires duplicating a few channels that are used in common by some agencies or are repeated elsewhere in memory in different organizations. Although this will result in some duplication (some would say "waste") of memory locations, this is balanced by the convenience and reliability of having channels well organized and easily findable for your activity.

3. Organize the channels into the same banks (that is, locations), on all your VHF and UHF radios. That way, you will need to familiarize yourself with, and remember, only one channel plan for all your radios, minimizing confusion in high-stress responses and public service situations.

4. It is best to select lower-numbered channels for this purpose, so that the memory locations can be the same on all radios, even those that have fewer memories.

5. It is a good idea to reserve some memory locations for public service events or other impromptu or transient activities. Again, having channels well organized in a compact group makes it easy to find them during the press of the event, and using the same locations for this purpose on all of your radios makes it easier to switch radios when you need to change locations or one runs out of power.