

Spring Cleaning: Time to Refresh

1. Check your EmComm and Public Service Readiness and Training
 2. Refresh Your Go Kit and Other EmComm Equipment
-

With the arrival of spring, it's time to Refresh. EmComm and Public Service Season is around the corner. Actually, all year is EmComm season, but in the mid-west, we often find the highest demand for our EmComm services during the warmer months when severe weather causes damage and disruption.

So here are some things you should review and possibly refresh, correct, or improve:

1. Training

- (a) Severe Weather (Skywarn) Spotting and Safety. If you haven't taken a Severe Weather Spotter class within the last two years, you should take one this spring. Even if you are not interested in active storm spotting, the class gives you important information to help you remain safe when severe weather threatens. There are still several opportunities nearby, including classes in:
 - i. Naperville on March 31;
 - ii. Chicago on April 5;
 - iii. Aurora on April 11; and
 - iv. Villa Park on April 25th.
 - v. Classes are listed on the web site of the National Weather Service Chicago Forecast office at: http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lot/?n=spotter_talks
- (b) Refresh or complete other training appropriate for the agencies and groups with which you work.
 - i. Many agencies expect all volunteers to have completed specific FEMA independent study courses, including some combination of IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and IS-800. FEMA courses are available online at no charge on the Emergency Management Institute's web site at: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>
- (c) Refresh your knowledge of your the SOPs of the agencies and organizations with which you work. If your group has a Field Operations Guide or similar manual, review it to re-familiarize yourself with the group's practices and any changes. Throw a copy in your Go Kit.

2. Refresh/Check your Go Kit and other EmComm/Public Service Equipment

Many of us have made little use of our EmComm/Public Service gear since last season. Now is a great time to blow the winter dust out of your gear to make sure it's ready for use when the time comes. If something is broken, you have time to repair or replace it. Dayton is about eight weeks away--make your shopping list now. Some things to pay particular attention to:

- (a) Batteries.

- i. Check alkaline batteries and if depleted or leaking, replace them.
 - ii. Even rechargeable batteries don't last forever. Make sure your rechargeables still hold a charge. Some battery chargers will test the battery and indicate the amount of charge that it will hold.
 - (b) Radios, Power Supplies, and Other Major Components.
 - i. Check to make sure all are working normally.
 - ii. Test transmitters for proper output.
 - iii. *Gotta have 'dem Megahurts!* Check your radios to make sure the frequencies, PL, and offsets used by your agencies and organizations are correctly programmed. Throw a copy in your Go Kit. A suggested practice for organizing your EmComm channels in your radios was presented in our January 2011 Net and the text of that presentation is available at: <http://pages.ripco.net/~ormos/ares.html#link-cooknet>
 - iv. If you have a generator, service it to ensure it will work when you need it. Change the oil and replace any filters as recommended by the manufacturer.
 - (c) Antennas (Fixed, Portable, Mobile).
 - i. Check antennas for proper operation. An antenna analyzer is a great resource. If you don't have one, someone in your group or club likely has one and can help.
 - ii. Inspect all antennas for good mechanical condition. Even if the antenna is working electrically, it may be about to fall apart.
 - iii. Inspect feed lines and all cables, especially around connectors and other points of wear.
 - (d) Accessories.
 - i. Inspect and check accessories, especially cables and connectors. Accessory microphones and headsets are subject to a lot of wear, especially around connectors.
3. Arrange your Go Kit(s) for Spring/Summer Use.
- (a) Check consumable items for expiration.
 - i. Consume any food or water and replace with fresh items.
 - ii. If you keep a spare supply of prescription meds in your Go Kit, it may also be appropriate to rotate those items into your home stock and replace with fresh.
 - (b) If you took the water out of your kit for the winter, lest it freeze, that can go back in around now. Same with sun-screen and bug spray.
 - (c) Replace or supplement cold-weather gear with gear appropriate for wet, hot, and sunny weather. Put the rain gear and hat back in.
4. Arrange your Vehicle for Spring/Summer Use.
- (a) If you usually carry chairs or other summer items, put those back in.

This list is necessarily incomplete, and of course everyone's Go Kit and EmComm gear is different. But spring is a great time to conduct this review so that you are ready for EmComm and public service events that will be coming up soon.