



Alabama Hospitals To Receive New Amateur Radio Communications Equipment!

One Hundred and Eight Hospitals across the state will soon add new state-of-the art, amateur or HAM radio communications equipment to enhance emergency communications! The Alabama Hospital Association, the Alabama State Department of Public Health and Alabama representatives of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) obtained a grant for \$500,000 to add the radio equipment.

Amateur radio is a radio enthusiast hobby that has a serious public service component that provides trained and experienced radio operators to assist organizations like Emergency Management, National Weather Service, American Red Cross, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and many other organizations.

Amateur radio operations currently exist in many Emergency Operations Centers across Alabama and are Federally licensed radio operators that volunteer their time to come and operate the equipment when called. The amateur radio equipment being added contains a new digital capability called D-STAR or Digital Smart Technology for Amateur Radio. "Alabama hams have built an impressive infrastructure of this digital technology and this grant will greatly add to our emergency communications capability", according to Greg Sarratt who represents the American Radio Relay League, the National Association for Amateur Radio.

Alabama Amateur radio operators in the American Radio Relay League's, Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) program routinely support providing auxiliary, backup and redundant communications to Emergency Management and other agencies. This communications capability is essential when the normal capabilities are not functional due to damage or overloading during bad weather, tornadoes, power outages and many other emergencies.

Hams are working with the Department of Public Health Center for Emergency Preparedness that coordinates Alabama's health, medical, and social services in the event of public health threats and emergencies. This partnership includes a training program and local hospital and amateur radio operators working together. This new equipment will help all Alabama Hospitals gain emergency communications capabilities and provide additional support specifically for the volunteer workers.

Over the past year, ham radio operators provided critical communications in emergencies including the California wildfires, Oregon and Michigan storms, tornadoes and other events world-wide. During Hurricane Katrina, Amateur Radio, often called "Ham radio", was often the ONLY way people could communicate, and hundreds of volunteer "hams" traveled South to save lives and property. When trouble is brewing; amateur radio operators are often the first to provide critical information and communications.

To learn more about this project or amateur radio communications see, <http://www.adph.org/> or www.arrl-al.org