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Alabama Emergency Management Offices To Receive New Amateur Radio Communications Equipment!

Thirty Three County Emergency Management Offices across the state will soon add new state-of-the art, amateur or HAM radio communications equipment in their Emergency Operations Centers. These county Emergency Management Agencies applied for a grant to add the radio equipment from the Alabama Emergency Management Agency that worked with Alabama representatives of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) on this project.

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

Amateur radio equipment currently exists in many Emergency Operations Centers across Alabama and there are Federally licensed amateur 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.

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.

"This new equipment will help all Emergency Management agencies gain communications capabilities and provide additional support specifically for the volunteer workers", according to Fred H. Springall of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

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 amateur radio communications see, www.arrl-al.org or www.arrl.org