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I've looked closely at the FCC rules and regulations that govern Amateur Radio I find that there is no mention of having fun or seeing who can talk the furthest. There is however specific reference to Amateur Radio providing a trained pool of radio operators available in times of need. In other words our ability to communicate when the normal communications infrastructure is overloaded or unable to function is the reason we are able to get a license. That said, how do we prepare for these times of need?

1. Join and actively participate in an organization like the ARPSC. Anyone can attend the Lansing Area-Ingham County ARPSC meetings, but to become a functioning member you must make the following commitments:
  - A. Agreeing to a felony background check
  - B. Certified completion of the following FEMA courses:
    - IS-22 Emergency Preparedness
    - IS-100 Incident Command System
    - IS-200 ICS for Single Resources
    - IS-700 National Incident Management SystemBy taking these courses you will be able to understand and work within the structure of our professional agencies and FEMA managed emergency events
  - C. Participate in 3 ARPSC related events in a 12 month period
  - D. Attend the ARPSC meetings
2. Make a commitment. Amateur Radio is a hobby and here is where we can PLAY radio. Emergency Communication however is a COMMITMENT. I realize we have family and job responsibilities that must come before Emergency Communications, but if your commitment priority to Emergency Communication is 13 or 14 places from the top you probably won't be making much of a contribution to the ARPSC.
3. Obtain the right equipment and learn how to operate it. You don't have to own every possible kind of fancy radio to be useful in Emergency Communications, but at least an HT or a mobile rig is required. Portable antennas will help significantly. Make sure you know how to operate the equipment. In an emergency there may not be someone available to show you how to enter a frequency, change an offset or add a PL tone.

4. Learn how to send and receive formal message traffic. Bob, K8RDN has given us several trainings on this topic but you need to practice the training until you don't have to think about the process. A great way to practice the sending and receiving of messages is to join in the weekly message handling nets on the link system. During an emergency is not the time to ask how to verify the word count in a message.
5. Expand your training. Take additional FEMA classes. Take the ARRL Emergency Communications classes. I highly recommend the ARRL EC-001 and EC-002 courses. Take CERT training. There are countless opportunities out there, and the more you know, the better you will be prepared to serve. If you don't have happen to have a photographic memory, review the materials every year to keep the details fresh in your memory.
6. Actively participate in local events to hone your skills. Become the NET control operator for this net or provide a training session. Participate in the various public service events. Remember, practice makes perfect. Think about it, amateurs practice so that they can do it right, but professionals practice so they will never do it wrong.
7. Learn the ITU phonetics. I could have signed into this net as "Whoever Ate Quality Grease". That may be cute, but it has no place in an emergency communications net.
8. Build your Go-kit and make sure you have extra batteries and chargers for your radio equipment. An HT with a dead battery is just an expensive paperweight.

**Training assignment for this coming week:**

Take the necessary time to learn how to perform the operational basics for your HT and mobile radios.

These basics need to include:

1. Switch between Memory mode and VFO mode
2. Set a PL tone
3. Change the offset for repeater/simplex modes
4. Adjust the squelch level
5. Change the transmit power level
6. Change the battery in your HT

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Be sure to perform these operations enough times that you don't have to refer to your equipment's operator manual to perform them. If you can't figure out the processes from your manual, seek out another Amateur who can show you how to do them.