



FEMA

## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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### LESSON LEARNED

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## Emergency Operations Center Management: Integrating Amateur Radio Personnel into Operations

### SUMMARY

Emergency operations center (EOC) managers should consider providing just-in-time training on roles, responsibilities, and organizations to amateur radio operators assigned to the EOC. Managers should also consider designating a staff member to supervise amateur radio operations at the EOC.

### DESCRIPTION

The Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) sponsored and conducted the Maine Statewide Communication Functional Exercise (FE) in conjunction with 14 county EOCs on October 29 and 30, 2009. Participants included state and county EOC personnel, the American Red Cross, and the Maine National Guard. MEMA conducted the FE to test its state and county EOC communications capabilities after a statewide power outage. The primary objective of the FE was to demonstrate EOC continuity of operations, including maintaining communications, after losing power and Internet service. The FE scenario was based upon a major ice storm in 1998 that caused blackouts throughout the state.

Maine's state and county emergency management agencies utilize amateur radio operators as a critical component of the state's emergency communications network. During a statewide EOC activation, MEMA staff members monitor radio traffic at the state EOC, while amateur radio personnel monitor statewide radio traffic at county EOCs. During the FE, Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) personnel and other amateur radio operators deployed to county EOCs encountered several challenges integrating into EOC operations. For example, RACES personnel who deployed to the York county EOC lacked adequate training to operate within an EOC. As a result, some of these radio operators did not fully understand the EOC organization and plans, which caused confusion and delays in EOC operations. In addition, amateur radio operators who deployed to the Oxford County EOC did not relay all the information they received while monitoring radio traffic to EOC personnel. Amateur radio personnel made decisions and filled deployment requests, mostly regarding amateur radio equipment and personnel, without consulting EOC managers.

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) and Amateur Radio Emergency Service are the two primary amateur radio operator organizations that provide tactical emergency support radio communications to federal, state and local governments in time of emergency.

The after-action report (AAR) recommends that the York County EOC develop just-in-time training on EOC operations for amateur radio personnel. The AAR also recommends that the Oxford County EOC designate a staff member to supervise amateur radio operations at the EOC. These recommendations can help ensure that amateur radio personnel deployed to an EOC can operate more efficiently and effectively.

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#### **CITATION**

Maine Emergency Management Agency. *Maine Statewide Functional Exercise After-Action Report*. 01 Apr 2010.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=43216>

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