

Butte Fire After Action Report

Daniel L. Edwards
KJ6WYW
Amador County ARES EC

The following is the final after action report for the Amador County ARES support of the Red Cross Shelter set up for the Butte Fire. Radio communications were maintained for 102 hours beginning at midnight Wednesday Sept 9, 2015 until 6:00 AM Monday morning Sept 14, 2015 An FSD 157 for this event is included with this report.

Although we were not technically challenged due to the high quality of the facilities at the shelter, we did have an excellent opportunity to exercise our ability to deploy on short notice. The following bullets are a brief chronological summary of our activities.

- Within 40 minutes of being activated by the Red Cross Shelter Manager, Paul Keaton, on Sept 9, 2015, we had three people at the shelter, located at the Jackson Rancheria Conference center. They immediately set up a go-box and two-meter antenna. Rancheria Staff members were there as soon as we arrived and set up tables and chairs for us. They provided extension cords to provide power from one of the light poles in the parking lot and then erected a pop-up over the table.
- We established a communication network using the K6ARC repeater, 146.835 - offset 100 PL. As soon as Net Control was announced, we began receiving check-ins from Amador ARES members who had been monitoring the repeater. Within two hours, I was able to establish a Net Control roster for the first 24 hours without having to initiate the Amador ARES Call Tree. We set up four-hour shifts for the first eight hours so that people would not become too fatigued. Each shift consisted of two persons. One person manned Net Control and the second provided liaison with the shelter personnel. Handy talkies on 146.550 were used for communication between these individuals. We also monitored the San Andreas repeater on 147.195 with a positive offset and 100 PL. By 0400, we set up a second go-box and antenna to monitor a Cal Fire channel.
- At 0800 on Thursday Sept 10, 2015, we went to a six-hour shift. At 1400, we set up a communications trailer with a third mobile unit. The trailer also provided additional power and a charging station for both USB, 110VAC and 12VDC devices.
- By Friday Sept 11, 2015, I had established a roster through 1800, Sunday Sept 13, 2015. Four members from Yolo County ARES volunteered to support the event on Friday and Saturday. Lucile King W6KJX, Greg Kruckewitt KG6SJT, Bill Gustavson K6BIL, and Rick Littlefield N6KLB provided great support Four members of Sacramento ARES John Staples, Jeffery Lamb, George Carrington, Eric Guenzler volunteered to take Net Control from 0600 to 1800 Sunday. This additional support was greatly appreciated and nicely complimented the Amador ARES Team
- At 0400 on Sept 12, 2015, I met with the Shelter Manager to discuss our continued support. We agreed that there was only minimal traffic and that due to the reliable availability of landlines, cell phone, and internet service in the shelter, our services were no longer needed. We decided to suspend our support at 0600 on Monday Sept, 14, 2015. We made this decision to continue on for another two days because the fire was still not under control and there was still a chance that it might shift and force closure of the shelter. By Sunday evening containment had increased to 20% and we felt comfortable in our decision to suspend operation as planned.
- At 0600 on Sept 14, 2015 we suspended Net Control operations.

As I stated above, we were not technically challenged by this event. No official messages were sent or received but we did disseminate status updates on the location and movement of the fire, the closure of roads and the areas being evacuated. This proved to be quite valuable due to the lack of coordinated information from the various agencies. ARES members not on duty and other amateur radio operators searched the internet and provided us with information that we were able to coordinate and provide to those monitoring the repeater.

Due to our prominent location in the parking lot, we found ourselves becoming the first point of contact for those coming to the shelter. Both those seeking support and those dropping off donations would come to our pop-up to check

in. We greeted each one in a friendly and supportive manor and directed them inside to the Shelter Red Cross staff. Although this was not a serious issue for us due to the lack of message traffic, we felt that it was an issue that we should address. Part of the focus on our location was due to the fact that our tent was a Red Cross pop-up and people naturally assumed that we were Red Cross members. We got the Rancheria Staff to swap our pop-up with one from the Rancheria and this reduced the requests.

To insure that the repeater was kept clear for network traffic, we announced each hour that the repeater was under net control that traffic should be directed through Net Control and limited to fire-related topics. The cooperation of the people who regularly use the repeater was outstanding. I did not script this announcement and relied on the net controllers to format their own statements. In retrospect, I should have had a scripted statement prepared in advance and provided it to the net controllers. A positive outcome of this is that the repeater manager, Chuck Bland came to the same conclusion and is going to include a programmed statement that can be activated during emergency repeater use that will periodically broadcast this announcement. This will include a change in the roger tone to distinguish it from normal repeater operation. He will also include the following capability.

- a. Ability for NC to record, at will, announcement messages. There will be separate messages for the VHF and UHF repeaters.
- b. Ability to enable and disable these messages
- c. Ability to set the interval of these messages - 15, 30, or 60 minutes. Can be changed at will.

I solicited feedback from the 20 ARES team members that participated in this operation. I have compiled their responses in a list of lessons learned on the following page. I want to thank all of the ARES members that supported this emergency event and their valuable input.

Lessons Learned and comments from Participants

1. Initial Action
 - a. We missed an opportunity to activate the call tree. This would have been a real life test. Lesson learned is to not get so caught up in the initial activity that you forget to follow process.
 - b. We should have sent an email to the K6ARC club email list notifying them that the repeater was being used for the event. I will add that to the check list.
2. Area Set Up. We need to establish our presence at the shelter. These are some of the things we should do
 - a. Signage indicating who we are and what we are doing
 - b. Traffic cones or similar to maintain separation from public
 - c. "Visiting Area" away from operator on duty
 - d. Information board posted for public view with information that we currently have and directions for interacting with
3. Provide and maintain an "Incident Binder" with standard forms for:
 - a. Primary Mission Statement and any Secondary Mission Statements
 - b. List of primary and alternate frequencies
 - c. Contact information for served agencies with names and responsibilities of key people
 - i. EOC
 - ii. Sherriff
 - iii. Cal Fire
 - iv. Red Cross
 - d. A list of Official Sources for incident information and numbers that the public can use for incident information
 - e. A pad of ICS 213 Messages forms
 - f. A Pad of standard log sheets
 - g. Net Control Roster with Contact numbers, call sign for person coordinating deployment and all those participating
 - h. Operation Manuals for all radios on site
4. General information should be broadcast every 30 minutes when traffic permits
 - a. Road closures
 - b. Evacuation areas.
 - c. Information on Power Outages
 - d. Acres involved
 - e. Percent containment
 - f. Phone numbers and URLs for information
5. Breathing Masks should be part of every go bag. Although the shelter provided masks for Net Controllers, we should not rely on them to supply us.



PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY REPORT

About This Form

Amateur Radio donates thousands of person hours of supplementary public service communications in civil emergencies, official drills and events such as parades and marathons each year. Such events show Amateur Radio in its best light, and it is critically important that ARRL bring documentation of this public service work to the attention of the Congress, the FCC and other public officials. Your information below is an important addition to the record. Please complete and return this form to the Public Service Branch at ARRL Headquarters. Thank you.

1. Nature of activity (Check one).

Communications Emergency. Amateurs supplied communications required to replace or supplement normal communications means.

Alert. Amateurs were deployed for emergency communications, but emergency situation did not develop.

Special exercise. Amateurs supplied communications for a parade, race, etc. *Test or drill.* A training activity in which amateurs participated.

2. Brief description of activity: Emergency Communications for the Red Cross Shelter in Amador County during the Butte Fire _____

3. Places or areas involved: The Shelter at the Jackson Rancheria Conference room

4. Number of amateurs participating: 20

5. Event start date/time: 23:30 Sept 8, 2015 6. Event end date/time: 06:30 Sept 14, 2015

7. Duration of event (hours):102 hours 8. Total person-hours:268.8

9. Number of repeaters used: _____ 1

10. Estimated person-power cost: \$5107.20 _____ (person-hours times \$19/hr)

11. Estimated cost of equipment used \$5900.00 _____ (hand-helds, repeaters, etc.)

12. Total estimated cost of service: \$11,007.20 _____ (add amounts from lines 10 and 11)

13. Nets and/or frequencies used (including repeater call signs):

One net was staffed on the K6ARC Repeater 146.835 one Net monitored San Andreas Shelter 147.195
FSD-157 (1/04)

FSD-157 (1/04)

14. Number of messages handled:

No official messages were sent or received

15. Names of agencies receiving communications support:
American Red Cross.

16. Please list call signs of amateurs who were major participants:
WA6WIY, KC6SGT, KJ6WYW, KK6CZG, AF5CN, KG6BZT, K6BIL, AG6EL,
KJ6WYY, W6KJX, KK6CZJ, KG6SJT, KE6FF, N6KLB, WA6HCL, KJ6HRO, KJ6BUV,
KI6ZWW, KK6VGQ, N6XD,

17. Other comments:

Please attach photos of amateurs in action, newspaper clippings or other data.

Name of Amateur Radio organization providing service: Amador ARES, ACARC

Location of organization: City or town: Pioneer _____ State: CA

Your name: Daniel Edwards _____ Call sign: KJ6WYW

Address: 27343 Dew Drop Rd

ARRL appointment, if any: Amador County EC e-mail address: amadoraresec@gmail.com

Telephone: 209 – 295 – 4744
(Home)

408-398-9625
(Cell)

I attest that the information provided above is complete and true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____

Date 9/14/2015 _____