

Emergency Communication Lessons Learned From Hurricane Helene

Video

Video Summary

- Dan started using a repeater to deliver personal welfare messages to loved ones.
- The repeater he used was at a hardened government site up a mountain and transmitted at 20W with only 5W reaching the antenna, but it had a huge footprint and lots of backup power.
- Dan didn't have much training, but checking to nets and participating in field days is good practice for emergency situations.
- After two days, they still had no help from the outside so the messages turned to requests for supplies.
- While people were telling Dan what they needed, EOCs were listening and coordinating air drops with local pilots.
- The community was pretty self-reliant, but the lack of communication by the general public meant that many rumours started. Thomas started distributing HTs locked to an simplex frequency to unlicensed neighbours.
- Dan mentioned that many unlicensed people checked in on the repeater to request supplies, which is allowed during an emergency.
- But there were also some crackpots that had to be turned away.
- Interest in ham radio has increased in the area and classes are full now.
- Advise from Dan and Thomas:
 - Know how to field program your radio by hand.
 - All HF antennas went down, so 2m was the only available band.
 - A good home station radio that can receive two frequencies at the same time is very useful to monitor the main repeater and a local simplex frequency.
 - Having multiple rugged HTs (like the FT-60R) with a long rubber-duck antenna (not the short stock one), is better than having on very expensive HT. But the Baofeng radios are not good enough.
 - Test the range between your home station and an HT on simplex to have an idea of the coverage. This is useful if you have someone in the home coordinating, and you need to leave with an HT.

- Have USB-C charging for HTs
- Starlink was very useful to get internet and phone back.
- Have WiFi calling setup on your cellphone because without SMS, you can't do 2 factor authentication for a lot of websites.