

Ham Radio Operators Unite to Save Lives in Delaware

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All over the world there are radio stations run by a single person, mostly for fun. Now authorities in lower Delaware are organizing some of those stations to save lives.

The new Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service group, launched last year, will use ham radio operators both in the field and in the county's new Emergency Operations Center to relay on-the-ground reports of weather conditions and other emergency situations back to emergency managers.



Ham radio operators are uniting in Delaware to build an emergency network.

"Amateur radio operators are licensed by the FCC for the privilege of basically playing with radios as a hobby but then it can also be a public service," said John Ferguson.

At station "KP3FW," John Ferguson is a master of "ham," or amateur, radio. For you young folks, that's a worldwide network of people like John sitting in dens, attics and basements broadcasting on unloved frequencies as a much loved pastime. Sort of a pre-"chat room."

Ferguson is heading up the RACES program and wants to get 16 hams trained to staff the emergency center 24/7 during critical situations: from traffic tie-ups to terrorism.

"The 800 megahertz radios that our emergency services uses or even cell phone service could be interrupted at times," said Joe Thomas, the Director of the county's Emergency Operations Center. "[The radios] can be our last resort. They are our backups when we have difficulties."

So when all else fails, Ferguson and friends are hear come hell or hailstorm.

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