

14 January 2015

Conclusion of the CRARS Emergency Response Project.

1. An Emergency Communications Booklet was produced in 2013 and updated in 2014. This listed the hams contact details for CRARS and the Quadra Island group who indicated that they were willing to serve as communications volunteers in emergencies. It also contained :

- Guidelines for running emergency nets.
- Frequencies of repeaters and nets
- Emergency location descriptions
- Equipment and instructions for use

Strathcona Emergency Program contacts in Campbell River and Strathcona RD communities. This was distributed to the listed hams and to the EPC.

2. A survey was produced which polled the CRARS members to determine which emergency preparedness activities they would participate in. The survey gave valuable insight into the demographics of CRARS which was summarized in the first Annual Emergency Communications Report Dec. 2014. It was found that about 25% of the members were likely to participate in emergency preparedness activities. This was for various reasons among which were:

- Residence in other communities:
- Age or health reasons.
- Having a primary commitment to another emergency response agency
- Disinterest in being part of an emergency volunteer organization.

3. Four categories of ham emergency service were identified to be able to better list the capabilities and commitments of each ham. This has been posted in the Larwood radio room together with a tabular list of hams with their preferred categories listed. Individual members can change their preferred categories as their circumstances change.

4. Recruitment of new members to CRARS was poor for a number of years and only recently has the potential value of ham radio been recognized by emergency response agencies. In response to a request from the Vancouver Island Health Authority a basic course was run in 2013 primarily to train associates of the Health Authority. 12 were qualified of whom four joined CRARS. One of those is still an active member. A second course was run in 2014 also graduating 12 new hams, many of whom were associated with emergency response agencies in the Comox Valley. For both courses the proportion of those graduating was about 60% of the enrollees.

Conclusion:

The infrastructure, location, equipment and procedures are in place for an ECT but there is a lack of personnel.

Many hams are willing to help with emergency communications in an emergency but there is much difficulty in persuading them to engage in practice sessions or exercises.

The formation of an Emergency Communications Team (ECT), trained and familiar with the requirements and practices of emergency response agencies, will only be achieved by graduating emergency response volunteers as ham operators.

This goal would be promoted by identifying an emergency volunteer willing to serve as ECT leader who is skilled in training and motivating volunteers.

CRARS can best help by providing training courses and maintaining the infrastructure.