



Amateur Radio Operators are Houston TranStar's Safety Net

Certified volunteers offer last resort for communications

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HOUSTON (Sept. 14, 2007) – If a natural or manmade disaster causes regional telephone networks to fail, Houston TranStar relies on its communications aces -- amateur radio emergency service (ARES) operators -- to continue its emergency communications with the outside world.

This dedicated group of nationally certified volunteers takes its place at Houston TranStar alongside law enforcement, first responders and emergency management personnel. In a disaster, amateur radio operators could become the lifeline for continued communications at Houston TranStar.

ARES operators work with the more than 150 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in Harris County to better protect themselves, their families and their communities during major incidents by developing an effective communications network. ARES and CERT groups take their direction from the first responder and emergency management community. This coordination makes Harris County among the best prepared counties in the nation during emergencies.

WHAT: Amateur Radio Awareness Day
WHEN: 1 – 2 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 15, 2007
WHERE: Houston TranStar
6922 Old Katy Road
Houston, TX 77024

Interviews with amateur radio operators and a tour of their area at Houston TranStar are available.

To recognize this invaluable core of volunteers, Houston TranStar honors these unselfish heroes on Saturday, Sept. 15, during National Amateur Radio Operators Day.

Amateur radio operators have been using their wireless form of communication since the early 1900s. Wireless messages can span the globe, using ten basic "bands" (groups of radio frequencies) ranging from High Frequency (HF) between 1800 and 29,700 kilohertz to Super High Frequency (SHF) bands.

“If all other communications fail, we keep Houston TranStar connected with the public and other agencies,” said Alan Issachsen, volunteer amateur radio operator. “That’s a huge responsibility that all amateur radio operators take very seriously.”

Houston TranStar relies so heavily on these volunteers that permanent space is provided for them in the Emergency Operations Center. During emergencies such as hurricanes, evacuations, major sheltering events or communication system outages, these operators are a vital resource to bridge the communications gap between government and private agencies, as well as the public.

Houston TranStar is a collaboration between four government agencies that coordinate and enhance transportation and emergency management services, responding to incidents and emergencies in Harris County and beyond. Sharing their resources to serve area residents, the agencies are the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro) and the City of Houston.