

Neighborhood Radios Keep Us in Touch

By Dawn Mackey, Bonny Doon CERT

As odd as it may seem, not everyone finds radio use fun and interesting. Almost everyone does recognize the importance of emergency communication. Recently more and more people are finding that the cell phones and land lines they rely on do not always work in an emergency or disaster. This is particularly the case in areas where cell service is not directly available anyway and people rely on technology to create their connectivity. When the power and internet go out, what can they do?

Ham operators, in conjunction with their neighbors, have been creating neighborhood communications groups. In Bonny Doon twenty- one neighborhoods have organized so that the neighbors can communicate with each other in emergencies. Everyone must be on the same frequency to talk to each other. This is achieved by having everyone purchase the same Btech V1 MURS radio. This radio is inexpensive, requires no license and is extremely easy to use. This is also the radio that CERT uses, and the radios are programmed with CERT channels. Community organizers help neighbors acquire and learn to use the radios and schedule practices. Ham operators (who may also be the organizer) can tie together the neighborhoods and relay emergency information to the appropriate agency.

In the process of organizing, a number of inactive hams became interested again and several people found that radios are a great hobby and went on to get their amateur license to support their neighborhood. There is at least one ham operator for all but two Bonny Doon neighborhoods.

Most people still don't think that radios are fun. Participation in exercises and practices can be very low. When the power goes out or the road is blocked and the water is rising and the phones don't work, the radio gives people emergency communication and security, and everyone appreciates the capability.

If you would like to organize a MURS radio communication group in your neighborhood, just check with your neighbors to find out if others are interested. If your neighborhood is interested in becoming a Fire Safe neighborhood, radio communications are part of the planning. You can contact your CERT team leader

who can direct you to the right people to help you and your neighbors purchase MURS radios, have them programmed and assist you with practice and exercise ideas.

For a lot of information about Bonny Doon Neighborhood Communications, go to bonnydoonradio.org. Check out the fly over, it is amazing!

Editor's note: If interested in purchasing a radio, the CERT Auxiliary has radios for sale at a discounted cost. Currently, the price is \$60. If interested, please email [CERTauxiliary\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:CERTauxiliary@gmail.com).