



CITY OF SAUSALITO

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PROGRAM

“Preparing and Protecting our Community”

Emergency Communications Equipment

Temporary communications disruptions in cities are more common than you might think. They may result from power outages, fires, or other frequently encountered urban technological problems. But when a major disaster strikes, the damaged communication lines may require days to be repaired and regular service restored. During emergencies your cellular phone service may also be disrupted.

Prepare yourself and your family for a communications breakdown by discussing the possibility in advance and make a plan of action in case you are separated when the communications breakdown occurs. Make sure that your family has access to all the emergency phone numbers that your family has deemed necessary in your disaster plan.

Two-Way Radios

The only way to effectively communicate over long distance during communication system failures is by two-way radio transmitters. The best types to own for emergency use are walkie-talkies, as they are easy to use and portable. There are many different types available today/. The most practical ones for citizens are:

- **General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) Radios-** These have an operating range from five (5) to twenty-five (25) miles. The GMRS service was created by the Federal Communications Commission to provide families with a reliable form of short distance communications that can be used during outings. The operate GRMS units; you need to file for an FCC license.
- **Family Radio Service (FRS) Radios-** FRS band radios have become quite popular over the past few years. They are an inexpensive way to keep in touch with family members or friends over short distances. The range for the FRS radios are approximately four (4) city blocks or one (1) to three (3) miles in an open rural area. They are especially useful during emergencies when you need to keep in touch around large crowds and confusion. You don’t need a license for FRS radios, but the FCC does have a strict set of rules regarding their use. An example of the FCC rules is that no profanities are to be used on the radio and strict prohibitions regarding modifying your radio or monitoring other peoples transmissions.
- **Hand-held Units-** Hand-held radios are able to communicate over long distances. The radio-to-radio range of a small five watt output hand-held radio can very depending on sun spot activity and your location. Hand-held ham units can also bounce signals off radio signal regenerators called “repeaters” that can significantly extend their operational range. To own and operate a ham radio, you must first get a basic FCC “no code” technician class license. “No-code” means that you will not have to learn Morse code to use the system. You will also need to take a relatively simple thirty-five (35) question



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multiple choice test. If you pass the test, your class of license will allow you to access different ham frequencies above 30 megahertz (MHz).

High quality GMRS and FRS radios range in price from \$50-\$150 per pair and are made by several vendors. Extra performance comes with a price. Hand held radios are costlier than GMRS and FRS counterparts. If you want an extra edge in an emergency and are willing to learn how to use them properly they are worth the extra money.

- **Radio Scanners-** Another valuable and relatively affordable communications tool is a radio scanner. Once programmed by the user, this device will automatically scan over and lock onto different radio frequencies used by fire, police, and in some cases even the military. Having the ability to listen in on these organizations transmissions can provide you with important information that may help you during a crisis or disaster. Many different vendors make scanners; you will need to research what scanner will work best for you. Once you obtain a scanner you will need to obtain and read some reference material to teach you the ins and outs about the proper use of scanners and different active frequencies.