

Comms Planning for Actions Large & Small

by Lefty Radio League

Planning is crucial. Consider:

- The skill level of users,
- The distance and terrain you will cover,
- Scoping out the location(s) first and trying different kinds of radio there,
- Checking the amount of radio traffic on different bands, frequencies and channels before your event.
 - This can include contacting local radio clubs, as they will likely know more about how different parts of the radio spectrum are used.
- And your own capacity to program your radios. Speaking of which...

Programming can be crucial, too:

- It's easier for users to go to "channel 2" than to "146.210MHz".
- Programming repeater info into radios (including GMRS) is just as important.
- Make sure you have the hardware and software needed – different radios require different cables and software.

Train users, even if it's just making sure they know where the PTT button is.

- Users need at least minimal onboarding / training.
- Laminated cards are a great way for users to keep track of the channels they're meant to use.

Have alternative means of communication.

- Text messages are a great complement to radio, in terms of privacy and security as well as using different infrastructure. (cell towers, mesh networks or satellites)
- But test your text messaging first, because different service providers provide different levels of reliability.

Security is always a consideration. Consider your adversaries:

- Random construction workers who want to use the channels you're on.
- Bitter Hams who police every frequency all day long,
- Private security or cops who want to eavesdrop or track you down, and/or
- Trolls or counterprotestors who want to sabotage your work.

Implement some basic security best practices:

- Ensure there's an alternative way for organizers to communicate besides radio.
- Consider communicating at the lowest power necessary, rather than the maximum power possible.
 - Note: You're always supposed to do this with Ham radio.
- Develop a plan ahead of time to change channels or frequencies when needed – and communicate it in a simple way to users when they get their radios.