

## **Radio hams celebrate 75 years of volunteer emergency service**

Newington, CT Sept. 9, 2010 --The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES) is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This program of the ARRL – the national association for Amateur Radio – provides the “ham radio” emergency communications for agencies such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, countless Emergency Operations Centers, National Weather Service and other organizations. Each year their specially trained radio communications volunteers give thousands of hours of community services for free in the worst of times.

According to Allen Pitts of the ARRL, “The fastest way to turn an emergency into a total disaster is to lose communications. In events from ice storms in New England to Hurricane Katrina and Haiti, when normal communications systems were down or overloaded, the Amateur Radio operators of the ARES programs filled requests for emergency help.”

Over the years the equipment has changed with technology, but their mission remains. The modern communications networks that today’s ARES quickly creates - *without the need for other infrastructure* - remain critical in emergency planning. In the first hours of a major event, Amateur Radio is often *the* primary source of information on the situation and reactions needed to save lives. When the Internet and phones go out, they call on the hams.

The first mention of an organized Amateur Radio emergency response organization appears in the September 1935 issue of *QST* Magazine. Some of the major responses needing ARES radio operators in recent years include: Earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Ike, Hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita, Northeast Blackout of 2003, Shuttle Columbia Recovery Effort, and the World Trade Center, Pentagon and Western Pennsylvania Terrorist Attacks of 2001. Even today, ARES teams are now aiding in the rugged forest fire areas near Boulder, Colorado.

## **75 and Still Growing**

Like other modern wireless technologies, Amateur Radio has come a long way from its beginnings. There are now over 690,000 FCC licensed Amateur Radio operators in the US. With more people involved than ever before, today's radio amateurs are expanding their voice and digital networks, using satellites and TV, developing hybrid applications of radio-internet and GPS location systems, long-range WiFi types of systems and more. Says Pitts, "Hams are the consummate DO-ers, not just USE-ers of technology."

To learn more about ARES and Amateur Radio, go to <http://www.arrl.org/ares-anniversary> .

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