

Ham Operators to Assist with Wistaria Festival Logistics

The Sierra Madre Emergency Communications Team (SMECT) will be on hand at the Wistaria Festival, helping to keep operations running smoothly. SMECT is a group of approximately a dozen local FCC licensed Amateur Radio (Ham) Operators. They also help provide communications - as extra "eyes and ears", for the Mount Wilson Trail Race, the 4th of July Parade, and the Halloween festivities on East Alegria every year. In addition, they support the Sierra Madre Chamber of Commerce during the Wistaria Festival by providing communications between the Chamber and the Vine and coordinating the busses and crowd control.

In addition to the very necessary but somewhat mundane tasks of helping with the logistics of the aforementioned events, SMECT provides an invaluable service to the residents of Sierra Madre during emergencies. They are on-call for the Sierra Madre Police and Fire Departments and have helped the city during the fires in the hills to the north of Sierra Madre and mud slides following those fires.

The SMECT Mission: To provide supplemental communications for the City of Sierra Madre

The Sierra Madre Emergency Communication Team was established and authorized by the Sierra Madre Emergency Communication Team Charter presented to the Sierra Madre City Council, at the May 2000, meeting. SMECT is assigned by the SM Disaster Plan to support the SMPD. Therefore SMECT activation will be initiated by the Sierra Madre Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Their service as "personnel locators" and "portable communicators" make these amateur radio operators extremely valuable during a disaster. To quote the FCC's Riley Hollingsworth, Amateur Radio is "the only truly fail-safe communications service on the planet Earth"

As communicators, they are flexible and creative enough to respond to the unique circumstances of each emergency. Except for one City owned radio that will be in the new EOC, all equipment is owned and maintained by SMECT members.

There are a number of possible emergencies that may require the Sierra Madre Emergency Communications Team support such as:

- Earthquake
- Major Fire
- Wide Spread Power Outage
- City Communication Equipment Failure or Overload
- Major Windstorm and/or Flooding
- Missing Person
- Civil Disturbance

But this weekend, they will be operating behind the scenes, monitoring emergency communications, shadowing the Wistaria Chair and assisting with communication between the volunteers and the Chair, and stationed at the Vine and the Shuttle pick up point. Simple things like communication between these two locations can make this event more enjoyable for all. For instance, if there is a bus waiting at the vine for people to come on board, but no one is, and at the same time the line at the pick up point has grown due to a sudden influx of people, communication between these two points by the ham operators can lead to the empty bus moving down to the pick up point for better utilization of the resource.

The logistics of transporting two to three thousand people back and forth from the vine to the festival in just a few hours can be a daunting task. But thanks to the ham operators, it doesn't have to be as daunting as it once was.