

FEMA and ARRL Sign Agreement; FEMA Administrator Calls Ham Radio “Resilient”

07/19/2014

The ARRL and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) have announced a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will enhance cooperation between the League and FEMA in the area of disaster communication. FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, KK4INZ, and ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, signed the agreement July 18 during the ARRL National Centennial Convention at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford, Connecticut.

“Radio is one of the most resilient communications technologies we have,” Fugate said. “When the power is out and telecommunications are down, the Amateur Radio community can serve as a vital resource in support of emergency responders and survivors during a disaster. This MOA will strengthen FEMA’s partnership with ARRL and build upon our work to expand emergency communications capabilities and the use of Amateur Radio in emergency management.”

The new agreement will allow FEMA and ARRL to work together to provide resources, services and personnel, as available, in order to strengthen capacity in areas of emergency communications, mass care and emergency assistance, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, while also raising public awareness about the use of Amateur Radio as a public safety resource. The pact also outlines the ways in which FEMA and ARRL will cooperate to carry out their respective responsibilities, with respect to disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery operations in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

Craigie said that from radio’s earliest days of experimentation to the present, ham radio volunteers have combined a passion for technology with a devotion to assisting agencies that respond to disasters. “This combination of inventiveness and service has saved lives for a century,” she said. “We look forward to working with FEMA to further develop opportunities for trained, equipped and prepared amateur radio operators to serve the public interest whenever and wherever disasters affect our country and its communities.”

Fugate echoed his afternoon remarks as the keynote speaker at the ARRL National Centennial Convention Banquet Friday evening. He said that before he even became FEMA administrator, it became clear to him that Amateur Radio could support ad hoc and innovative communication without relying on conventional telecommunication systems.

“The more sophisticated our systems become, the more fragile they become,” he told the gathering of some 800 dinner guests. He again emphasized the need for resiliency in communication systems, and asked, “How many public safety networks can come close to ham radio’s bandwidth?”

“The relevancy of ham radio only grows,” asserted Fugate, who just upgraded to General class. “Amateur Radio is taking that hobby and turning it into saving lives.”

After Fugate’s talk, President Craigie presented him with the ARRL Medal of Honor.

The ARRL National Centennial Convention heads into its third and final day on Saturday. The event has attracted some 3000 visitors from around the US and the world.