When all else fails…...

"When all else fails" is a powerful statement. It's hard to imagine situations in which commercial systems such as the Internet, cellular data networks, and telephones fail, but this actually happens on a surprisingly frequent basis.

In many disasters, radio amateurs provide a vital link for emergency services and community organizations. Radio amateurs are already dispersed throughout communities and their emergency networks are based on decentralized, survivable methods.

The Neighborhood Hamwatch program is designed to provide connectivity between local neighborhood associations and community relief organizations in time of emergency.

Radio amateurs provide a "gateway" between basic two-way radio technologies used by community organizations, such as GMRS, FRS, and CB radio, and the much more flexible and advanced emergency communications systems operated by volunteer radio amateurs.

Local Neighborhood Hamwatch Sponsoring Organization:

Radio Relay International
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Niles, MI. 49120-0043
(833) 377-0722
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Neighborhood Hamwatch

Providing training and communications support for neighborhood associations, community relief organizations and others…...

Common Two-Way Radio Tools

How would your neighborhood association or community relief organization communicate without cellular telephones? Many options exist, such as CB radio, GMRS and FRS radios, and the like. Many of these resources work fine for short range communications but they lack the flexibility needed to access county-wide emergency services networks or the International messaging layer provided by organizations such as Radio Relay International.

The Neighborhood Hamwatch program is designed to provide training and over-arching infrastructure to support basic messaging on behalf of community organizations "when all else fails."

FCC licensed radio amateurs can transfer important messages between your local organization and city or county emergency services. We can even transmit messages throughout North America and to selected locations overseas.
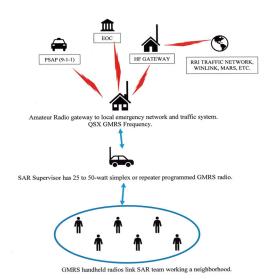
How it works.....

Let's imagine that your local search and rescue (SAR) organization is responding to a major wildfire, earthquake or hurricane. Cellular telephone systems are disrupted and other means of communications are inaccessible or overloaded. Your SAR is equipped with basic handheld and mobile two-way radios that allow communications within your team, but how would you communicate with local or county emergency services? How would you send a message to a location hundreds of miles away? Would your members be trained in communications procedures? Would they know how to format important messages to ensure they arrive intact while moving to their destination?

The answer is "Neighborhood Hamwatch." FCC licensed radio amateurs provide a "gateway" to higher-level networks with connectivity to emergency services at the local and county level. They can even transmit basic messages, called "radiograms," to locations hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

Neighborhood Hamwatch is a program of *Radio Relay International*, but it may also be sponsored by a local radio club, emergency communications organization, or the like, which will provide standardized training and structure to ensure your volunteers and community members are well prepared to efficiently communicate both internally and externally in time of emergency.

An Example Local Network

Amateur Radio gateway to local emergency network and traffic system. QSX GMRS Frequency.

SAR Supervisor has 25 to 50-watt simplex or repeater programmed GMRS radio.

GMRS handheld radios link SAR team working a neighborhood.

The diagram above shows a typical Neighborhood Hamwatch Network. It works as follows:

1. The community organization communicates *internally* using a combination of FRS and GMRS two-way radios or another basic two-way radio technology.

2. An Amateur radio gateway either at a home or in a vehicle provides *external* connectivity to county-wide, statewide, or nationwide networks as needed.

3. Both official messages and health and welfare messages for citizens can be transferred via this system, even if the volunteer is equipped with just a simple FRS walkie-talkie.