

## Because We Are a Community ...

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This month's editorial is being written in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, which packed a one-two punch on its way from the Gulf of Mexico to the North Atlantic. First, it came ashore in Louisiana and Mississippi as a Category 4 hurricane, causing over two dozen deaths and massive damage there, then dumped heavy rain across the interior of the country before picking up more moisture from the Atlantic as it approached the coast and unleashing record amounts of rain in New Jersey and New York. The resulting floods, unseen in the New York City area since Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Superstorm Sandy in 2012, were responsible for at least 43 deaths as well as millions of dollars in property damage. This editorial is also being written on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City, Washington, DC, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. And they all intertwine.

In my hometown in New Jersey, Ida dumped 10 inches of rain on us in about 5 hours, causing streams to overflow their banks, flooding streets and basements, not only in low-lying areas but also along streets that couldn't contain the massive amounts of runoff heading for overwhelmed storm drains. The bottom of my street turned into a lake that was four feet deep, prompting several people to abandon their cars and even one rescue by a neighbor who is a former firefighter. Several of us were outside in the worst of it, waking up neighbors to move their cars while they still could and warning drivers not to attempt going through the water at the bottom of the street. When someone asked about the police closing off our street, our former firefighter neighbor replied, "the police can't get here; we're on our own."

That wasn't quite true, because while "the authorities" couldn't reach us, we had each other, and working as a community, we managed to keep more cars and people from getting stranded, and prevented a disaster-in-progress from becoming a tragedy for people who might otherwise have been trapped. We had each other's backs. Afterwards, while waiting for FEMA to decide whether we were officially a disaster area, our churches and community leaders provided whatever help they could to those most badly affected. Yes, we were on our own, but we were on our own together.

The situation in New Orleans was even worse when Ida came ashore there. In his article on page 18, Roberto Dabdoub, KB5AVY, describes riding out the storm with his wife in their home near Lake Pontchartrain, and hearing a voice on his handheld, soon after the power went out, saying "the 911 system in New Orleans is down; telephone service is down." After hearing that, Roberto recounted, "we knew we were on our own." But that wasn't quite true, either, because Roberto spends much of the rest of his article talking about still being able to get on the air with his battery-operated QRP station and indoor antenna, and knowing that, if the situation got worse than it did, he could count on his fellow hams to get him help. Because we are also a community, perhaps more geographically dispersed than the neighbors on my block, but still ready to help each other when needed.

Another example: On page 28, Paul Scipione, AA2AV, tells us about an ongoing health-and-welfare net in his hometown of Canandaigua, New York, that grew out of the isolation imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Every day since March 2020, the local radio club has held a net on its 2-meter repeater, just to check in on each other, see if anyone needs anything, and to keep everyone connected. Because we are a community.

Our "CQ Classic" this month recalls the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks 20 years ago, another instance in which hams (among many others) immediately pitched in to do whatever they could to help. Because we are a community.

American culture has traditionally placed a lot of emphasis on self-reliance, on being able to take care of yourself and your immediate family in stressful times. But the truth is that we all do better when we function as a community, whether physical or virtual, taking care of each other as well as ourselves.

Helping others has been a hallmark of amateur radio since its earliest days, and it continues to be today. This issue is our annual Emergency Communications Special, in which we take the opportunity to showcase different ways in which the amateur radio community looks out for others. In addition to the articles mentioned above, our cover story (p. 20) is about the need for advance planning in emergency drills, but also the importance of being able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances since emergencies rarely go according to plan. We've got plans for downloading and decoding weather satellite data without relying on the internet, and a how-to on tracking close-in beacons from personal emergency beacons. In addition, several of our columnists cover the basics of effective amateur radio EmComm, and Emergency Communications Editor N8BHL takes a close look at the ARRL's newly-enhanced commitment to amateur radio emergency communications.

Beyond the "borders" of EmComm, we have a report from the first-ever Youth on the Air (YOTA) camp in the Americas ("Ham Radio Hogwarts," p. 8) and a follow-up (p. 56) to last month's look at the FCC's new rules regarding ham stations and RF exposure, in which RFE authority N6NB shares a computer program he wrote to actually do an exposure analysis, which he says is now easier than using the FCC's new procedures for determining whether your station is exempt.

Weather disasters are becoming worse and more frequent than in the past. We need to prepare, train, practice, and be ready. Because as a police captain in my town told me as he was retiring and stepping down as OEM Coordinator, "we're going to need you guys when all this fancy new stuff fails at the worst possible time ... and it will."

Enjoy the fall weather and remember to set aside some time on the last weekend of this month to operate in the CQ World Wide DX Contest's SSB weekend and be part of the world's largest participation sporting event!

– 73, Rich, W2VU