



Switch flipped: SP's emergency radio station officially on the air

By **Peggy Kelly**
Santa Paula News
Published: **September 22, 2006**

By Peggy Kelly

Santa Paula Times

With the flip of a switch the city's new emergency and public information radio station was officially turned on although 1610 AM has been on the air for weeks, offering information on Cruise Nite and exhibits at the Santa Paula California Oil Museum.

"This is a very significant day for Santa Paula," noted Santa Paula Interim Fire Chief Kevin Fildes.

The ceremony dedicating Ready Santa Paula 1610 AM took place outside City Hall where a faux radio studio door was complete with a red lit "On the Air" sign that activated with a little behind the scenes help per schedule.

Chief Fildes noted that Sept. 11-17 is Disaster Preparedness Week and that the city's CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) and wide public outreach efforts will help "prepare citizens of Santa Paula to be better prepared in case of an emergency. I feel that the radio station is a vital tool," in preparedness, which Santa Paula has taken the lead throughout Ventura County.

"This next step, 1610 AM, will make Santa Paula even more prepared...we thank the City Council for giving us the tools" by making disaster preparedness a priority and securing funding for the effort.

When it was time for Mayor Rick Cook and Councilwoman Mary Ann Krause to flip the switch to officially dedicate the radio station, "If it wasn't for Captain Steve Lazenby we wouldn't be here," said Cook, referring to the city's Emergency Preparedness Officer.

The radio station "Has been a dream of mine for three or four years," said Cpt. Lazenby, who had been researching such systems for years.

The system cost about \$26,000, much of the cost garnered by a grant, and Cpt. Lazenby said that even he is surprised at how many people are listening to the public service announcements and other news.

Cpt. Lazenby admitted that when speaking to motorists while handing out information on emergency preparedness he "makes sure that they tune in to 1610 AM right there..."

The radio station was utilized for its first emergency on Tuesday when a bomb threat emptied all Santa Paula Elementary School District facilities.

Chief Fildes said that the radio station was assuring listeners that all students were safe and keeping them updated on the incident.

"A maintenance worker at Bedell School drove his pickup truck to the gate of the school and turned on 1610 AM" so panicked parents who had arrived at the campus could hear the reports. "They calmed down...it helped tremendously."

Rock and roll it's not, but Cpt. Lazenby said that 1610 AM should be pre-set on everyone's radio dial: "We want people to get used to it," and listen on a regular basis for general public information so it will be second nature to tune in when an emergency arises.