

The Source

Information Radio Newsletter

October 2018

Published by Information Station Specialists (theRADIOsource.com)

Evacuation Stations Now on the Air

Gatlinburg and Sevier County Soberly Assess Options after Wildfire Devastation

GATLINBURG, TN: In October, 2016, the city of Gatlinburg had no reason to think that a ferocious fire storm planned to visit the community around Thanksgiving. But it did. The popular tourist destination found itself playing host to the most unwelcome of guests as a “hurricane of fire” approached its doorstep the evening of November 28th.

As darkness fell, safety officials began a hasty evacuation of 14,000 residents and visitors, but the inferno overwhelmed the power grid, communications and 911 systems. Water pumps burned. Fire hydrants ran dry. Gone in one evening were entire neighborhoods and more than 2,500 buildings. Due to a superhuman effort by local safety officials, loss of life was limited to 14.

This summer the City and surrounding Sevier County upgraded its warning systems to include 14 outdoor warning sirens and 3 synchronized [ALERT AM Emergency Information Radio Stations](#) that can be used to guide citizens to recommended exit routes based on future fires’ locations. Motorists will be able to hear - on vehicle radios and in real time - advisories issued by safety officials on the ground. The same messages will appear in text form on computers and portable devices. The programming is also being streamed in real time for people who don’t have ready access to a radio receiver or find themselves outside the coverage area.

According to Fire Chief Miller, the event was the Nation’s most devastating inland disaster in recent times. “These technological upgrades will help us be better prepared should it happen again.” With the climate warming more each year, many believe that it could.

Other recent wildland fire events in which information radio services played lifesaving roles include:

Idyllwild, CA – Cranston Fire, August 2018

“Our entire mountain was without power for several days, which took down many local broadcasters who lacked generators. Temperatures were 90 plus, the internet was [often] not operational ... nor were telephones fully functional,” reported Bill Tell and Roland Gaebert of Idyllwild’s Mile High Amateur Radio Club. As the Cranston fire raged, forcing evacuations, Idyllwild’s Information station WNKI578 on AM1610 remained fully operational. [See 2018 Idyllwild press release about the Cranston Fire.](#)

Montecito, CA – Thomas Fire, December 2017

You will remember that Montecito was hard struck by the largest wildfire in California’s history - the [Thomas Fire](#), which consumed 281,893 acres and, along with the subsequent landslides, led to the

largest loss of life and property in the area since the Great Santa Barbara earthquake of 1925. Recounts Jackie Jenkins, communications coordinator for the District's fire department, "When all other critical infrastructure was lost intermittently due to strong power surges, we were able to rely on the AM Information Radio Station to keep the community informed." See ["Disaster Strikes Twice; Montecito...pulls out all stops to deliver critical info to evacuating residents by radio internet stream technology,"](#) *The Source*, Jan 2018.

In the words of Mike Williams of California's San Marcos Pass Volunteer Fire Department, "How do we advise motorists while fire lines are moving, given the uncertain state of cellular communications and the underlying desire to avoid promoting distracted driving? In Santa Barbara County, we have found success using this most old-school of technologies - AM Radio."

"When it all goes down, info radio stays up."

Provider Announces 2018 IAEM Conference Theme

GRAND RAPIDS, MI: Information Station Specialists will be exhibiting at this year's IAEM "EMEX" Emergency Management Conference, which opens next Monday in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The company will be poised to discuss the utility of its products during crises that sever power and communications for extended periods.

Front and center is the firm's "ALERT AM" Emergency Advisory Radio Station, which has been a staple of emergency managers for nearly 20 years. (See [a state-by-state listing of stations.](#))

The system's claim to fame is its ability to operate for days on batteries with loss of grid power and its many levels of operational redundancy.

Information Station Specialists will also be introducing a new class of system for use by public safety agencies that has county-sized coverage potential for use during large disasters. Though High Performance Emergency Radio Systems (HiPER) are still in development, company spokespersons will be on hand (Booth 727) to discuss and consider integrating your ideas into the final product design.

IAEM Welcome!

Information Station Specialists to Exhibit at 66th Annual Conference

GRAND RAPIDS, MI: The International Association of Emergency Managers brings [their annual conference](#) to Grand Rapids, MI this year, October 19th to the 24th. Information Station Specialists' president Bill Baker is taking the opportunity to welcome attendees from around the globe to the city – one of the most livable and "visitable" destinations in the US.

"We've been blessed to be a stone's throw from Grand Rapids for the past 30 years and have seen its steady growth to become one of the nation's most interesting new places to experience. We can't wait to share our fair city with emergency managers from around the world," says Baker.that can be so instrumental in keeping the public informed before, during and after a disaster.

On display in the exhibit booth will be the [RadioSTAT Portable Advisory Radio Station](#) and [LIGHTNING LED Message Sign](#).

"If you are attending, please come by so we can meet you and give you a personal welcome," offers Baker. "It's the perfect time to ask questions about the specialized radio and signage solutions that can be so instrumental in keeping the public informed before, during and after a disaster. And we will have something special for visitors who mention this article." Baker would not divulge the nature of the surprise but assured *The Source* it's "sweet."

END