

CDF AUXILIARY TELECOMMUNICATIONS GROUPS (ATG)

8038

(No. 9 Sept. 1995)

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) operates and maintains an extensive telecommunications system for support of its mission in the protection of the State's natural resources. Most often, this system is utilized during fire prevention and wildland fire suppression activities. However, because of the system's expansive coverage through its resources, which are spread throughout the State, CDF continues to be a principal telecommunications resource for other agencies during earthquakes, floods, hazardous material spills, etc.

During severe fire weather periods and emergency incident operations, CDF emergency command centers are able to coordinate activities and resources utilizing an extensive radio communications system in the VHF frequency band. However, as emergency activities expand into extended or major attack situations, this narrow band of radio frequencies becomes overloaded and unable to adequately support the demand of prevention, incident operations and logistical support requirements.

As a means to minimize this "frequency overload" problem, CDF administrative units have established auxiliary telecommunications groups (ATG) through the Volunteer In Prevention Program (VIP). These groups utilize licensed amateur radio operators and other volunteers and equipment primarily to augment 1) fire prevention operations during severe fire weather periods, and 2) logistical support during emergency incident operations.

The following policy provides the basis for standardizing the organizational and operational procedures of A.T.G.s' within the various administrative unit levels of CDF.

PURPOSE OF ATG PROGRAM

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The ATG program is established for the purpose of augmenting the CDF telecommunications system during severe fire weather periods, major emergency incident situations and/or activation of regional or statewide multi-agency coordination operations. It seeks to efficiently fill the telecommunications gaps that occur when demands on the existing system exceed its capabilities.

ATG PROGRAM GOALS

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- Establish and maintain a group of licensed amateur radio operators and other volunteers who are available for call to assist in the telecommunications support of CDF's fire prevention and emergency incident activities.
- Acquire and maintain appropriate telecommunications equipment for use by the ATG.
- Provide voice and digital communications for support of CDF emergency command centers and incident communications plans.
- Establish voice and digital communications links with appropriate federal, state and local emergency networks and systems.
- Establish and maintain communications with CDF's Mobile Communication Centers.
- Assist in tracking fire prevention patrol and emergency incident resources.
- Establish and maintain a backup telecommunications system that can be activated subsequent to a failure of all or part of CDF's system.
- Collect and disseminate field incident intelligence information as directed during non-wildland fire emergency incidents.
- Provide alternative communication capabilities for specific command and support personnel during major emergency incident operations.
- Provide voice and digital communications support to CDF headquarters, region and unit damage assessment teams.
- Establish technical support subgroups for repair, maintenance and trouble-shooting of the ATG equipment.

ATG ORGANIZATION

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The ATGs shall exist within the Fire Protection Program of CDF through the Fire Prevention Section's Volunteers in Prevention (VIP) program. In some units the ATG organization resides within the RACES program, especially in those units that have emergency management responsibilities. Coordination with the State OES RACES should be encouraged. Technical direction will be provided by personnel from within each administrative unit's emergency operations and Fire Prevention sections. Technical

support will be provided by CDF Headquarters and the Department of General Services telecommunications personnel.

Direct supervision and coordination of the ATG shall be provided by one individual representing the administrative unit's fire protection program. It is desirable that this individual be a licensed amateur radio operator.

ATG MEMBERSHIP

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Members of the ATGs shall be registered as Volunteers in Prevention (VIP) with CDF. All requirements and benefits under the VIP program shall apply to the members of an ATG. Members who operate and maintain ATG telecommunications equipment must hold a current amateur radio operator's license.

ATG TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

8038.5

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All members of the ATGs will receive training in the following subjects within the first year of membership:

- Orientation to CDF, its programs and telecommunications systems
- Introduction to State OES/auxiliary communications
- Introduction to the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).
- Special training, as necessary, for specific assignments, such as CalMAC, expanded ECC operations, fire prevention patrols, fire line safety, etc.

ATG CALL-UP SYSTEM

8038.6

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A formal functional organization chart and procedural description shall exist describing the ATG process for operational notification and assignments.

ATG MEETINGS**8038.7****(No. 9 Sept. 1995)**

Meetings of ATG members will be held under the direction of CDF personnel for the purpose of conducting business and/or training. Meeting schedules will be based on the needs of the individual administrative units.

COM-312: RADIO VAULT SPACE CHARGES, ATG**8038.8****(No. 9 Sept. 1995)**

Auxiliary Telecommunications groups (ATG) who request and are granted permission to install radio equipment in CDF vaults will make application by using the COM-312 form. A standard lease will be issued to the ATG user after processing through proper channels.

CDF cannot waive fees for vault floor space (\$100 per year/per space) or antenna space (\$50 per year for 1 or 2 antennas). The \$150 is paid by CDF to the Department of General Services. If General Services receives the lease fees, they do not charge for lease preparation. CDF can, therefore, waive the administrative fee for lease preparation.

However, when CDF receives benefits from the ATG user which are greater than the annual fees required (\$300 per year for commercial/standby power and road maintenance) CDF can waive the fees that are to be received by CDF. Each unit benefiting from ATG use can submit written justification for each requested site lease. Units must submit justification supporting any amateur radio group utilizing CDF vault and tower space in order to have the administrative fees waived. Justifications should equate monetary value versus person hours. A sample justification for ATG user is included at the end of this section.

CDF HQ Telecommunications will, where complete justification is received, fund the \$150 per year per site for each ATG user group that has a current COM-312, justification, and lease on file. Auxiliary Telecommunications Groups that do not receive a justification from a CDF unit will have to pay the current rate for vault and tower occupancy once approved through the agreement process.

This process will satisfy the requirements of CDF Technical Services, Real Property Management Unit, Department of General Services, and the State Administrative Manual (SAM).

SAMPLE JUSTIFICATION FOR ATG USER

"This is to justify the need for new or existing communications equipment located at Fowler Peak Lookout, located approximately four miles southwest of the city of Angels Camp. The equipment at this site is in the amateur radio service, and was placed at this site to provide communications for the Volunteers in Prevention which works in conjunction with the State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF).

The equipment involved is two repeaters which are in the 144 MHz and 224 MHz amateur bands. These repeaters are somewhat unique in that they both use computer controls, thus allowing remote changes in configurations. They can be tied together or separated, depending on need. Both repeaters have served for the past five years.

INCIDENTS

Complex Fire: Used for liaison between CDF region office and use to this fire. Savings for the state of California: Approximately \$100,000.

Railroad Flat Fire: Again used for liaison between CDF region office and the field command post. Through the repeater equipment that exists, the State Police were aided in capturing the arsonist who set the fires. Savings for the State of California: Approximately \$50,000.

Arock Fire: This fire was administered by the U.S. Park Service, Yosemite National Park. The repeater system was used with the Public Information Officers at this fire complex. The system was used to supply communications for the safety of news media people and covered the fire area right down to the valley floor. Savings to the state unknown. Savings to U.S. Government: approximately \$30,000.

Delta Floods: The repeater system was used in conjunction with the San Joaquin County R.A.C.E.S. organization to cover the levees on the delta. The system also provided communications for the field command post. Savings to the state unknown. Savings to the county: approximately \$10,000.

Minden Fire: Through our inter-tie with Reno, Nevada, we were able to supply some communications for this fire. The efforts started very late into the fire and little was accomplished in regard to the fire; however, we did prove that through our inter-tie with the Reno area we can provide fair communications to the eastern side of the Sierras in Region IV.

Total savings for the State of California: approximately \$100,000 for the past five years.

Many other situations involving emergency assistance have taken place through the system. About one auto accident a week is reported through this repeater system. Because phone lines are connected to the repeaters, operators can directly place calls through 911 using the autodialer. The repeater system is also connected via a radio link to

the Livermore area. Through this link we can provide a remote telephone for the National Labs in Livermore. The repeater system has provided many public events with reliable communications throughout the coverage area. The repeater has its own emergency power. Without access to the site, we can provide approximately three days of operation. Please note that with all amateur radio operations we cannot charge a fee for our services. All work is done through voluntary help. Our group has done a yearly cleanup of the Fowler Peak Lookout property and has included cleaning the radio vault area and picking up around the grounds, as well as painting and weather sealing.

FORMS AND/OR FORMS SAMPLES: RETURN TO ISSUANCE HOME PAGE FOR FORMS/FORMS SAMPLES SITE LINK.

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