



# **K5NMB**

# **Command and Communications Deployment Manual**

“OR...Now that I am going...what’s next?”

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## **Introduction:**

Disasters, by definition, create human suffering. They may devastate entire states or regions and destroy whole communities. Large disasters, such as hurricane Katrina, may decimate the infrastructure in the affected area, tearing down telephone lines, cell phone towers, and other public and emergency services communications systems. In addition to Communications systems, disasters knock out electrical power, water, gas, and other public utilities. Sometimes disasters destroy a regions entire transportation system, rendering roads, rail lines, and even air transportation inoperable.

It may take days or weeks for responders and disaster relief resources to reach an area. Meanwhile the people in those areas have no electricity, potable water, shelter, food, medical help, transportation, or communication. Even when agencies can bring in a large amount of resources to the major population areas, small towns or remote communities may go much longer without help.

The most important and the simplest resource for all disaster areas is communication. Communication is the most important because without it no one outside the disaster area will know what or where the needs are. Thus, the first resource needed is communication. It is also the simplest. Although phone lines and cell phone towers are down, one person with a radio, antenna, and a battery can provide local, national, and even international communications. With the current technology, one person can hike into an area, no matter how remote and within minutes open two-way communications for that location.

In order to provide a good communication network for a large area it will take many communicators operating in many places using various modes of communications. There will need to be communicators who can set up and operate a mobile communications unit or trailer. There are times when communicators may need to operate alone in remote areas. When other disaster relief resources are operating in an area, every resource will need communications support.

The mobile communications unit is a self-contained, multi-mode, communications system. First, it is a communications system. A system, by nature, is a number of different components that have to be combined to make a functional whole. For communications to take place there needs to be the right combination of transceivers, antennas, wire, connectors, power,

other equipment, and someone who has the knowledge to put the system together and operate it. If anything in the system is missing or operating properly, the whole system fails and communications on that system will not work.

The mobile communications trailer contains various communications systems. It has the capability of operating various communications modes, HF, VHF/UHF, and digital modes. The trailer also contains redundancy in many of these modes, so that in the event of something failing in the system, the operator can replace the failed item.

The mobile communications trailer is actually a communications unit. The trailer does not provide communications, the systems do. Once the operator has the trailer in place, he or she can either operate from the trailer or move the communications equipment to another location, such as the inside of a building.

The communications trailer is self-contained. It contains all the communications systems, including power. It has its own kitchen with a refrigerator and stove. It also has its own toilet and shower system, with its own water and disposal systems. Finally, it comes equipped with heating and air-conditioning systems.

There are two other resources the communications trailer and unit need. First, and most obvious, is a knowledgeable, equipped, and capable operator. Second, as any system, it needs certain consumable supplies to fuel the operations. Obviously, the generator needs gas, the water tank needs water, the refrigerator needs propane, and the operator needs food and water.

Sometimes the obvious needs are the neglected needs. The operator can be so focused on the communications systems and in such a hurry to get on the road that he or she may forget the supplies.

There is finally, one of the most important resources that is the most neglected and it is the intangible resources of knowledge, information, and the proper mindset. Without these, all the communications systems may fail. This is not only the knowledge and attitude of the control operator possesses but also important information about the deployment.

This chapter of the manual is the instructions on the proper protocols and procedures communicators need to follow in the event of a deployment. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 1 is general information in the responsibilities of the communicator. Section 2 is information the communicator needs to know and protocols he or she needs to follow prior to departure. Section 3 contains the protocols to adhere to while the communicator is in route.

**You are first and foremost a communicator not just a radio operator. Therefore, use whatever communications device or method is going to be the most effective for a particular situation.**

Section 4 contains the protocols the communicator should follow upon arriving at the staging area and/or the work site. Section 5 contains the protocols the communicator should follow in demobilization.

Case vignettes are scattered through the material as examples of the importance of the information in the manual.

## **Section 1**

### **General Information**

This section provides information to help the communicator develop an operational mindset needed for deployment. Disasters by their very nature produce chaos. The initial response to disasters is often chaotic as well since disaster response is a continuously unfolding drama. Some of the information in this section will be repeated in other sections.

#### **Flexibility**

During the deployment to hurricane Gustav, BCNM disaster response resources were diverted and redirected numerous times. Flexibility is the ability of an individual or organization to adapt to changes and stressors. Communicators must demonstrate infinite patience and flexibility in the face of the chaos of disaster response.

Emergency management must make many operational and logistical changes to response plans as information on the disaster unfolds. Knowledge of what resources are needed in what locations may change by the minute.

In the deployment phase of a disaster when units and resources are on the road, it is not uncommon for those resources and units to be diverted and redirected numerous times. In some cases, units have been redirected multiple times in one day.

#### **Operational mode**

The disaster relief communications unit consists of trained radio operators. However, the primary purpose of the unit and thus of the personnel is to provide communications support.

All communication requires four things, a message to be sent and received, someone to send the message, someone to receive the message, and a mode or method of communication. Most of the time, who sends the message and the method of the communication are not as important as the right message getting through to the right person. There may be times when the method of communication must be strictly enforced due the sensitive nature of the information, however, most of the time, the method of communication is not important. The most important thing is that the appropriate person must receive the message and receive it accurately.

## **Operation location**

During the Little Bear fire our chainsaw units were not allowed to be in the field without radio communications. Dangerous storms would periodically move through the area and there would be flash floods. Because cell phone and other communications forms were unreliable the only choice for reliable communications was amateur radio. We had a communicator go out with every unit and assessors.

Some disasters may create a total communications systems failure across an entire region. Telephone lines and cell phone towers may be destroyed. This also means that all public and emergency services communications may no longer function due to the destruction of radio repeaters.

When the communications unit arrives to the designated station, there may yet be need for communicators in remote locations. There are situations in which other disaster relief units in the field need to maintain contact with the communications unit. This means that some communicators may need to be in the field and not on the communications unit.

This can be a challenge for communicators for a number of reasons. First, the communicator may need to rely on his or her personal equipment and supplies. Second, if there is other radio equipment available, operators will need to learn how to operate it. Third, due to environmental conditions such as temperature, rain, snow, geography, etc. the operator needs to have the appropriate gear and supplies.

## **Make sure and never assume**

The very first national deployment of NM Southern Baptist disaster relief resources was the feeding unit to California wildfires. Due to an inability to purchase food through local vendors in California we had to rent a truck in NM and take the food into California. We were told to provide X amount of meals. What we did not know and did not check on was how many different meals we were to prepare. We loaded up on chile con carne and wound up serving chile for lunch and dinner for three days straight.

Never assume -- this is probably the first and most important rule that is the most often violated in disaster response. We make certain assumptions about a response and find out too late



we assumed wrong. Because communications is the lifeblood of any operation, assumptions by communicators can have the most profound impact on a response.

Most people have heard about Murphy's Law. This law states that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. All deployments, no matter how easy they should be, suffer from a host of inevitable complications. The last thing any deployment needs is complications due to the volunteer's failures to communicate. This is not just the DR communicator it is everyone.

Sometimes this failure to communicate is the result of people making assumptions. If there is one rule for all DR communicators, it is never assume anything. The communicator has to insure all communications are accurate. This also means that the communicator must insure that the right information is communicated to the right people at the right time.

## **Section 2**

### **Pre-deployment**

The lifeblood of a disaster relief response is communications but immediately following a major disaster, communications resources may not exist. Therefore, it is essential that communicators take a number of precautions prior to deploying to a disaster zone.

#### **Gather Information**

The operator should gather as much information as possible prior to leaving. There are some fill-in forms at the end of this chapter. If the operator will gather all the information on these forms, he or she should have at least the basic information needed on site. The operator should ask the unit director for this information. If the unit director does not have this information, BCNM may have it. If BCNM does not have it, the operator can request help in determining who has the information. BCNM and the unit director should facilitate obtaining the information. In a disaster relief deployment, one can never have too much information, but one may certainly have too little.

Also, gather as much information as possible on the affected area. Some of the information operators need to know is:

- Does the area have electrical power? Without power, there may not be access to fuel. If this is the case, the operator may need to take ample fuel to run the generator and vehicle for an extended period of time.
- What is the climate in the affected area? This will determine the type of outer garments one should take. This is critical information if the communicator could potentially operate in a remote area or attached to another unit (not in the trailer).

#### **Inventory supplies and equipment**

Before you leave, insure that all communications equipment and supplies are on board and in good working order. If the operator is deploying with personally owned equipment and

supplies, insure everything is operational, there is ample power sources and if possible, redundancy of equipment in case of a system failure.

If the operator will be deploying with the communications trailer the lead operator is responsible for insuring everything is on the trailer and is in good working order, this includes all equipment on the inventory list, tools, supplies, masts, antennas, etc. Make sure the unit has batteries (fully charged), propane, and water before deploying.

### **Deployment Notification**

One of the most perplexing and frustrating aspects of being a DR volunteer is having a notification of a possible deployment then having it canceled. Volunteers often get their hopes up, have everything packed and made all the arrangements to go, only to be told to stand down. A disaster produces too many unknowns for initial responders to be able to identify all the specific resources needed in a specific area. All DR volunteers must be flexible, patient, and gracious.

Pre-deployment generally occurs in phases. These phases are the stages of alert Southern Baptists DR ministry uses to give volunteers a heads-up on a possible deployment.

### **Stages of Notification System**

**Alert**—the first stage of response at any level—national, state, or personal—is ALERT. This signals a potential response. The key word here is potential. This stage is asking the question, “If there is a deployment, will you be able to go?”

Some you should do during this phase are:

- Insure your personal go-kit is stocked and up to date.
- Check all of the equipment to insure proper operation.
- Take an inventory of the communications unit. If something is missing, tell the unit leader.
- Pull out the forms and begin gathering information.
- Talk to your physician about prescription refills.
- You may need to talk to your physician about immunizations.
- Talk to your spouse and family.
- Talk to your employer.

**Standby**—the second stage of response for disaster relief is STANDBY. There is a probable need for a response. The operative word here is probable, not definite. At this stage, volunteers should be ready to go when the call is given. If for any reason you are not able to go, you need to contact your Blue-Hat ASAP and let him or her know. Generally, this stage is updated twice a day.

Some things you should be doing during this stage are:

- Pack everything you need to take.
- Insure all battery packs are fully charged.
- Secure all equipment and supplies in and on the communications unit.
- Stock up on perishable items such as batteries, food stuffs, water, gas, etc.
- Insure you have all the information you can possibly obtain.
- Again talk to your family and employer.

**Go/No-go**—the third stage of response is GO or NO-GO.

“GO” means that response is definite and you will be given information on when you are leaving and where to report. However, remain flexible and keep your communication lines open, because the situation can always change. Turn on your radio, dial in the frequency, and head out.

“NO-GO” means that at least for now stand-down. You may be placed back on standby or alert, so keep the communication lines open.

## **Section 3**

### **Protocols for Traveling**

This section provides information on the protocols and procedures communicators need to follow while in route to the disaster area and when returning home. Due to the ever-changing nature of a disaster response and the importance of the volunteer's safety and security, all communicators should follow these protocols.

The travel of volunteers and the transporting of DR resources happen in many ways and at many different times. The first volunteers and equipment to deploy to a disaster area may travel together as a group. This group may be composed of a few people with a couple of vehicles, or it could be hundreds of volunteers with dozens of vehicles and units.

It is not uncommon in a disaster response for traveling units to be redirected numerous times. Sometimes this redirection is small, such as a change in the parking area for the units. However, sometimes it is a radical change, such as changing the city or state, from the original notification. There have also been times when deployed units have been redirected numerous times in one day. Therefore, it is imperative that volunteers have open communication lines with various entities and or stations, and with each other.

There are other more important reasons to have good communication lines. Often times, volunteers are traveling through unfamiliar territory and they may get lost. Units can be within a city block of their destination, but still not be able to find it. However, the most important reason for good communications is in case there is an incident in which the volunteer is sick or injured and nobody knows about it. Disasters are not safe places to travel to; there are many hazards including the manmade ones.

Volunteer communicators are not providing communications for themselves alone, but for everyone to which he or she is connected. When an entire state convention deploys to a disaster, every unit and many volunteers may travel together as a group. The DR communications volunteer may be the person communicating for the whole group and with the whole group.

Communicators should never assume that the group leader(s) would communicate information to BCNM or other entities. Communicators must discuss with leaders who will

communicate what information, to whom, and when. The DR communicator should coordinate with BCNM and the group leader who and how communications will be maintained for the group. The communicator should also coordinate with the group leader how to maintain communications with members of the group.<sup>1</sup> The first priority of the communicator is to have a reliable and agreed upon communications system with the group leader.

As a general rule, the group should contact BCNM every two hours to report progress and to learn of any news of possible changes in the situation or deployment destination.<sup>2</sup> If there are any issues, problems, or other pertinent information about the group, BCNM may desire or need notification immediately. There have been instances in which a vehicle broke down or was involved in an accident.<sup>3</sup> If and when the group stops for a meal, to refuel, or any other delay, BCNM needs to be notified.

**Only the BCNM has the authority to change any group or individuals deployment. In the event the North American Mission Board (NAMB) disaster operations center (DOC), the affected state convention, FEMA, American Red Cross (ARC) or any other person, or entity should contact any person in the group about any changes in the route, destination, or reporting requirements, any and all changes must be cleared and confirmed by BCNM. Never make any changes without obtaining clarification and permission by BCNM. This is not just a matter of reporting changes to BCNM, the BCNM must approve any changes.**

When a disaster or potential disaster will involve NM Southern Baptist DR, BCNM in consultation with other entities may determine the staging areas for DR resources. A staging area is a location in which agencies gather resources before determining the strategic location for each resource. Agencies may stage resources in a city or state outside of the affected area, and or they may be staged within miles of an affected area.

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<sup>1</sup> There is no perfect communications system for this situation. Cell phone systems may be overloaded or inoperable, rendering them unreliable. They are also ineffective for this kind of communication when everyone in the group gets the same information at the same time. Not every vehicle in the group will be equipped with a citizen's band, (CB), a family radio service (FRS), or a Ham radio.

<sup>2</sup> There may be times when this is not possible. As conditions change, look for possible communications windows. Always keep BCNM informed of all progress, issues, problems, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Should there be a disabled vehicle or minor accident (without injuries); the group may be asked to continue to the deployment destination. The communicator should coordinate with the group leader if and what communications should be maintained with the disabled vehicle.

This may be another place of frustration for some DR volunteers. Due to the changing needs in disasters, resources may be staged in various locations or they may be shuffled between staging locations and never deployed to the affected area. The only thing communicators can do is report this to BCNM. BCNM and other agencies such as FEMA, the ARC, Salvation Army (TSA), or government entities make decisions about staging and deployment.

## Section 4

### Protocols When Arriving at the Staging Area and the Deployment Destination

There are a number of tasks for communicators to do upon arrival at the staging area and the deployment destination. This section details what information should be communicated, to whom and when.

Upon arriving at the staging area or the deployment destination, BCNM must be notified. The communicator may assume that the group leader will do that, but the group leader may assume the communicator will do it. If each one assumes the other will do it, it probably won't get done. The communicator should take the initiative to work this out with the group leader. (Again, never assume a completed communications.)

Keep in mind that the initial arrival may not be the final destination. Once BCNM has been contacted then the unit leader needs to check in with the Incident Command staff (IC). The command staff will determine the final destination. There are times the unit may be located with the incident command staff and times it will be set up at an operational site. An operational site is a location where numerous resources are assigned. Before moving to the operational site, be sure to check in with BCNM about your new destination.

Once the unit has arrived at the operational site, the communicator should make contact with the site leader to determine set up location. Because site leaders may not have any experience with radio communications the communicator may need to negotiate a location for unit set up.

There are four considerations for set up location. **Altitude** – The higher the elevation, the better the communications. Try to locate the unit on the highest ground. **Space** – The unit, antennas, and safety margin demand the unit have ample clearance. If at all possible try to have about 100 feet to allow for a G5RV antenna. **Obstructions** – Radio waves do not travel well through solid objects such as building and trees. Try to find a location free of obstructions. **Safety** – A communications unit poses a significant danger to people. The antenna masts and tripods may fall on someone. If a person touches an antenna during a transmission they will suffer an RF burn. Try to locate the unit out of the high traffic areas.

**Make sure you contact BCNM, the Incident Command staff and the site leader before setting up anything.**



## **Section 5**

### **Demobilization**

Hurricane Katrina was like no other hurricane or disaster to which Southern Baptists have responded. Our response covered Louisiana, Mississippi, and parts of Georgia and Texas. No other storm in history has required the amount of resources (equipment, money, supplies, and people) that Katrina needed for such an extended period of time. Incident command had extreme difficulty keeping track of all the units and their location. There were instances of units pacing up and going home without notifying incident command.

Sometimes there is confusion in when and how to start taking things down, pack up and go home. To reduce some of the chaos, this section provides information on demobilization procedures.

The first and most important rule for demobilization is not do anything without communication and approval from various people. Even if it appears that communications systems have been fully restored the communications unit may still be in need. If you perceive there is no need for the communications unit, talk to the incident command staff and BCNM about the situation. If they agree there is no longer a need for the unit then mutually agree on a time for you to close up and head back.

It is important to not get in a hurry but to shut down and pack away everything in its proper place. When people get in a hurry they misplace things. Keep in mind that the unit may not get back home before being redirected or redeployed to another location.

First: insure the unit has all the equipment and it is in good working order. We need to know if something is missing or broken before you leave. Critical items may need to be replaced immediately.

Second: Insure that all the equipment is stored in the proper location. Everybody needs to know where all items are all the time. It is amazing how items can get lost in the trailer so put things back where they are supposed to be.

Third: Secure everything properly as items shift and move during transit.

Fourth: Follow the check list to insure the trailer is ready to move.

Once everything is properly and securely stored and the trailer is ready to move check out with Incident Command and let BCNM know you are leaving. Remember to check in with BCNM every two hours or as instructed.

Due to a staggered and unknown demobilization for all units, the communications unit may demobilize and head home at a different time than the other units.

## Abbreviations

FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Administration
NAMB	North American Mission Board
DOC	
ARC	
BCNM	Baptist Convention of New Mexico
VHF	Very High Frequency
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
HF	High Frequency
DR	Disaster Relief

## Disaster Relief Communications Deployment Information Sheet

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Disaster Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Disaster Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Leader (Blue or White Hat): \_\_\_\_\_

Unit leader's contact information:

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Baptist Convention of New Mexico Contact information:

<b>Names:</b>	<b>Phone #:</b>	<b>E-Mail:</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

If you are deploying with other units and will be traveling together, get names and contact info.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Call Sign:</b>	<b>Cell Phone:</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Deployment Information

### Staging Location

If resources will be staged at a location other than deployment site, get as much info as possible.

Call in Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_ Call Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of staging area:

\_\_\_\_\_

CITY STATE

Address and Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person and Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions (Where to park, get keys, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Use the space below to draw maps, parking diagrams, and record any other information.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Initial Deployment Location

(This may change numerous times)

Affected State DR Dir. \_\_\_\_\_

NAME

CALL SIGN

PHONE

Deployment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY

STATE

Site White Hat: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME

CALL SIGN

PHONE

Site Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME

CALL SIGN

PHONE

Site Call-In Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_ Call Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Site Name and Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions or Other Information: \_\_\_\_\_

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Use this area for maps, diagrams, and other information:

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## Deployment Quick Reference Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staging Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Deployment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Position	Name	Call Sign	Phone
Unit Leader (Blue Hat)			
BCNM IC			
Affected State DR Dir.			
Staging Area Contact			
Deployment Location Contact			
Location White Hat			
Communications Officer			

## Communications Information

If traveling with other emergency communicators, detail the communications plan.

Simplex Frequency \_\_\_\_\_

### In Route Repeater Information

Location/Name	Frequency	Off-Set	PL	Other info