

LOCAL COMMUNITY RADIO (LPFM) IS ESSENTIAL IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Local Community Radio Act
H.R. 1147
S. 592

Emergency response is the coordination of government resources with local communities to facilitate communication and effective recovery and rescue operations during national security threats, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. In order to ensure a quick response to emergencies, governments work with different broadcasters to ensure that reliable communication infrastructure exists.

Stories of Low Power Community Radio providing vital information in times of crisis

WCIW-LP

IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA

As Hurricane Wilma approached Immokalee, FL, the local low-power, WCIW-LP, alerted the community, first in Spanish, then in Haitian Creole and Central American languages such as Q'anjob'al, Zapotec, and Mam. This radio station was **attuned to the diverse languages spoken** in this farmworker community in southwestern Florida, making it able to alert everyone working in the fields.

WQRZ-LP

BAY ST LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the in Mississippi, a low-power station, WQRZ-LP, **was the only source of emergency information** in Hancock County, Mississippi, broadcasting vital recovery information 24 hours a day. The city of Bay St. Louis, where the station is based, was ravaged as 125 m.p.h. winds destroyed bridges and other infrastructure. Throughout the county most radio, television, and phone services were down. Shortly before the storm, WQRZ had moved its equipment—including its home-made radio tower—to an Emergency Operations Center where it made its broadcasts. The station provided vital information long after the storm, eventually receiving a temporary full-power license.

WRIR-LP

RICHMOND, VA

Recognizing the valuable role LPFMs play in natural disasters, the City of Richmond entered into a **five-year agreement** with WRIR-LP to broadcast emergency response information in support of the City's recovery efforts.

KYGT-LP

IDAHO SPRINGS, COLORADO

During severe snowstorms in March 2003, Clear Creek Radio (KYGT-LP) became a hub of emergency information for people trapped in their homes and cars under 30 foot avalanches. For four days the station sent out **emergency PSAs** and gave people a place to solicit and receive information using their cell phones. The station helped arrange the rescue of someone trapped in a snow drift after his family called in.

KZQX-LP

CHALK HILL, TEXAS

During Hurricane Ike many residents in East Texas lost electricity for up to a week. While most television stations stayed on the air, people were simply unable to tune in. In Chalk Hill, TX, **residents used battery powered radios to tune in to the local low-power station**, KZQX-LP, which stayed on the air using generators. KZQX-LP broadcasted vital information, such as reports from local authorities and interviews with the area energy company as well as the local Public Safety Director. Volunteer reporters ran live reports on road closures and damages. Reports continued after the storm passed.

The **PROMETHEUS RADIO PROJECT** is a non-profit group in Philadelphia that has built dozens and assisted hundreds of stations in the United States and around the world.

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WHY LOW POWER FM RADIO CAN SAVE LIVES DURING EMERGENCIES

THE DEADLY COSTS OF MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

January 18th, 2002: Just before 2 a.m. a train carrying 240,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia derails outside of Minot, North Dakota. As a cloud of this potentially deadly gas spread over the town, the train operator immediately notifies the local emergency dispatch. Soon frightened residents begin to dial 911, reporting trouble breathing. The emergency dispatch refers them to the 'local' radio stations...only no reports are played. The city's six radio stations are owned by media giant Clear Channel, which at the time is piping in content—and no one is at the stations. As callers flood emergency dispatch for advice, the radio continues its scheduled music programs—with no emergency information. One person is killed and hundreds are hospitalized as the grave consequences of media consolidation become painfully clear.

"Local radio is essential to emergency communications during times of disaster. It is the only medium that can reach the most people within the affected community."
-Sara T. Allen, CSRE, Independent radio consulting engineer and co-host of WQRZ-LP during Hurricane Katrina.



Brice Phillips of WQRZ-LP, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Recipient of the "Phoenix" Volunteer Service award for using LPFM broadcasts for emergency response during Hurricane Katrina.

During some of the worst hurricane seasons in recent memory, **Low Power FM radio** has been a **crucial**— and sometimes the only— source of reliable emergency information for various communities (*see other side for stories*)

LPFMs can be powered by small generators or car batteries, **making it possible to continue transmission** when power supplies are limited.

The average household has **nine radio receivers**— many of them battery operated. Radio remains a universal technology, crossing the digital divide and providing information to an entire community regardless of their access to TV or the internet.

Low Power FM stations are generally run by local community members and volunteers— **people committed to their communities and not the bottom line**— and can modify their broadcasts to provide information needed by communities during emergency situations.

READ ABOUT LPFMs SAVING LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE...

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