

“First on Scene”
By Ron Dodson, KA4MAP

Amateur radio operators, especially those who have mobile radio stations, can be the "first on scene" at anything from a typical auto accident to a hazardous materials incident. Whether, driving to or from work or on personal business, you can be presented the opportunity to be either a part of the solution or part of the problem in how you respond.

Too many times we hear reports of amateurs being injured or killed while trying to assist at an accident scene. Not terribly long ago in another state, an amateur was electrocuted while attempting to gain access to victims in a car crash when he came in contact with the power lines that had been downed during the accident.

If you find yourself the first to arrive following any type of accident, **REMAIN CALM!!!** Attempt to evaluate what has occurred, but do it safely. Look and listen whenever approaching ANY accident site. Be mindful of gasoline and diesel spills; power lines, broken gas mains etc. How many times have you seen someone walk up to a wreck with a cigarette in his or her mouth or a flare in his or her hands? Be mindful of hazardous materials as well. Some chemicals need only to be inhaled in minute quantity to **KILL**. That first breath could be your last!

Also avoid moving victims unless they are in obvious peril (i.e.. the car is burning and you have no way to put it out.) Injuries can be compounded by moving injured persons without proper means of first stabilizing their injuries.

Once you have some idea of what to report, call 911. If you have no cell phone or as is often the case, are in areas where they have "NO SERVICE", try using your radio to make an autopatch call. If the repeater is occupied, wait for termination of the current transmission then come on promptly with the words, "(Give Your Callsign) **FOR EMERGENCY PHONE PATCH.**" Normally one of the parties will indicate they are standing-by for you. If you don't have phone patch capability, ask for a station that can access 911 for you. It is best that you talk directly with the emergency service operator rather than relaying through a third person.

Give your **CALL SIGN** followed by the words "**EMERGENCY PHONE PATCH.**" Some repeaters will allow you to dial 911 as you would any other number. However, many repeaters provide a speed dialing function.

If for any reason you are unable to get through via the phone patch, seek assistance from a base station with telephone access. Ask them to call 911 and relay the information.

When calling 911, don't talk until the emergency operator answers. When the operator responds, identify yourself as an amateur radio operator calling from your portable or car radio. Pause for a few seconds. If the operator seems unfamiliar with such calls advise them that only one of you can talk at a time. Make your transmissions brief. Most operators will be aware of this constraint. Briefly describe the situation (including any known injuries) as well as the precise location. You will be connected with the appropriate agency based on the information you give. Follow this procedure even though you may be certain which agency will handle the incident.

When you are connected to the appropriate emergency agency, identify yourself again and briefly and calmly describe the situation, location, and other important information. Give the **PRECISE LOCATION**: For example: "1 block west of I-75 on

Highway 42." Or, "2 miles east of Brandenburg on Hwy 448." Give the location first in case communications should be disrupted.

Give essential details. Don't tell the operator how to handle the situation. Dispatchers are trained to provide the correct response and they have the necessary knowledge of available resources.

If asked for additional information (e.g., more detailed description, your name, telephone number, etc.), provide it to the best of your ability even if you don't understand the necessity for it. It may be required to determine the optimum response or even to provide assurance that the call is genuine.

Then, if asked to remain at the scene, do so and continue to observe caution.

Source: Kentucky Amateur Radio Radio Web Site – www.kyham.net