

## Thinking About Go Kits – 1/27/2011

The last couple of articles touched upon home-brew J-Pole antennas and batteries, both a good addition to any “Go Kit” for portable communications. But what else should you consider adding to your personal kit?

Of course having usable radio communications is important, but simplicity is always helpful when trying to be functional in less than desirable circumstances. One thing Fall River area Hams can be called upon for is emergency shelter communications, but where else might our services be applied? How about a forest fire and providing logistics communications for the meal and rest areas for the fire crews? A Search and Rescue scenario could also call for our flexible communications and ability to communicate over longer distances than your typical municipal radio system.

A dual band, 2 Meter & 440 radio is a good starting point. If you can, modify the radio for the MARS/CAP out of band TX/RX modifications, you will open up extra capability if ever required. In a declared emergency, with approval of the proper emergency services, your radio may be put into service for something other than Amateur radio, but it also allows you to receive and monitor other non-Amateur communications. For example, you may be listening to Civil Air Patrol (CAP) aircraft conducting an aerial search for a missing person and helping to coordinate ground support teams. In some cases, you may even be able to get onto the local EMA repeater, or other local EMS system, but only when specific permission has been granted. No declared emergency and No permission means no transmitting out of the Amateur Bands.

Your Go Kit should also carry a few other essentials such as an LED flashlight, note pad, pens and pencils, and of course a length of coax that is in good condition to connect your radio to your portable antenna. You may also need some sort of mounting pipe or antenna support stand if you are planning to utilize a separate antenna from your HT or mobile radio. Duct tape is a common recommendation, but a couple of rolls of good quality black tape will give you a quick way to tie down a small antenna, secure coax, and not take up a lot of space. It also can be removed a lot easier than Duct Tape without messy residue.

You may also find yourself set up for an extended time before the official support infrastructure arrives. You may want to have a 48 hour supply of non-perishable food and water to keep yourself healthy and safe until help arrives. A small First Aid kit and basic toiletries are also good practice. An AC extension cord and 6 outlet strip will also find good use if you have AC power available.

Once you have all of this “stuff” in your own personalized Go Kit, it can become a bit unwieldy. Our repeater trustee, KA1LH, found this out after September 11<sup>th</sup> when he responded to New York City to assist the Red Cross. He was well prepared, had all of his credentials and supplies in place, and showed up for duty with a large tote-bin full of gear and supplies only to find out he was not allowed to bring his vehicle anywhere near his communications post. He had to haul this heavy box for nearly 2 miles by hand! The lesson learned here is your Go Kit must be portable and readily transported. A small folding hand truck would be helpful, but what comes to mind is to construct your Go Kit into one of the heavy duty plastic boxes that have a handle and wheels built in that can be purchased at Home Depot or Lowes for reasonable prices.

Being truly prepared really takes some thinking about the problem you are trying to work through, imagining various scenarios, then building and testing your Go Kit equipment, and refining as you go along.