

The **REACT**er

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On the Cover:
A firefighter watches as
a mountain explodes in flame
near San Bernardino, Calif.
(Photo courtesy Wayne Clemons)

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From the President

by Charles A. "Chuck" Thompson

Yes, We Have a Plan -But It's Not What You Expected

long with each Team's ID cards and other renewal materials, or shortly thereafter, the Suitland office will send copies of the amended *REACT* International Bylaws and the revised Policies and Procedures of *REACT* International, including the recently adopted Disaster Procedures.

Those who might be expecting a detailed plan for *REACT* International to take charge in a disaster situation will be disappointed. The Board of Directors decided that *REACT* International's office is not capable of becoming a "headquarters" in a disaster response and that for *REACT*, disaster response and support of other agencies will be handled at Team level. In some cases, strong state *REACT* councils may also become involved, as the Florida Council is now, and the Southern California is working towards.

I agree with the Board of Directors. Simply stated, the resources simply don't exist at *REACT* International. Your officers are spread across the country, and we're very fortunate to have one (Treasurer Norm Kaplan) who lives in the vicinity of Suitland. As recently as the July convention, RI officers were located in North Texas, South Texas, California, and Maryland, with the Chairman of the Board in Washington State. We have geographical diversity, but that's not conducive to "command and control," folks.

The Suitland office will be available to assist with communications — that is, if a local Team needs assistance, the RI office can provide contact names and numbers, perhaps identify Teams which have reported having appropriate equipment, etc., and can assist in making contacts.

The strength of *REACT* has always been in the notion that each local Team is independent, and

tailors its activities and capabilities to fit the needs of the community or area supported. The RI Disaster Response policy recognizes this, and attempts only to strengthen the idea that each local Team must assess local needs, and try to provide support that will be useful locally.

In many areas, VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) is established and provides an excellent vehicle for *REACT* Teams to participate. *REACT* International is a member of National VOAD and a number of State councils are active in their State VOADs. Sub-state VOADs are becoming more and more common, and local Teams should make every effort to join and participate.

In today's world, disasters are all too common, and well-organized, well-equipped, and well-trained *REACT* Teams can make a difference. I hope each *REACT* Team will assess its capabilities, and its goals, and try to make a difference in its community.

And remember – promise only what you can deliver, and when called upon, deliver!

Are You Still With Us?

Renewal forms were sent to all existing Teams in November. *All* Teams are required to renew by January 31 (to avoid penalties). *Has YOUR Team renewed yet?* Check with your Team officers --don't let your membership lapse!



From the Chairman of the Board

by Dick Cooper

There's More Than One Way To Get Involved in *REACT*

ere's hoping that every one made it through the holiday season, starting with Thanksgiving in November and going right on through the end of the year to New Year's Day.

Traditionally the new year brings many new things in the lives of *REACT* members, and resolutions are part of that tradition. This year plan to do something unique: Make a resolution to work with *REACT* in areas that you may not have considered before.

For example, if you've always worked just with your local Team, perhaps hold an office or other functions, consider expanding your involvement to the Council level. If you already work on the Team and Council level, consider working on a committee or some other position within the *REACT* International (RI) structure.

Expanding your capabilities to other parts of *REACT* isn't as hard as it may seem. If you ask any person who is active in the Council or with *REACT* International, you will find out that their participation started with the local Team and expanded from there. They probably will tell you that this extended use of their capabilities is rewarding as well as January-February, 2004

beneficial to the Council or RI.

At RI, I know that there are many committee positions that need to be filled, both as committee members and in some cases as committee chairperson. If you have any questions, please contact any RI officer or director for your answers. Get involved - to use an old phrase, "Try It, You'll Like It!"

During the recent holiday season and well into 2004, many areas served by *REACT* Teams have inclement weather. There are many more travelers during the holiday season and the weather causes more highway incidents. These factors combine to create many more calls for assistance.

Whatever activity your Team may encounter at this time of the year or any other time of the year must be reported on the monitoring report included in the registration packages sent to all Teams. As Norman Kaplan pointed out in his Report From Headquarters article in the November-December issue of the REACTer, this information is vital to RI when applying for grants and when discussing the capabilities of RI and Teams with national agencies such as FEMA, Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc. As Norman says, "No one likes doing paperwork," but it is essential to the continued growth and existence of RI.

Another way to get involved in RI is by serving as a Regional Director. The directors for Regions 2, 5, and 8 are up for election this year. Nominations are due April 20 so it's time to start planning your nomination. Nomination forms can be obtained from the RI web site or obtained from the RI office. Become involved!





Photo by Wayne Clemons

Every Fall, easterly winds blow across the Mohave Desert east of Los Angeles. The winds sweep over the low range of mountains, turning the vegetation into kindling. Almost anything can set the mountainsides on fire: a piece of broken glass, a carelessly tossed match, or – too often – an arsonist. This year, fires believed to have been set deliberately broke out in two areas east of San Bernardino, and a third fire was accidentally started in the San Diego area. *REACT* members from all the Teams in Southern California played a role in dealing with these disasters. Here are reports from two *REACT* members: Ed Greany, who was in San Bernardino, and Harold Cole, who was on the mountain itself.

Ed Greany's Report

An arm from Hell reached out and touched Southern California in late October. Temperatures had been in the high 90s to low 100s with winds from the Pacific. That would soon change to the infamous Santa Ana winds, which blow in the opposite direction bringing hot temperatures from the deserts into the Los Angeles area. It didn't take long for an arsonist to seek his opportunity to create chaos. He did so by starting the "Grand Prix Fire" in the area of Rancho Cucamonga near the Caion Pass.

The winds fanned the fire into many residential areas and

into the mountain valleys. Fire resources were summoned from adjoining mutual aid departments but it was soon apparent that this was going to be too big for local resources to handle. Additional units were called out. Meanwhile, a second fire called the "Old Fire" was ignited by an arsonist in the City of San Bernardino. This fire was started at the base of the San Bernardino Mountains where many resort communities, including Big Bear, Arrowhead, and Crestline, welcome tourists all year round.

The fires quickly threatened a number of residential areas. Meanwhile another fire, called the "Cedar Fire" in San Diego, was started by a hunter shooting a flare into the air in order to locate his partner. He was placed into the custody of the Sheriff's Department and the California Department of Forestry. This fire would subsequently become the largest fire in San Diego history, causing heavy loss of property and lives, including a firefighter caught in a wall of fire.

Additional resources were called in from Northern California, Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona. The San Diego firefighters assisting with the first two fires in San Bernardino were eventually recalled back to San Diego to help fight the Cedar Fire.

The strong Santa Ana

winds kicked up gusts to 65 mph as heavy smoke covered the entire southern part of the state and approximately 200 miles into the ocean. The heavy winds and poor visibility prevented aircraft from fighting the fires. All the fires burned out of control at the whim of the weather.

The CREST *REACT* Team. an affiliated ARRL ham club located in Corona, was contacted by a RACES member of Inland Empire Amateur Radio Club. Radio operators were needed at the Ontario Command Center for four Grand Prix fire Red Cross shelters. A call went out to the Team and several operators immediately volunteered. Unfortunately, only licensed ham operators were being requested and while many CREST members are hams, not all have a ham license, which limited the volunteer staff we could offer; we still managed to supply a few operators for each shift.

On the second day, another phone call was received. It was the San Bernardino County Red Cross Chapter calling this time. (CREST is in the neighboring Riverside County.) The chapter had located us from the ARRL website and pleaded for our help. They didn't care what communications we had; they just needed help. We began our callout again.

Upon arriving at the Red Cross headquarters, we met a ham radio operator in the Comm Room who was trying to establish communications with the large shelter located at the Norton International Airport (formerly an Air Force base). The shelter was a giant metal hangar on the base and the ham operator at that site was inside the metal hangar, making communications extremely unkind for VHF 2-meter signals January-February, 2004

back to the headquarters. Also, the fire was now licking at the mountain community of Crestline where the hams' 2-meter repeater was located. Things didn't look good.

Responding *REACT* members from CREST and San Gabriel Valley *REACT* Teams established GMRS base stations at the Red Cross headquarters and inside the shelter. Utilizing the Heaps Peak GMRS Repeater in Big Bear, soon good, reliable communications were in effect side by side with the amateur 2-meter radio counterparts.

We switched to GMRS and operated that way for over 24 hours with perfect clarity and reception. During the second day, the Citrus Belt Amateur Radio Club, originally working the 2meter radio set up a "440" ham radio net, which worked much better in getting the signal out of the metal hangar. Unfortunately, the "440" repeater is also located in Crestline. Edison Electric shut down all electricity to the mountains for fear of starting additional fires if the Santa Ana winds blew any trees onto power lines. That didn't do well for communications. Our Heaps Peak GMRS repeater automatically switched over to our backup generator and kept us on line. In fact, soon our repeater was the only available communications link, since the ham repeaters were slagged by the fire (as were several commercial radio stations' broadcast transmitters).

REACT members worked together with the ham radio operators from the Citrus Belt Amateur Radio Club, located on the grounds of the Patton State Mental Hospital in San Bernardino. The Citrus Belt club also owns the 2-meter and 440MHz repeaters we used for the Red Cross operation. This was a very positive partnership and both organizations learned from each other. We are hoping for a continued stronger relationship for future events.

Communications also involved FRS and GMRS simplex. FRS radios were used inside the Chapter headquarters to make it easier for Red Cross personnel to communicate with each other when not in their offices. FRS also was used in the Shelter for the

Residents of a San Bernardino neighborhood watch fearfully as fire approaches. Fortunately, this neighborhood was spared; many other residential areas were wiped out.

(Photo courtesy Jason Houts)



same purpose. An FRS radio was in the Comm Room at each location in case they had radio traffic for us. This is the first time I witnessed FRS radios being used in a large disaster and they were extremely useful for short distance communications.

REACT volunteers worked 12-hour shifts to man the radios in the Comm Room at the Chapter and as runners to deliver written messages to and from Red Cross operations managing personnel. We also provided "Shadows" at the Shelter for those Red Cross personnel without FRS radios.

When we realized that the mountain was without electricity, we decided to prepare for the possible loss of our GMRS repeater also. Our portable GMRS repeater was installed in the Chapter Comm Room and an antenna was mounted on a roof access ladder extending 30 feet above the roofline. This repeater was never needed but it was comforting to know that we had it in place just in case it was needed. At any time, we could have operated entirely on GMRS without compromising the communications effort.

Part of CREST REACT involves the Silverado Canyon Fire Watch operation. Approximately a dozen CREST members live in Silverado Canyon, a deep canyon in Orange County east of Disneyland. While on routine patrol, two units noticed a BMW speeding out of the area. They caught up with him and copied the license number, then resumed patrolling. At 2200, they had a shift change. The following shift found a bottle of flammable liquid with a sock over the neck at

the closed access gate to the area. The Orange County Sheriff was summoned to the scene to investigate. Our members probably prevented a fire that would have involved Orange County and our Santiago Peak (GMRS) Repeater. Great job, guys!

Eventually the Grand Prix and the Old Fire merged into one giant fire. But not long after that, we were relieved by Red Cross National personnel and the Chapter was closed up.

Before the fires were actually contained and out, over 76,000 acres were burnt causing over \$15 million dollars in damage to the forests. The cost to California was \$9 million per day to fight these fires. Structure losses were 450 homes and commercial buildings destroyed, and there were two fatalities. The total losses are over \$10 billion. More than 60,000 people were evacuated into seven centers or shelters. Additionally, twelve evacuation centers were open for animals, domestic and wild. Fire personnel totaled 2392 for the Old Fire and 1851 for the Grand Prix Fire. There were eight more deaths in San Diego including one firefighter. REACT volunteers in San Bernardino and vicinity came from CREST, San Gabriel, Saddleback, Seacoast, COMUPAC REACT Teams.

Harold Cole's Report

On the morning of October 25, 2003, the only topic of conversation was the "Grand Prix" fire in the Cucamonga/Lytle Creek area, west of San Bernardino. That changed shortly after 9:00 a.m. when the Crest Forest Fire District dispatched units to investigate a report of a fire in Waterman Canyon. A few minutes later, CFFD Chief Bill Bagnell called out all available personnel to report to their stations.

I reported to my duty station, the district's headquarters, Station 25. In less than half an hour, all equipment was staffed and moving out. As a member of the district support staff, I began stocking two of our vehicles. The classroom in our building became the Incident Command Center, and quickly filled with personnel from the Sheriff's Office and other agencies.

Some units were transferred from the "Grand Prix" fire to the new fire, which was designated as the "Old Waterman Fire" (later just called "The Old Fire," even though in fact it started after the "Grand Prix" fire). Fires starting in Waterman Canyon are almost an annual event. Unfortunately, as is too often the case, this year's Waterman fire was not an act of nature, but of an arsonist.







More than 450 structures were destroyed by the "Grand Prix" and "Old" fires. (Photo by Wayne Clemons)

We later learned that the "Grand Prix" fire also was most likely the product of arsonists.

By mid-afternoon, we were preparing supplies to be sent out to the strike teams, using the central engine bay as the supply location. Two 18-wheelers full of bottled water, dry staples, fresh fruits, and other goodies arrived from Albertson's; one of the trailers was refrigerated and was left at the station for our use. Truckloads of donated goods arrived from area supermarkets and other stores throughout the next several days. The Red Cross brought sandwiches, which we then delivered to the "troops" on the firelines.

While I was kept busy at the station, sorting and stacking supplies, our Team President, Jerry Medvin, was pressed into use as a gofer. He made countless trips down the mountain to pick up supplies and bring them back to the station, and later helped with the evacuation of families. Jerry and I were able to keep in communication using our GMRS repeater until the fire reached it; after that we used amateur radio. Within and around the station, Jerry and I and the fire district personnel used FRS radios, provided by Mountain REACT. Late in the afternoon of Oct. 25, two electric power transformers blew. The utility company then shut down all of its power to the mountainside communities. At that point, mandatory evacuation was ordered and sheriff's deputies were sent to help residents pack up and move. Most of the evacuees were sent to Red Cross shelters at the former Norton Air Force Base.

For the next four days, Jerry and I continued providing support for the CFFD firefighters on a 24-hour-a-day "schedule," taking brief naps when we could. Ken Connors, a member of Mountain *REACT* who uses a wheelchair, was at his home base at the bottom of the hill; he served as our contact to the outside world.

Station 25 started to look more like a warehouse than a fire station, as supplies continuously arrived and departed to stations in Twin Peaks and Running Springs, and to the Rim High School staging area. On Tuesday, the Sheriff's Office commissary truck arrived, providing our first hot meal since Saturday. The Thousand Pines Christian Camp also was opened to provide housing for strike team members, who had their first chance to get a hot shower, a hot meal, and a few hours' sleep in a warm cabin.

Tuesday also brought some scary moments as a third fire, dubbed the "Playground Fire," broke out. Before the "Playground Fire" was contained, it threatened Station 25; evacuation was seriously considered, which would have hampered the supply and coordination efforts for all of the fire strike teams on the mountain. Fortunately, the "Playground Fire" was brought under control before that was necessary.

The "Old Fire" and the "Grand Prix" fire came together on the edge of San Bernardino, before the winds shifted and sent the fire racing back *up* the mountains. Hundreds of homes were destroyed, including the home of one of our Mountain *REACT* members (who decided to relocate, with his pregnant wife, to a less fire-threatened area). We lost not only our GMRS repeater, but a recently donated van that was being fitted out as a comm truck.

By November 1, the combined fires had been contained and were under control, and operations at Station 25 were scaled back. Leftover supplies were donated to the Red Cross, Rim High School, and the Thousand Pines Camp. Jerry and I were released with a "Well-done" compliment from Chief Bagnell. Mop-up operations continued on the mountain until November 16.

The "Grand Prix" and "Old Fire" crisis was the worst wildfire episode in recent Southern California history. Fortunately, after eighteen months of meetings, drills, strategy sessions, coordination with utility and service organizations, and repeated public hearings, we were ready.

Now we'll start getting ready for the next one.

GETTING THE WORD OUT --

THE ROLE OF THE PIO

BY WAYNE BARRINGER, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER KINGS COUNTY (CALIF.) REACT

ews is big business these days. It's a world filled with advertisers, air time or print deadlines, stresses over content, and seconds of time called "sound bites" that the media use to get your attention.

For the average *REACT* Team, if you're looking to get news time in a large metropolitan area like New York City or Los Angeles, it can be a daunting challenge to inform the public about your Team's activities. It's highly unlikely that a news anchor from ABC, CBS or NBC, to say nothing of CNN, is going to show up at your next Team meeting and ask, "so what've you guys been doin' 'round here lately?"

But for most Teams and Councils, it's a challenge that can and must be met. Keeping the public informed is the best way to attract new members, to let people know about the services your Team or Council provides, and to attract public support for your next fund-raiser.

One of the most important steps is to have a Team or Council Public Information Officer (PIO) whose specific duty is to get the word out.

I recently witnessed the election of new Council officers. Was it newsworthy? I don't know; it depends on a whole lot of factors: how much 'fill' space the news outlet has, whether my lead line gets their attention, whether my writing style is easy for them

to get my meaning and much, much more. But I do know that not sending out a news release guarantees that the news media won't know about it.

Even if it's not printed in your local newspaper or put on the air, the news about your Team or Council should be considered important! You should write it up as a news release and submit it to the various TV/radio and media outlets in your Team's or Council's service area. And you should always publish on your Team or Council Internet web site. If nothing else, the news reporters and editors will become familiar with REACT and will be more interested the next time you have something they consider newsworthy.

Documenting your training sessions might be an interesting story for a small, local newspaper. Conducting communication support for a local non-profit or charity organization at their next event is absolutely something newsworthy.

Did you take pictures? Do they include action images of members? Are those pictures reinforced by a dynamite story line that not only gets but holds attention? Many times, a story will appear in the paper or on TV *because* the accompanying photos are so interesting.

So you've got the pictures and the news release, and they've been submitted to all the local news media. Suddenly, you "get the call": the news outlet wants to talk about your activities. Who in your Team or Council is the best qualified to be your spokesperson?

Here's a few thoughts to ponder:

1. Don't expect results just before a deadline. If you contact the news outlet five minutes before a print deadline, how successful will your efforts be? But if you contact someone in a news organization well in advance and tell them what you've got and, if they are interested, ask them when their deadline is, do you think you've increased the odds of success? Of course!

So one of the first tasks for the PIO is to learn what the local news organizations' deadlines are. (Hint: The deadlines for newspapers are *very* different from those for TV, and radio stations – if they broadcast news at all – may not have any deadlines.)

- 2. Give them what they need. Use good grammar. Spell-check your article before you submit it. Use the proper format when preparing your news release. Be consistent about describing your Team or Council, what it does and what *REACT* is and does! Give them complete contact information, including e-mail and voice/fax numbers to get back to you.
- 3. Prepare for the interview. You've done both #1 and #2, when the phone rings and, much to your surprise, they actually want to talk with you. Will you be ready?

Designating a spokesperson for your Team is the first step towards getting your REACT Team ready for media publication. It's also a requirement for those Teams preparing for Incident Command System deployments. When deploying (field response) under an ICS-based approach, the Public Information Officer maintains contact with the Incident Commander and is the designated contact for the media. For Teams assigned to the Emergency Operations Center and using the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), the Information Unit becomes the central hub of operations for media production.

The PIO needs to track lots of information, including what resources are deployed and how, and anything that may be "newsworthy" to report. What significant contribution has been made so far during the deployment? Were any lives or animals saved? Have the deployed REACT resources assisted in any evacuations, or are they providing communications for an evacuation center?

Creativity is also a desired January-February, 2004

trait for a PIO. Trying to find something positive or interesting is sometimes a challenge, but a good PIO can find something interesting to share almost any time. Strategic goals, training scenarios, something "different from the norm" are things that attract attention, and news is all about attracting and maintaining attention.

The PIO should stay focused and continually document scenarios that are of interest to others.

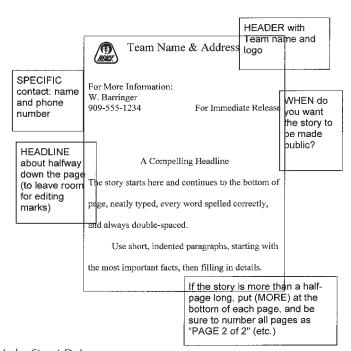
Designing a news release that becomes the standard format for your Team provides the media outlets with a recognizable "signature" of your team. The news media want certain specific information, and presenting it in a standardized way helps you to prepare the story and helps them to pick out the information they need. [See the sidebar, "Anatomy of a News Release"]

Your Team's web site is another excellent opportunity to show your best side and present a positive image of *REACT*. If your Team doesn't have a web site, get one! Many Teams rely on their "webmaster" to keep the site updated, but I recommend that all Teams follow the practice of corporate America: use your PIO as a "marketing department" to drive the content of your web site.

To sum up, the job of the PIO is every bit as important as that of the technicians who keep your equipment humming, or the officers who organize your Team's events and activities. Your Team is competing with dozens, perhaps hundreds of other volunteer organizations in your community, competing for members, public support, funds – and attention.

(Wayne Barringer can be contacted by e-mail at: kb6ujw@arrl.net)

Anatomy of a News Release



Graphic by Stuart DeLuca



a threat to every radio

by Charles D. Land, P.E., KC5NKK

(Editor's Note: Charlie Land is a member of Travis County and Bexar County REACT Teams. He is also Executive Director of TEXALTEL, a trade organization for independent telephone companies.)

im Haynie, President of ARRL and a member of Dallas County (Tex.) *REACT*, spear-headed a meeting at the Texas Public Utility Commission on September 29, 2003, to discuss the controversial issues that Broadband Over Power Lines (BPL) creates for the current users of radio spectrum.

The basic concept of BPL is to transmit broadband signals, containing Internet data and possibly other content, over existing electrical power lines. BPL is designed to use spectrum from 2 to 80 Mhz - just above the AM broadcast band to just below the FM broadcast band – and right across the ham bands on 6 through 75 meters. Although the licensing of radio spectrum and regulation of interference are solely within the jurisdiction of the FCC, there are regulatory issues at the state level. There is also some concern that state regulatory officials, if not fully educated on the problems posed by BPL, might jump on a bandwagon in favor of the technology.

BPL is being promoted by manufacturers and a few electric utlities who see it as an opportunity to deliver high-speed Internet service to homes and businesses that is comparable to cable modem and DSL services. Public policy officials see BPL as a means of introducing one more competitor into an arena largely controlled by telephone monopolies and cable TV companies. FCC Chairman Michael Powell and at least one other FCC Commissioner have made some favorable statements about BPL.

At the heart of the discussion was the fact that power lines are unshielded antennae and any RF signal... will interfere with receivers.

Larry Barnes; Judith James, P.E.; and Gordon Van Sickle of the PUC staff were present at the meeting requested by Haynie. The meeting was also attended by Steve Zoromsky of the Lower Colorado River Author-

nity to deliver high-speed Internet ity; Marcus Barnes, W5CN (no service to homes and businesses that is comparable to cable modem and DSI services. Public the ham community.

Haynie presented the concerns of hams as to interference, and Marcus Barnes and friends responded to more technical questions about interference and what could be done (as well as what couldn't) to avoid it. Haynie, who makes no claims of in-depth technical expertise, did a great job of explaining the issue in non-technical terms, and had some very high level technical people present to explain the issues to the techies in the meeting.

At the heart of the discussion was the fact that power lines are unshielded antennae, and that any RF signal on power lines will be radiated and will interfere with receivers in the vicinity of power lines (which includes all of us).

The experts present were asked if ham frequencies could be "notched" from the frequencies used by BPL and avoid interference with ham operators. The answer was that there are other users throughout that spectrum. If BPL filtered out all of the other frequencies that are in use, there's

nothing left for BPL.

Other concerns are that power lines have a history of harmonics and unexpected RF generation, with faults on insulators and at transformers creating interference in numerous frequency bands today. If BPL is implemented, we have to wonder how much interference would be caused in frequency bands outside of that used by BPL.

It was also pointed out that to make BPL work, a high pass filter (a capacitor) would have to be placed at every transformer. There has not been enough experience to gauge how much added exposure to lightning surges this poses to homes and businesses.

Hams are also concerned about the RF interference that power lines will receive, and how often such interference will stop data transfer over BPL. Hams are accustomed to working with neighbors to cure interference problems on TVs, radios and telephones. We'd hate to add Internet users to the list of challenges to our technical and social skills.

PUC staffers present expressed concern that Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephones are beginning to appear, and if BPL is successful, it will no doubt be used to some degree for telephone services. We can all easily imagine the nightmare of a BPL user trying to call 911 when a neighbor is chatting on 75 meters.

The PUC staff was keenly interested in interference issues that exist today. We assume they were trying to get a perspective as to whether BPL would be a minor or major addition to those problems. They seemed to understand that the bulk of the current problems are due to devices that have inadequate shielding from RFI; these problems are technically resolvable, and nearly always handled among neighbors cooperating with each other.

BPL has been touted by some as the answer to the lack of broadband in rural areas. However, the economics of BPL make this unlikely to happen. Being the huge attenuators of RF that power lines are, present technology limits their use to about a mile.

Most platforms today call for fiber telecom cable to be placed with power lines, and then to rely on the power line itself for only the last mile of transmission. For very rural areas, where the number of customers per mile is low, BPL would not be economical.

This appears to be born out by the fact that BPL advocates are targeting urban areas for their development. And this appears to be the heart of the controversy with proposals at the FCC to allow higher RF power levels in BPL applications – to extend the reach from the end of the fiber cable to the furthest customer that can be served.

Obviously, if the reach could be dramatically lengthened so that a power company could construct fiber cable to the substation and implement power line carrier that would reach all customers served on distribution lines (the 13,000 or 7,200 volt lines that go through the neighborhoods, running a few miles in urban areas and 10-50 miles in rural areas), the economics of providing the service would be radically different. Of course, this proposal has been the focal point of amateur and other users' interference concerns.

So far, the field tests of

BPL have consisted of a few houses. The largest field trial is planned to cover 10,000 homes in Manassas, Virginia, and is planned to be conducted sometime this fall. No doubt ARRL, as well as the BPL supporters, will be watching closely.

To most of us, BPL looks like a technology with so many problems that it has no chance of getting off the ground. We think that interference problems will be far too prevalent, that service quality problems due to interference will be far too common, that the costs of implementing the technology will be far too high, and that hazards to consumers and to technicians implementing the service will be far too high.

Equipment manufacturers are highly motivated to make this technology work well enough to be marketable. They dream of creating a new market for their equipment among a very deep-pocketed group (power companies) that today don't buy anything from them. We'll have to wait and see – and support our comrades and make sure that everyone understands what is at stake if interference occurs.

Some manufacturers and electric utilities want to transmit broadband signals, such as the Internet, over existing power lines. But will that technology produce interference that would destroy most radio services?

REACT ivities Team, Council, & Region News

Reading (Penn.) REACT

Jeanette Hunsberger of Reading *REACT* was the subject of a "Senior Spotlight" article in the *Reading Eagle* a few months ago. The article said, in part:

"leanette has been in-...Reading volved with REACT...since 1986. She now serves as first deputy for the unit, which helps out public service organizations, police and fire departments in the City of Reading and other areas of Berks County with traffic control whenever needed. She directs traffic for parades, City Park Bandshell Concerts, walks such as the MS Walk and even second-alarm fires and automobile accidents if necessary. She is on call 24 hours a day...."



Photo by Jeff Fazio, Reading Eagle

Jeanette offered this advice to other seniors: "If your health is good, keep going. There are a lot of places where you can volunteer. This is what I do. I like to be with people. I like to help them."

Kings County (Calif.) *REACT*

REACT Team 4965 again refused to join the crowd of onlookers as the 2003 Hanford (Calif.) Christmas Day Parade went by. They refused to join them, because they were too busy. Instead, they were the volunteer communications staff deployed for crowd control and pedestrian safety as the floats, marching bands and dignitaries passed by them.

"Keeping everyone safe is the most important aspect of our involvement in this event," said Kurt Ervin, president of Kings County *REACT*. "We have spent lots of time preparing for this event, and once again, it went off without a hitch because our members stayed alert."

The Team attended safety briefings with law enforcement and city officials and went on maximum deployment during the early afternoon. All volunteer communicators with the Team arrived early to check their equipment and be able to deploy early.

"Getting into position early helps to establish a presence," Ervin said. "We have

Central California REACT Council

Members of the *REACT* Teams in the San Joaquin Valley came together recently to elect their leaders for the next two years.

Officers of the Central California *REACT* Council will act as a conduit for unifying and representing the *REACT* Teams of the San Joaquin Valley. Their nominations and election were uncontested as voting for the 2004-2005 term went smoothly without discussion.

Officers elected at the meeting were:

President: Kurt Ervin, Kings County *REACT*

Vice President: Rick Schneider, Tulare *REACT*

Scribe (Secretary): Rob Montes, Kings County *REACT* Sergeant at Arm: Joe Gates, Kings County *REACT*

learned over the years to arrive early and play it safe, especially because the event goes into the hours of darkness."

The Hanford Chrismas Parade is an annual event featuring city officials, local businesses, various school children and some local citizens. This year the parade started at 5:00 p.m. (Nov. 28) and featured a theme of "Christmas Through The Eyes of A Child."

-Wayne Barringer

Tri-County (Mo.) *REACT*

The St. Louis County Park Rangers invited Tri-County *REACT* to their station for lunch and to present us with certificates of appreciation as their way of thanking us for all the volunteer hours



Vice President Mark Redecker holding the St. Louis County Parks Certificate of Appreciation given to Tri-County *RE-ACT* we put in helping them with events this year. Eight of our members assisted the Park Rangers with traffic control and parking at seventeen events this year which included outdoor concerts, fireworks displays, a car show, and weekend fairs. The eight members put in over 305 man hours assisting the Rangers in 2003.

-Brian Fischer Director of Operations



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January-February, 2004

Silent Mics

Joan Shrigley, Unit 403 of West Suburbs (III.) *REACT*, passed away on October 14, 2003. Joan served her Team proudly for 24 years, holding many Officer positions throughout her tenure. Her tireless volunteering efforts, leadership, and humor will be greatly missed. She was slated to receive an official recognition from the Village of Oak Park, III., for her service to the community at the time of her death.

Michael McCloy, LM 002, passed away in Mexico on November 26, while on a cruise. He had been a member of Life *REACT* in Georgia (a Team that was dissolved in 2001). Donations may be made in Mike's name to Basset Hound Rescue.

Calendar

January 1 New Year's Day

February 5 Constitution Day (Mexico) **February 6** Deadline for submissions for March-April *REACTer*

February 21-22 Annual Meeting, *REACT* Board of Directors, Suitland, Md.

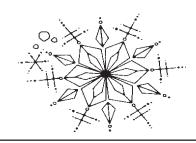
March 13 Commonwealth Day (Canada)April 2 Deadline for submissions for May-lune REACTer

April 20 Nominations Due for Regional Director Elections (Regions 2, 5, and 8)

May 5 Cinco de Mayo (Mexico)May 22 Victoria Day (Canada)May 31 Memorial Day (U.S.)

June 4 Deadline for submissions for

July-August REACTer



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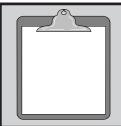


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Report from Headquarters

by Norman Kaplan, Treasurer, *REACT* International

Not Just Charters Need To Be Renewed

e are in the renewal season. As *REACT* International, Inc., sends out the new membership cards, we also will be sending out the monitoring and activity report, the same as in prior years; a proposed new monitoring and activities report, for comments by the Teams; the beginning sections of the 2002 *REACT* International Annual Report; the new *REACT* International Bylaws; the new procedures section and the new *REACT* International Disaster Plan.

As Headquarters is still collecting some of the items, the earliest renewers will get two mailings of the information. When all of the information is in Headquarters, then there will be only one mailing. Each of the Teams' officers should share this information with their members.

The REACT International Disaster Plan relies on each of the Teams to lead any response in their area. The action arm of REACT International is each Team. REACT International plans to act as a coordinator for providing additional help through other Teams in the area, state, region and nationally. Some of the questions asked on the new monitoring and activity form are geared toward getting this information. REACT International will ask members through their Teams if they can help in emergency and disaster situations. The originating

coordinators will be the Councils working through the Regional Director, where available, or the Regional Director where there is no council.

Unfortunately, in the nation's capital, the Washington D.C. Metro Council has died. Under Homeland Security, *REACT* will have a place in relaying communications between various nongovernmental personnel, jurisdictions and/or governmental agencies. Our Teams will need to work together as a unit. In meetings, the government Incident Management managers have stated that they will be looking to us for multi-jurisdictional communications. We need to be proactive at the local level.

I believe that this will be the case throughout the organization. We need to plan ahead, both at the local, state and the regional levels. Do we need to have a list of repeaters available by frequency and PL tones? Have these lists been shared with the organizations that we have agreements with? Have we prioritized who we will be support-

ing? Should we have agreements in place to share repeaters, GMRS and amateur, available during emergencies and disasters? Or do we just need to have a voluntary agreement for use by other REACT members? What do we need to do as *REACT*ers to plan ahead? Your thoughts are welcome.

REACT International's Disaster Plan requires supporting those Teams in the area effected. As an example, NOVA REACT's Communications Officer, Al Sevilla, has stated that he will share his repeater capability with Federal City REACT in emergencies.

We need to make plans for the equivalent sharing around the *REACT* community. We also need to plan on how we will support each other's Team. I know that several of these plans are already in place. It would be nice if a copy could be sent to International so that we can share with other Teams and plan on helping those Teams that will need it. Plans between *REACT* International and the Teams need to be put into place.



January-February, 2004



No Plan, No Clue

think it's fair to say that 9/11 caught everyone by surprise. *REACT* was neither better nor worse prepared than, say, FEMA or the FAA or any other organization involved in disaster relief.

The fact is that the *REACT* Teams most immediately affected, in the New York and Washington areas, performed heroically. They didn't wait for anyone to tell them what to do; they did what they could, where they could, making it up as they went along.

Afterward, unfortunately, they and others indulged in the pastime of fingerpointing and Mondaymorning quarterbacking. Some people wondered why *REACT* International didn't "do something." RI President Chuck Thompson appointed a committee to "investigate" what was done and to recommend what should be done if, God forbid, there is ever a similar occurrence in the future.

The committee, under RI Director Bob Kaster (who knows a thing or two about disaster relief) concluded that most of what the New York area Teams did was exactly what we would expect them to do. True, there could have been better coordination and communication among them, and it would have helped enormously if there had been plans in place in advance.

As for what RI should have

done, and should do in the future, the committee concluded that *RE-ACT* International has neither the responsibility nor the capacity to be a national command-and-control agency.

We're not the Red Cross. We're not the Air Force. We're not even FEMA. Our "national operation" consists of one full-time office manager and one volunteer part-time helper.

In short, there are both practical and philosophical reasons that no one should expect RI to "take charge" in any future disaster, to direct the deployment of resources.

The philosophical reason isn't so obvious, but it goes to the heart of what *REACT* is all about. We are an organization of *independent, autonomous local Teams*. That's all we are, that's all we are supposed to be. If there is any "command-and-control" to be exercised, it is *by* those local Teams. If there is any coordinating of resources, it is *between* those local Teams.

There are presently something less than 300 local Teams in the U.S., depending on how many renew. What would it take for *REACT* to have even a modest capacity to function on a truly national level? Think about that — and what we need to do to get there, if that's what we want to do.

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