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In Opposition of RM-11392

Oregon Governor Allocates \$250,000 for Digital Communications Network

The State of Oregon's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) received \$250,000 from Governor Ted Kulongoski's Strategic Reserve Fund to further develop and enhance a statewide Amateur Radio digital communications network, announced ARRL Oregon Section Manager Bonnie Altus, AB7ZQ. "This network, the Oregon ARES Digital Network (OADN), already uses a combination of different radio equipment and spectrum segments, computers and the Internet to provide a robust backup communications system in times of disaster. With its enhancements, all Oregon counties will be able to communicate with the state OEM," she said. "In December, this system proved its usefulness in the storms and floods by utilizing Winlink stations in Lincoln and Clatsop Counties to communicate with OEM. Early in that activation, the OEM's Amateur Radio Unit found they were not able to keep up with maintaining a complete log of communications when using voice communications, but Winlink activities maintained an automatic log for them."

According to Altus, the primary purpose of the OADN is to provide back-up digital communications capabilities between county Emergency Operations Centers and Oregon Emergency Management and other state agencies in Salem, in the event that normal communications systems fail in an emergency.

During the December storms, Amateur Radio operators were there to help. After a visit to one of the severely affected towns, Governor Kulongoski said, "I'm going to tell you who the heroes were from the very beginning of this...the ham radio operators. These people just came in and actually provided a tremendous communication link to us." Oregon's OEM said the radio operators were "tireless in their efforts to keep the systems connected. When even state police had difficulty reaching some of their own troops, ham radio worked, setting up networks so emergency officials could communicate and relaying lists of supplies needed in stricken areas."

Through an Intergovernmental Agreement between the individual county Emergency Managers and Oregon's Office of Emergency Management, ARES/RACES groups in each county will be responsible for installation, maintenance and operation the network.