

Looking back on 2001

2001 marked Cupertino ARES' (CARES) 15th year of service to the City of Cupertino and the community. This was also a year of significant challenges for our nation, California, and CARES. In particular, two events will clearly differentiate this year from all others:

- In January, rolling blackouts threatened to disrupt how Californians live and work. Cupertino was directly impacted when homes, schools, and businesses lost power. Early during the emergency, it was predicted to be a very dismal year for power shortages.
- The events of September 11 redefined the threats that all Americans face and the magnitude of the disasters that could result when they are realized. In the end, we developed a new appreciation for life and freedom, and realized that the risk of their loss gave us the strength to rally in their defense.

The mission of the Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Service is to maintain and train Amateur Radio volunteers capable of providing professional emergency communications, increasing the City's emergency response effectiveness, and speeding the recovery of our community.

The events of last year turned out to be a sobering test of our training, readiness, and commitment to our mission.

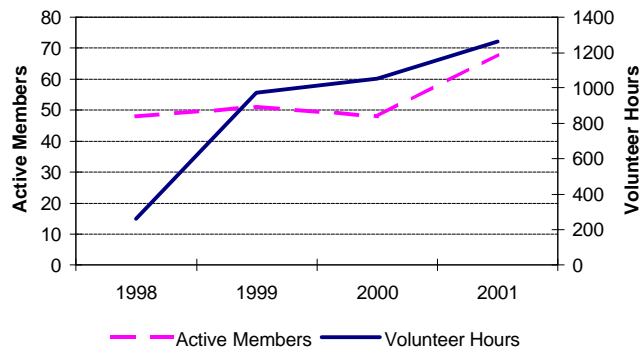
CARES shifted to Increased Readiness Operations on three occasions in preparation for a formal activation. Our members also looked for and found ways to improve their personal readiness with the goal of *making a difference* in their community. In the end, the CARES response was professional and overwhelming.

CARES also exited 2001 operating in a state of Increased Readiness. The standing Operational Objectives are: (1) support the City as required, and (2) increase our personal response capabilities as much as possible. Activities to accomplish these objectives are still in progress.

It's the people

As a result of these emergencies, 2001 was also a year of renewed interest for and increased participation in CARES.

Active membership was up 41% from the previous year with 85% of the registered members participating in at least one CARES activity (that is, check into a radio net, attend a meeting, respond to a drill or activation, or support an organized neighborhood).



Last year, CARES signed up 7 new members and retired 7 others who no longer were available to participate. Registered CARES membership stands at 80.

2001 also saw CARES members volunteering more hours to preparedness and response than in any other year. Volunteer hours rose 19% over the previous year to 1,262 hours.

Increased participation was also evident by the number of members checking into the weekly radio net. Immediately after the air campaign began over Afghanistan in October, the CARES telephone tree was again activated and 35 members checked in to the CARES Emergency Net. Over the last four months of 2001, regular weekly net check-ins ran 41% higher than the first portion of the year, averaging 17.5 members per net.

In short, CARES members were there when they were called.

Hope for the best, Prepare for the worst

To accomplish our mission, we continued to focus on our two primary objectives: Preparedness and Response.

Training activities revolved around the monthly CARES General Meetings and a set of drills and exercises.

Orientation Training sessions covered a range of topics from presentations by City utility and service providers to introducing new communications technologies. Speakers from PG&E and Pacific Bell completed our training series on *Utilities and Emergency Preparedness*.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department, one of our Served Agencies, hosted two CARES General Meetings at the Cupertino and Seven Springs Fire Stations. The Cupertino Station visit gave us a chance to hear some personal experiences

from Bat. Chief Bob Smith.

These visits also gave us a good orientation of the stations and an opportunity to meet some of the crews.

CARES General Meeting attendance averaged about 25% of the membership with some sessions being particularly more popular than others.

- Orientation Training Sessions in 2001*
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- *Emergency Plan Review*
 - *PG&E and Emergency Preparedness*
 - *Pacific Bell and Emergency Preparedness*
 - *Transmitter Hunting*
 - *Introduction to ATV*
 - *Message Handling, Field Day Preparations*
 - *Santa Clara Fire Department and Disaster Experiences*
 - *Functional Field Drill Overview*
 - *County Sheriff's Department & Emergency Preparedness*
 - *National Weather Service and the Spotter Program*

Web-based Training is a new method now available for delivering communications training. Several CARES members are taking or have completed a series of web-based Emergency Communications courses offered by the ARRL (American Radio Relay League). Participating members report these courses are worthwhile and are providing a good foundation in emergency communications.

Drills and Exercises were also scheduled. As a result of the October 2000 SET, CARES worked on several operational issues with EOC/NCS (Net Control Station) logistics that were developed and tested in 2001.

- Drills and Exercises in 2001*
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- *CD-0101, Preliminary Damage Assessment Drill*
 - *CD-0102, EOC/NCS Logistics Drill*
 - *CD-0103, EOC/NCS Drill*
 - *Joint City of Cupertino / Santa Clara County Drill*
 - *CD-0104, Emergency Field Communications Drill*
 - *Earthquake Drill, Riverside-St Andrews Neighborhood*
 - *CD-0105, Functional Field Communications Drill*
 - *Earthquake Drill, Erin Way Neighborhood*
 - *County-wide RACES Drill*

The annual CARES Emergency Field Communications Drill (ARRL Field Day) allowed us to practice putting several stations on the air. With logistical support from our Served Agencies, this drill demonstrated that we are capable of operating under adverse field conditions if necessary.

CARES also supported several organized neighborhood drills with simulated EOC Radio Room operations. Radio traffic, in the form of updates and status reports, was passed between the neighborhoods and CARES.

Improve the Response, Speed the Recovery

In 2001, the CARES Phone Tree was activated 3 times to notify CARES members of a shift to Increased Readiness Operations. Process improvements with how, and to whom, calls are initiated resulted in over a 40% membership participation rate during the Emergency Nets.

To address the 2nd Increased Readiness Operating Objective, (increase our personal response capabilities as much as possible), CARES arranged for a group purchase of antennas and batteries. Seventeen members purchased J-pole antennas, allowing those members to either increase their transmitted signal strength or qualify as a Net Control Station operator. Sixteen portable 7 Ah batteries were also purchased to extend the duration of an individual's response at home and in the field. All purchases were individually funded.

Amateur Television (ATV) was introduced to CARES members and also demonstrated to the EOC staff during their May 2001 City Drill. As a result, a plan to implement a basic ATV capability was developed by CARES and approved by the City. This system should be operational early in 2002.

The CARES pool of Net Control Station (NCS) operators increased by 2 last year bringing the total number of NCS operators to 16. The new NCS operators are Jack Funk W6MGL and Spencer Clark AD6YS.

Served Agencies

The City of Cupertino is our primary Served Agency. Over the years, the relationship between our two organizations has evolved into a strong partnership that, we believe, has been mutually beneficial. CARES is very pleased to be a partner with the City and in the service of our community.

CARES began its engagement with the Santa Clara County Fire Department with team meetings, drill coordination, and a sharing of capabilities and expectations. Preliminary discussions with local Department members indicate they have real needs that CARES potentially could address. We hope to explore these needs, develop response scenarios, and put them to the test in 2002.

Our plans for 2002 will focus on the following three areas:

- 1. Response Effectiveness.** Work began last year to refine our guidelines and develop tools to ensure consistency with our emergency response. We will finish this work by rolling out a set of response checklists for all operating positions.

Additionally, there are about 300 licensed Amateur Radio operators in Cupertino, 80 of which are registered with CARES. We will develop a plan and processes on how to deploy the amateur radio volunteer who, during an emergency, will walk in off the street and have no experience with our methods and procedures.

- 2. Qualifications.** There are many jobs and operating positions that must be staffed during an emergency. To ensure our members are set up for success in an assignment and can fulfill our mission, a more thorough approach toward training and qualification is needed. We will begin working on a program to define a series of position and operating qualifications that CARES members can pursue.

- 3. Community Service.** While our training efforts are primarily directed toward supporting an emergency response, we acknowledge that there is a role we could play in supporting community activities. CARES will explore different community events as a means for (i) delivering communications services (within the guidelines of the FCC rules), (ii) practicing passing radio traffic, (iii) raising public awareness about CARES, and (iv) cultivating interest in Amateur Radio.

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