

but it does not work for those who are deaf or have a severe hearing loss.

In a dinner table conversation with several deaf members of Byne Memorial Baptist Church in Albany, it was determined that something needed to be done to help the deaf community know when severe weather was approaching or when the National Weather Service issued watches or warnings.

"If we're not looking outside or watching television, we have no way of knowing that something is going on," said Ann Singletary through an interpreter. Singletary is totally deaf and is concerned that she will miss warnings that may cause fatal injuries if she and her husband, Roscoe, who has a severe hearing impairment, are unaware of the warnings. "Most people who are deaf are not as aware of their surroundings since they can not hear what's going on around them," according to Toni Halstead, an educational interpreter for the deaf and board member of the Georgia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

With these concerns and the desire to insure as many people as possible are warned when severe weather threatens, the Albany Metro Area SKYWARN group set out to provide weather information to the deaf community. The group is part of the Albany Amateur Radio Club and has gained widespread recognition as an important source of weather information. "Albany has a well trained and very functional SKYWARN program," says Bob Goree, the Warning Manager for the National Weather Service in Tallahassee, Florida. The Tallahassee office is responsible for the southern part of Georgia.

A meeting with SKYWARN Net Manager John Kincaid, KR4OH, and the club's board of directors resulted in the development of a pilot program using Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD) to inform deaf residents of severe weather information. The telephone company is providing the group with the devices that display text typed from the SKYWARN communications center. The center calls members of the deaf community who have a TDD and use the device to issue a watch or warning.

The church, which has a deaf mission with almost one hundred members, was used as the contact organization for the deaf to register for the weather information. A brochure with specific response information was given to each person who signed up for the free service. The brochure outlines what each watch and warning means and instructs the deaf members on how to respond to the informa-

tion. If a watch is issued, the call goes out to the registered TDD units with the times and areas of the watch. The brochure tells the deaf members to keep a "watch" for rapidly changing weather conditions. Likewise, if a warning is issued, the call simply says "WEATHER WARNING" to save time. The members then know to take cover immediately.

A light flashes when the phone rings activating the TDD. When the weather information is issued, members have been instructed to tune in to WALB-TV 10, the local NBC affiliate, for continuing weather coverage. The SKYWARN group has worked in concert with one of the station's meteorologists, Kent Williams, to fine tune the project. Williams produced a feature story for the television station, which was picked up and aired by several other NBC affiliates. The station is now providing a registration outlet for the program through its Internet Web site.

"This is a great idea and a great program," added the weather service's Goree. "I have encouraged the Albany SKYWARN group to publish this project for other SKYWARN groups," he said.

Since the system was implemented, it has been used almost 20 times to issue severe weather statements, including warnings for an early fall outbreak of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. It was part of the same deadly system that struck the southeastern United States. The number of registered deaf members with a TDD increased following that watch. "The word is getting out and more people want to have access to this information," said Halstead.

"I thank you for calling me and telling me about the bad weather. I feel so much better knowing what is going on and getting the warnings," said Janice Ivey in a TDD conversation with the SKYWARN communications center. Ivey and her husband Clint are both totally deaf and had depended on others calling to tell them to watch television if something was happening.

The project was evaluated in July of 2002 by the SKYWARN group, the National Weather Service in Tallahassee and local Emergency Management officials. For more information about SKYWARN for the Deaf, you may contact the project's coordinator Stan Halstead, W4GOD at albanyskywarn@mchsi.com or by writing Albany Metro Area SKYWARN, c/o Albany Amateur Radio Club, Inc, PO Box 70601, Albany, GA 31708-0601.

FLIGHT 93 MEMORIAL, SEPTEMBER 11, 2002

By Jim Crowley, NJ3T,
Somerset County RACES Radio Officer

Amateur Radio operators were asked to help during the first anniversary memorial service for United Flight 93 in Somerset County, Pennsylvania on September 11, 2002. Rick Lohr, N3VFG, the Emergency Management Agency and 9-1-1 Director for Somerset County, contacted Jim Crowley, NJ3T, during the early planning stages to summon help.

Since the site of the memorial service was in a rural setting, all visitors and participants in the memorial service had to park at designated areas throughout the county and take shuttle buses to the site. Radio amateurs were recruited to help watch the parking areas, and to report to the emergency operations center (EOC) any suspicious activity and be available to handle any emergency message a visitor or agency may need to pass. Any medical emergencies would also be relayed by ham radio if necessary. Amateur Radio operators including RACES and ARES members from Somerset, Bedford, Cambria, Fayette and Westmoreland counties signed up and registered to help. Amateur Radio operators were also set up at the EOC.

Everything went like clockwork and all Amateur Radio communications worked very well. There were a few minor incidents reported. An ambulance was requested for a visitor at one of the parking areas and for one at the memorial site. Someone also locked their keys in their car at another area. All in all, the event went well.

LATE SUMMER TORNADOES STRIKE INDIANA

By Dave Crockett, WA9ZCE
Indiana Public Information Coordinator

Amateur Radio SKYWARN spotters from 14 central Indiana counties were given credit for helping save lives during an outbreak of late summer tornadoes during the morning of Friday, September 20, 2002.

The National Weather Service in Indianapolis had been tracking a line of strong thunderstorms associated with a cold front. The front began to mix with warm moist air and upper level wind disturbances. Shortly before 11 AM, the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, issued a tornado watch for the southern half of Indiana. The watch



A temporary memorial for United Flight 93 in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.



President George Bush used this helicopter to visit and participate in the memorial service on September 11, 2002.