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UNITED STATES OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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**War Emergency Radio Service
Fact Sheet**

Note to Editor or Writer: What great possibilities do American communities have for emergency radio communication as a defense arm? What new field has opened for the thousands of radio amateurs banned from the air? This Fact Sheet gives essential information on an important protection aid made available for defense forces jointly by the Office of Civilian Defense and the Federal Communications Commission—the War Emergency Radio Service. OCD Director James M. Landis declared: “Thousands of Defense Councils, particularly those in target areas, can now substantially increase the effectiveness and flexibility of their defense forces through the War Emergency Radio Service. OCD strongly recommends that every community take steps immediately to give itself this added protection in case of enemy attack or local catastrophe.”

For further information on this subject, communicate with the Editorial Section, Office of Civilian Defense, Washington, D. C.

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DEFINITION THE War Emergency Radio Service, WERS, is a new system of two-way radio communication for use of Civilian Defense and other defense forces in local areas. *It is rugged, home-grown, highly adaptable, and of the greatest use before, during, and after an air raid or other emergency.*

WERS can be set up only by specific authorization of the Federal Communications Commission.

OPERATION The FCC has assigned to WERS a number of frequencies, the more important being *from 112 to 116 megacycles*. Within this range OCD recommends that operation be planned for three bands of several channels each. At need there would be available 14 distinct channels so that *there is no practical limit to the system's flexibility*.

1. One band connects the local Civilian Defense control center with the district control center and so reinforces the community's outside communications.

2. A second band connects the local control center with local fixed points such as wardens' posts, fire houses, hospitals, public utilities, and industrial plants.

3. A third band connects mobile forces like fire trucks and emergency medical teams with the control center. This band can also connect with walkie-talkies.

RANGE WERS transmitters use a maximum of *25 watts input power*, which gives an effective communicating range to Civilian Defense forces of approximately 10 miles, the longest distance ordinarily necessary for this type of service. Transmission of this limited range cannot help the enemy. It is useless for direction finding or interception of messages.

ADVANTAGES There are three main advantages to WERS:

1. *Wide coverage*.—WERS can reach *many points simultaneously*, once its channels are put on the alert. One district warning center can reach all local control centers. The local control center can simultaneously notify all wardens' posts of air raid signals, for example. The need for telephone chain calling is eliminated.

The system also has a value in the case of *calls to only one point*. All sets are listening in, and operators can break in to give advice or information, or can guide their own forces better through knowing the current situation.

2. *Invulnerability*.—*It is virtually impossible to put the new system out of action*. At most a few sets may be destroyed, which can easily be replaced. All other means of communication depend on cables, wires, and exchanges vulnerable to bomb hits and partial or total destruction. A bomb hit anywhere between the two points of communication will usually put all lines out of commission. Radio needs no wire or cable.

3. *Contact with moving units.*—The new system can reach defense forces in motion. WERS gives all mobile forces a continuous central command and allows them to be shifted from one incident to another without returning to the base. Walkie-talkies extend this two-way contact.

Walkie-talkies are small portable sending and receiving sets carried by the defense forces. By means of these sets an incident officer or a fire chief or chief of any emergency unit can direct his squads easily and quickly from a vantage point at the scene of disaster.

WALKIE-TALKIES

The new emergency radio system is of direct use to many strategic centers and installations in the community, such as hospitals, industrial plants, railroad yards, docks, bridges, and public utilities. Its importance to these points appears in the two following representative cases.

USEFULNESS TO
COMMUNITY

1. *Industrial plants.*—Calls to an industrial plant give air raid warning, advise the plant's Defense Coordinator of latest developments during a raid, confirm calls for emergency units and indicate the help coming, and advise in the operation of the plant's own emergency forces. Calls from an industrial plant summon emergency medical teams, rescue units, fire and police forces, demolition squads, and at need, decontamination units. Large industrial plants can use walkie-talkies to reach plant protection volunteers in outlying sections of the plant or in separate buildings or defense posts.

2. *Hospitals.*—It is crucial to know during a raid exactly what beds are available and what operating rooms are free in the casualty receiving hospitals of a community, and to direct casualties rapidly to available facilities. If telephones go out, the control center can still keep a complete picture of the hospital situation by WERS. By use of the new system, ambulances can be loaded and dispatched effectively because the control center is in communication both with hospitals and with the incident officers and incident medical officers. Mobile medical teams can be directed from point to point without returning to their bases. If the hospital facilities of an area become overtaxed, the radio channel to the district headquarters can arrange for reinforcing hospital facilities. For hospitals, WERS represents a communication asset whose value is written in terms of saved lives.

Thousands of volunteers are helping set up the new WERS system. Amateurs otherwise banned from the air are today helping to build and operate thousands of two-way stations needed throughout the country. In community and Nationwide drives, attics and back rooms

VOLUNTEERS

of radio repair shops are ransacked for junked sets and unused material—it is the existence of this material which puts the United States out in front as the country most ready for the rapid setting up of this fool-proof communications auxiliary. With the materials gathered, volunteer groups construct stations which become the property of the defense forces. Not only amateurs, but qualified repairmen, electrical trade unionists, and persons holding commercial radio operators' licenses, including radio engineers employed in broadcast stations, are joining in this work.

TRAINING

All the defense personnel who will operate the newly constructed stations must be trained, and each one specifically who will operate a station must obtain a permit from the FCC. *This permit is not hard to get—* after training, it means the passing of an elementary FCC test. Many Defense Councils have organized classes in WERS operation.

BLANKET LICENSES

Under OCD's recommended plan, blanket licenses are obtained from the Federal Communications Commission for all the Civilian Defense radio stations within one area of operations. *Thus one WERS system covers a district warning area,* and the equipment and operators of the entire district are available to any stricken community. This prevents "freezing," for under law, operators in one separately licensed community cannot work in any other unless they bring equipment with them.

Licenses are issued only to municipal or local governments, such as cities, towns, townships, or counties. They are not issued to police departments, fire departments, or Defense Councils as such.

CIVIL EMERGENCIES

WERS is invaluable not only in war disasters, but in the fearful and sudden catastrophes of civilian life—*flood, fire, hurricane.* Civilian Defense forces can rapidly be called out, warning can rapidly be given, outside help can be summoned. Those areas particularly, like the Mississippi or Ohio River communities subject to flood, or like Florida or Western regions subject to hurricane or tornado, obtain through WERS a guarantee of communications no natural disaster can interrupt. WERS is not limited geographically: other major disasters with their threat of wartime dislocation—storm, building collapse, explosion, conflagration—can occur anywhere. Civilian Defense more and more is playing a vital role everywhere in protecting communities against such hazards. *In these emergencies, as in those of war, swift, dependable communications are essential.* WERS increasingly provides the answer.

PICTURES

Dramatic pictures, suitable for any type of reproduction, are available on WERS.