



**Wildland Residents Association, Inc.
San Marcos Pass Volunteer Fire Department**

By
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President-Executive Director

BACKGROUND

Recent developments in the commercial broadcasting business have significantly changed how news is presented. Major national broadcasters have bought out many stations.¹ The results are that there are no commercial radio stations on the South Coast of Santa Barbara that have a staff on the weekends to report any emergency news or alerts.

The Cachuma and Gaviota fires caused serious traffic problems on SR-154. Moreover, several vehicle fires caused the highway to be closed, resulting in serious traffic problems. This also created a potential hazard for local residents in the event a local fire required evacuation.

Over the last 30 or more years, many local and state emergency plans called for notification of local broadcasters to provide emergency information for fires, floods, traffic and assorted issues. The current use of automated stations makes this methodology less effective. The Emergency Broadcasting System is also automated. This allows for authorities to send an announcement to the public via commercial broadcast stations automatically through automated switching. However, this system is not frequently used. It also requires that the public be listening to the station in the first place, something that the public often does not do.

¹ Clear Channel, Fox, Infinity Broadcasting, etc.

SYSTEM SYNOPSIS

Advisory radio systems have been around for years. The stations broadcast a low-power AM signal within the commercial AM broadcast band so it can be monitored by any conventional AM radio. These stations are frequently found in state and national parks, airports and universities. UCSB utilizes one for parking control. Hundreds of communities across America now use such systems to provide alerts. The City of El Segundo recently installed a system under a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety and CALTRANS.²

The SMPERS station can be remotely triggered to play automatic pre-recorded announcements or accept a real-time announcement such as evacuation instructions from designated emergency authorities. The station also accepts all 53 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) event codes from a separate receiver and automatically transmits them. Automated announcements can be programmed to be selective as to both content and area of concern. Automated emergency information is also part of the homeland security programs now in place in conjunction with NOAA.

Local authorities will also be able to call the SMPERS station via telephone and make live announcements. These announcements can be live and continuous or recorded and replayed repeatedly until removed. Access to the station will be limited to a select few and governed by written policy that is supervised by the WRA and the Fire Safe Council.

Based on the elevation, it is anticipated that the signal area will include SR-154 from US 101 to Lake Cachuma, East and West Camino Cielo, Paradise Road and the communities of Painted Cave, Trout Club and Rosario Park as well as Baptist Camp and Upper Oso Campground.

SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

The SMPERS station shall be owned and operated by the following:

**Wildland Residents Association, Inc.-
San Marcos Pass Volunteer Fire Department**
5655 West Camino Cielo
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
805-964-7194
www.firedept.net/wra/

The Wildland Residents Association, Inc.-San Marcos Pass Volunteer Fire Department holds the FCC station license. A FCC temporary license has been issued under the name San Marcos Pass Volunteer Fire Department. This license is subject to automatic renewals until the final license is granted.³

² Low Power AM Radio Station, WPWA 745, 1040 KHz.

³ WQBT795

The SMPERS station will also be under the administrative control of the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council may develop the policies and procedures for the system with the cooperation of council members and the WRA.

In addition to the WRA, the following agencies would have direct access to the system to make announcement or to trigger pre-recorded messages:

- Santa Barbara County Fire Department
- Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services
- Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department
- California Department of Transportation-CALTRANS
- California Highway Patrol-CHP
- United States Forest Service

During non-emergency periods, endless loop pre-recorded messages will play that will include Public Service Announcements-PSA's from the following agencies:

- Wildland Residents Association, Inc.
- Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department
- California Highway Patrol
- United States Forest Service
- American Red Cross
- Santa Barbara Community Action and Emergency Response (CAER)

EQUIPMENT PROVIDER

The following vendor provided the radio equipment and licensing services:

Information Station Specialists, Inc.

PO Box 51
3368 88th Avenue
Zeeland, MI 49464-0051
616-772-2300
616-772-2966 fax
iss@theradiosource.com
www.theradiosource.com

ALERT AM® Emergency Advisory Radio System

The complete package includes:

- **NOAA EAS/Weather Radio Interface**
Allows scheduling of Weather Radio/EAS cut-ins as part of the regular programming. Warnings broadcast automatically via NOAA's Specific Area Message Encoding protocols.
- **Live Broadcasting**
With local microphone in real time⁴
- **Continuous Broadcasting**
Continuous broadcasting during program update times to prevent dead air during a disaster.
- **Siren Interface**
Allows triggering of different messages based on cues provided by a siren, alarm or pushbutton.⁵
- **Remote Monitoring via Telephone**
Verify that your broadcast is on the air, above
- **Emergency Message Override**
Prioritize emergency message, other recordings and cut-ins during emergencies.

STATION LOCATION

The SMPERS station is located within the WRA communications bunker located at the following location:

2800 Painted Cave Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105⁶
34-30-30.0 North
119-47-33.5 West
838 AMSL
TB 964 J 6

⁴ This feature would be accessed by a telephone

⁵ Sirens are not utilized in the San Marcos Pass area. However, this feature could be interfaced with the two-tone sequential paging format utilized by County Fire to page stations.

⁶ The WRA already maintains a VHF radio station at this location for the fire departments, WNQO260.

The SMPERS station will transmit 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will have emergency power to ensure it is on the air in the event of an emergency that disrupts electricity in the area.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

CALTRANS will post signs on SR-154 notifying drivers to tune to 1040 AM on their car radios for local emergency information.

The WRA shall provide current information to the public on station information on the Association web site: www.firedept.net/wra . Other agencies may provide additional information within their public safety programs.

FUNDING

The funding for the radio equipment and support hardware was provided by a generous grant from the Wood-Claeysens Foundation in Santa Barbara. The Wildland Residents Association, Inc., will provide operating costs for power and telephone. Specifically directed tax deductible donations will be accepted to help defray costs.

CONCLUSION

Several Fire Safe members have expressed a positive interest in the SMPERS project, including the American Red Cross and the Amateur Radio Emergency Services Team (ARES), as well as the other local homeowners associations. Through the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council, policy and procedures for the SMPERS station and appropriate public oversight and supervision can be provided. This also provides a foundation for which all of the local public safety agencies can participate.

The San Marcos Pass Emergency Radio System-SMPERS is the direct result of the community coming together to find a solution to the mutual problem of getting emergency information out to the public in a timely and effective manner.