



To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Shane Barnes, and I am the Founder and President of the South East Queensland UHF Emergency Service Team, SEQUEST.

I started as a volunteer in emergency radio communications in 2007, monitoring then formed SEQUEST in 2009 to improve emergency radio monitoring services on the citizen radio bands.

Over the years, our team of volunteers has handled numerous emergency and safety of life calls on UHF CB radio, ranging from broken-down vehicles, car accidents, to fires and even a situation where a woman gave birth on the side of a highway. Regarding the proposed changes, I am concerned that they will significantly impact not only our volunteers and organisation but also require us to restructure our services. Furthermore, the communities we educate about emergency channels have contacted us and expressed concerns about the proposed changes, as they are aware of our role in monitoring these channels and our ability to respond in emergencies.

A majority of the emergency calls we receive are on repeater channels, which provide broader coverage than simplex channels.

This was recently evident during the recent tropical cyclone that affected Southeast Queensland, where the Gold Coast was affected, resulting in numerous power outages and mobile phone towers. In this situation, Channel 5 on the Gold Coast GCA05 on Springbrook, became a vital point of contact for the public requesting power updates to road closures. We have observed an increase in the use of emergency channels during natural disasters, but also a decrease during normal day-to-day monitoring operations, with more public users using UHF CB. Local government disaster management centres in regional areas outside SEQ have taken a vested interest and are monitoring and setting up emergency repeaters for monitoring purposes state government agencies, Queensland Police Service, are also looking into UHF CB as another communication tool for disaster management, focusing on regional and rural areas outside SEQ. However, the reliance on mobile phone coverage is questionable during and after a natural disaster.

The emergency channels should remain in their current state, as the proposal's reliance on mobile phones is not a viable alternative, especially in rural and regional areas. If the emergency channels were to be removed, it would significantly impact our monitoring duties, as we would be required to scan every channel, rather than monitoring designated channels for calls. The issue with scanning every channel currently is that most of the 80 channels inside SEQ area are currently congested by commercial users. We also find from our monitoring that UHF CB is a very popular choice of communications, from recreational users to commercial and even government departments. Regarding HF CB, we have never received a call in the 16 years we have operated, although we do monitor the designated emergency channel as part of our services and do feel that due to the number of HF CB radios limited produced these days by manufacturers it could be removed as an emergency channel. As the President and a volunteer radio operator myself, I hope that the emergency channels on UHF CB will remain, which will enable us to continue providing this essential service on the UHF CB network and keeping our 15 volunteers in their roles where they enjoy providing a service to the community.

Regards

Shane Barnes MAIES

Founder & President

South East Queensland UHF Emergency Service Team - SEQUEST

Emergency & Safety of Life Communications

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