

# Testimony Concerning SB 144 - Schlueter

## Introduction & Background

My name is Barbara Schlueter, KD0WAW, 1320 Elm Street, Andover, KS 67002. I became an FCC licensed amateur radio (Ham) operator in 2013. My father, brother, husband and son are/were Ham radio operators. As a Ham radio operator I am requesting the SB 144 Bill wording be revised to not prohibit Ham radio operators the use of their two-way radio communications equipment in moving vehicles.

## CERT

In 2015, I wanted to use my Ham radio skills to help my community so I joined the Butler County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). As a CERT member I have been trained in basic disaster response skills such as light search and rescue, disaster medical operations and organization, and traffic control. CERT is part of the **volunteer Citizen Corp** which is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security. CERT works closely with federal, state and local governments, first responders and emergency managers. Butler County CERT is sponsored by the local Emergency Management Office located in Augusta, Kansas and works with the local Red Cross. CERT training consists of formal classroom training and planned events to ensure its member's skills are adequately proficient for incidents (emergencies).

## Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) & Emergency Support Functions (ESFs)

Our county, as part of their EOP has identified ESFs and CERT is named in 10 out of 15 ESFs, as the primary or secondary support function. Some of those assignments include; 1) perimeter control, 2) Net Control if there is a complete loss of the public safety radio system, 3) crime scene preservation (CERT has been trained by the Sherriff's Office), 4) damage assessment, 5) staffing and running volunteer reception centers, 6) Search and Rescue (CERT is trained in search techniques for individuals with Alzheimer and Autism) and 7) resource support to generate and issue accountably ID badges to first responders and to tag resources. Additionally, the Mass Care, Housing and Human Services ESF identified CERT as trained to run shelter operations, first aid, and disaster health services and CERT members are registered and cross-trained as American Red Cross volunteers. Ham radios are essential in most if not all of these functions in order to interface and communicate between CERT members and other support agencies.

## Storm Spotting

CERT is trained in Storm Spotting Safety through yearly presentations. Additionally CERT is advised that in the field driving a vehicle the member is to check into Net Control using their ham radio. Net Control is manned by the CERT coordinator who identifies, maps and tracks the CERT members and directs their movements throughout a storm's life, transmitting through the Ham radio. CERT members are told to travel in pairs and to watch out for storm chasers. The CERT member is told to go to a high point to get the best view and to be seen by others and to make sure the member is able to leave quickly. Radar sweeps are 7 minutes old so the manned vehicles in the field are essential to storm reporting. Ham radio is essential for storm spotting safety of the member and the public.

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## Emergency Preparedness and Training

CERT members are trained to perform **BEFORE** the first responders arrive at a scene. Ham radio operators need to be proficient with their equipment as well as trained for disaster and public service support. They need to practice their skills **during planned events and on a day to day basis** so that their actions are **intuitive during an emergency**.

Ham radio operators bear the cost of their own equipment for the public safety and continuously update their skills to include the latest technology advances on their own time and at their own cost. Advances in technology enables a Ham radio operator to use his own radio to transmit an email into the Winlink 2000 **Global Radio E-mail System over the free air waves during an emergency** where no other communication is possible (WinMor application).

Cell phone towers can quickly get overloaded during an emergency even if they are still standing. Also a cell phone does not provide the ability to direct teams in the field. As an alternative, it has been found that satellite phones need a code and training to operate and are cost prohibitive as a first responder choice.

Amateur radio operators are licensed by the FCC and must pass written exams which include proper radio equipment use. The license is conditional that the operators must meet high standards of operations or the license can be revoked. Hams are drawn by their interest and desire to be helpful and provide assistance when asked. It is important to remember if this bill were enacted *the pool* of perspective Ham radio operators who would participate in CERT might *be reduced, thereby affecting the safety and security of the public*. Also *lack of a Ham in a vehicle* would *impact the public safety during community events*.

## AUXCOMM

This December I participated in AuxComm. This was a 20 hour class sponsored by Kansas Emergency Management and the Department of Homeland Security. AUXCOMM stands for auxiliary emergency communications. The class was intended to teach volunteer Ham radio operators how to plan, design, setup and operate communications within the structured ICS (Incident Command System).

## Ham Radio Volunteers save money and support the safety of the community

Butler County has 1,472 square miles with a population of 65,880, with only 120 deputies. There are not enough police officers, so volunteers are needed with ham radio. CERT members help the public for safety and control at parades, foot races, charity bike rides over several miles, crime scenes, search and rescue events, and for traffic control during large events. It is estimated that the volunteers would cost the county \$22 per volunteer hour. CERT members save the county and state government a considerable amount of dollars and free up the police for more serious and demanding job duties.

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**In conclusion**, please exempt Ham Radio operators from SB144. There are not enough police officers to serve the public, so volunteers are needed with ham radios. Amateur radio operators need to practice their skills in non-emergency situations to be able to competently act during an emergency. We have to remember that even before an emergency is declared, amateur radio operators are there locally on the ground before the official first responders arrive. They tell us how Big is Big and how Bad is Bad in an emergency, so the first responders know what resources to send to the scene. Also when all else fails amateur radio works!

Submitted by,  
Barbara Schlueter  
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