

# A Few Hints for Public Service Participants

## by Bruce Pigott - KC1US

After working a number of public service activities, I started making notes on how to be a more effective communicator. Some of the suggestions come from observations; others are from my own experience.

Be concise - Each message should be brief and convey a single piece of information. There may be priority traffic waiting.

Dress sharp - You have to earn respect quickly. Many other volunteers, professionals, public safety personnel and the public are observing you and your actions.

Use plain language - Morse code Q signals, CB 10 codes, and funny phonetics are unwarranted on voice channels and reduce message comprehension.

Push to talk.

Wait to talk - All repeaters have initial transmit delay. Some have more delay than others, especially linked systems.

Speak slowly - Net control and other stations are either out in the open, or in a room full of noise.

Speak clearly - Leave the mumbling to the politicians. KC1US

Take it off - your belt. Leaving your hand held radio next to your body will cause up to a 15dB loss in transmit power. Your two watts are reduced to only 1/16 of a watt.

Think long - The repeater uses an 18 foot antenna from a better location. Use a minimum of a quarter wave antenna (at least 15 inches for two meters) on your hand held radio so you will be heard. It may also allow you to use a lower transmit power.

Lock it - Place your radio in lock mode so your assigned channel and operating mode do not get accidentally changed.

Label it - Since situations and locations change rapidly, keeping track of your gear is easier with labels.

Write it down - Make detailed notes including time, actions, individuals and messages about critical incidents. It will lessen confusion later when describing the issue or making a report.

Know your location - You will be asked for directions, what is this event, how many are participating, starting point and route, how far to the next stop. Determine the direction of the repeater you are using, so you do not block your signal.

[Stay calm](#) - Shouting into the mike and not keeping the radio antenna vertical decreases readability.

[Be patient](#) - There will be a lot of waiting for events to happen. When the peak hits, both net control and field operators will get busy with multiple activities.

[Be aware](#) - of your situation. There may be hazards to be vigilant for while you are doing your communication tasks.

[Be visible](#) - Make sure you can be found by the person you are doing communication duties for plus other volunteers. This is also a safety concern.

[Check it out](#) - Before the event, check that your battery packs hold a charge, antennas are in good condition, assignment frequencies are set and you have manuals to program your radios in the field.

[Wear good socks](#) - You will be on your feet quite a bit, so take a tip from hikers about supportive footwear and good socks. Synthetic wicking fabrics such as polyester, acrylic or polypropylene will keep your feet dry and comfortable in both cold and hot weather.

[Volunteer early](#) - Check the regional Public Service List, local section news, club nets or newsletters and websites, so organizers can make assignments and return event details to you.

[Be flexible](#) - Full information is not always available when the event starts. You will be called on to do multiple tasks.

[Be specific](#) - If you have limitations on time, transportation, or personal capabilities, include that in your sign up data. Do not wait until you receive your assignment to inform the organizer, and then assignments have to be juggled.

[Turn it down](#) - The person you are shadowing does not need radio chatter blasting in their ear all day long. You should relay specific messages so the coordinator can do their job effectively.

[Stay out of the action](#) - Place yourself out of the event route with a good sight line of the participants. Do not set up directly at a corner, as this will cause congestion.

[Equipment will break](#) - Have appropriate spares and tools you know how to use.

[Make a list](#) - Keep a short checklist of equipment needed for working these well controlled events. This will be a subset of the items in your full ready to go kit. Update it based on event experience.

[Report details](#) - Send to the radio coordinator information about repeater operation and observations about your assignment after the event.