

Washington Parish Communications District

805 Pearl Street
Franklinton, Louisiana 70427
July 27, 2010



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Katrina Chronicles, Five Years Later

Shane O'Neal, NS5D, wrote in *The Katrina Chronicles 1* (November, 2005, *QST*), "By the time I reached Bogalusa, giant trees were scattered everywhere, the tops of utility poles were lying on the ground and snippets of power lines were strewn like spaghetti along the side of the highway. There were trees on top of houses, trees sticking out of houses and a few houses on top of trees. This was a small, impoverished southern community that had been set back 100 years in the course of a day."

Marcelle Hanemann said some five years later in the local Washington parish paper, *The Daily News*. "Residents and leaders of Washington Parish, like their counterparts throughout the southeast portion of the state, learned the hard way when Hurricane Katrina blasted through that survival and recovery are nearly impossible without effective communications".

One of those that witnessed this destruction in 2005 was Jim Coleman, AI5B. Jim was serving as the ARES Emergency Coordinator for Washington Parish at the time of Katrina. He now serves as the Louisiana Section Emergency Coordinator and Chairman of the Parish's 9-1-1 governing board.

Coleman announced on Tuesday, July 27th that the parish, plus the 9-1-1 Communications District, will construct and equip a new facility to provide coordinated electronic, telephone, satellite and radio communications to, from and between all law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, hospitals and emergency management agencies within Washington Parish and with the surrounding parishes and Mississippi counties.

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Coleman went on to say that, “The architects are about four weeks from the plans being final,” Coleman said. “Then they’ll go out to bid, and it will take about a year to build. It should be ready in fall of 2011.”

Tommy Thiebaud, Washington Parish Director of Homeland Security, joined Coleman in presenting information to the parish council for their approval. Director Thiebaud and Chairman Coleman have insisted that redundant radio communications assets be included in this facility.

Accordingly, the facility will be equipped with a full D-Star repeater plus an analog 144 mhz ham repeater. Near Vertical Incident Skywave (NVIS) antennas on 75 and 40 meters are planned for the nine acre site. In addition, the facility will as serve as a regional hub for a 440 mhz linked system designed by the Louisiana Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ARES Liaison, Roger Farbe, N5NXL. Lastly, when all else fails, 2 meter directional antennas at 400 ft AGL will be available for long distance vhf communications.

State Senator Ben Nevers has been instrumental in securing state funds for this facility. Senator Nevers, it might be remembered, exclaimed: “Thank God for ham radio” after passing on some important information to his emergency manager during Katrina using ham radio equipment, when all else failed.

Indeed, the success of ham radio is playing a significant part in The Katrina Chronicles, Five Years Later.