

MEMORANDUM

To: Steve Willis, Chairman, El Dorado County Fire Safe Council

From: Deborah Kruse, Chair, Coloma Lotus Fire Safe Council

Subject: GMRS Radio Use and Neighborhood Radio Network Development

Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2021

This memorandum requests an agenda item be added to the February EDCFSC meeting to discuss GMRS radio use and neighborhood radio network development. Several members of the El Dorado County Amateur Radio Club (EDCARC) Radio Net Advisory Committee want to share with this group the progress made in developing procedural safety controls to avoid liability, miscommunications, and other potential radio net issues.

During its meeting last October, the EDCFSC Board passed a resolution limiting the development of Neighborhood Radio Watch Programs (GMRS) by Associate Fire Safe Councils. The resolution also stated that (during January or February 2021) the Board would reconsider Neighborhood Radio Nets' use by Associate Fire Safe Councils in coordination with EDCARC, as long as sufficient safety controls are put into place.

Before and since the October meeting, the Coloma Lotus Neighborhood Radio Network, separate from the CLFSC, was organized in coordination with EDCARC members. A growing number of licensed GMRS radio users have been running weekly check-in calls since March 2020. Over these past ten months, we have been developing and improving Radio protocols and scripts. There are now procedural controls (protocols or standards) prepared and being put in place to obtain Neighborhood Radio Nets' desired objectives while avoiding and minimizing liability, miscommunications, and other issues. An advisory committee has formed with representatives of the Sheriff's office, County OES, and other emergency personnel to review and develop protocols and procedures for Neighborhood Radio Net use. Training in fire behavior, incident command protocols, and the use of radios have been prepared for rolling out radio nets throughout El Dorado and Amador Counties.

At this time, the advisory committee does not foresee EDC Associate FSCs would conduct area radio nets. FSC members who want to use GMRS radio nets for emergency preparedness would form a separate group under the EDCARC umbrella. Also, neighborhood radio groups need a well-placed repeater to provide adequate radio reception. These repeaters (radio reception) will help determine each Radio Watch Group's geographic extent. One well-placed repeater would likely cover multiple smaller FSCs. No formal Memorandum of Understanding is needed between the EDCFSC and the EDCARC. However, since the two groups share wildfire preparedness objectives in the same western slope area, we would like the two groups to work together when there are opportunities for mutual support.