

## AVALON TUNES IN TO EMERGENCY

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AVALON - The newest radio station hitting the airwaves doesn't play Top 40 music, country or classical. It doesn't play music at all.

It's not talk radio, but it could help you out.

The Avalon Office of Emergency Management started broadcasting on 1630 AM a 14-minute loop of weather information, which will soon include information on potential emergency conditions in Avalon and surrounding communities, Avalon Chief of EMS Kevin Scarpa said. In case of blackouts, floods or storms, the radio broadcast will instruct listeners on the location of shelters, where to park cars during floods, whom to call during blackouts and other emergency procedures.

The \$21,000 system, covered mostly with an \$18,000 New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management grant, will update the current public address system, which Scarpa said has had problems. That system has speakers at three Avalon locations, and a voice instructs residents or vacationers about emergency conditions. "It's fairly inefficient because it echoes," he said. "It's not easy to understand." Especially during blackouts, nonemergency 911 calls flood the dispatcher's lines, which can get tied up with unnecessary calls, Scarpa said.

The borough hopes to change that with a constant radio broadcast that people can tune into first. "We're hoping that people get accustomed to it, that they turn to it before anything else, when the lights go out, when the thunder cracks," he said. Avalon started broadcasting weather reports from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on March 23.

By the end of this month, that broadcast will include local information and public-service announcements, Scarpa said. The public address system will still be in place and may be used to alert people to tune into the radio frequency....The antenna is affixed atop the Avalon firehouse, whose metal roof helps transmit the 10-watt broadcast, he said. It can be heard in Avalon, Sea Isle City, Stone Harbor and Strathmere.