The Source
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Ventura County Partners with ISS to Introduce Portable Radio Station for Use by Public Health and Safety

California's Ventura County forms the northwestern portion of the Greater Los Angeles area. Covering nearly 2,000 square miles of land, crisscrossed by several major highways, this growing region boasts a population of nearly 800,000 people, one third of whom are Spanish-speaking.

Early in 2008, County emergency preparedness specialist Steve Johnston approached Information Station Specialists' (ISS) with a set of needs that ultimately led to the finetuning of a new means of reaching the public with health/safety information in a crisis. The RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station is designed to be used in conjunction with portable road signs that instruct motorists to tune to a special AM radio frequency for critical information. On average, each station covers 25-75 square miles and can be quickly moved into position in an emergency and/or operated from a fixed location at other times.

In late summer 2008, ISS assisted Steve Johnston in debuting this new capability at "Operation Sunrise," an annual training event the County hosts for volunteer Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), first responders and other emergency professionals to help them hone their skills.

Below, Johnston shares his perspective on the RadioSTAT experience at Ventura County:

Steve Johnston *(2nd from right)* Trains First Responders

"Ventura County Public Health/Emergency Preparedness Office has a robust Point of Dispensing (POD) plan, which we exercise frequently. "After-action" reports from these sessions indicated much time and staff were spent repeating basic information to citizens. Also comments were made regarding the lack of bilingual signs and directions to the POD site. So we looked to technology for assistance.

RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station was tested during realistic first-responder medical surge training exercises – providing information to the general public and media as it would in a real emergency.

RadioSTAT Demo Operation Location

"We determined that ISS' new RadioSTAT AM solution was what we needed to help resolve those issues. The system is portable, easy to use and allows us to create and broadcast information to incoming persons, greatly reducing the need to answer questions at the site as well as reducing the need to get the media to broadcast driving directions.

"The system is easy to set up and get on the air quickly. Our Public Health Officer is now recording scripts on flash drives so we have material ready to go in the event of a disaster or response to an event. The ability to broadcast 'live' via microphone allows us to create and broadcast timely information. Coverage is great in our county, and we are considering letting other county agencies use our RadioSTAT station for non-medical response information and events.

Mock school bus explosion at fictional "Sunrise Middle School" helps Ventura County Public Health test their response capabilities.

"By broadcasting basic information to arriving citizens we have increased our throughput during mass vaccination exercises and we have relieved our staff of repetitive questions and answers. In fact another after-action report suggested a portable AM radio receiver at check-in areas

for people waiting for vaccination, which we did. This eliminated many questions. And by alternating bilingual information we covered a larger segment of our population than with just signage alone.

Incident Command, Registration and Communications Tents in Place

"We used contributions from several grants we administer to buy our RadioSTAT station.; CDC, Homeland security and pandemic flu preparedness funds were pooled. The expenditure was in compliance with preparedness requirements for each grant. I think the point is that grant recipients need to look at the deliverables and think out of the box on how to comply with them. Our workplan was approved before any purchases were made.

"I want to thank Information Station Specialists for their assistance in designing and refining this concept into something highly user friendly and important to our response plans. They provided assistance in frequency monitoring and selection, FCC license application; and they listened to our feedback on what was needed and affordable.

JUNE 2009 UPDATE:

"Recently we got a chance to deploy our RadioSTAT station during the swine flu event. During the first couple of days, we were receiving requests from physicians to test patients for the swine flu. We were concerned about bringing them [inflected people] into our building to collect specimens. With a concern for social distancing and to keep potential cases from infecting others, we decided to have citizens drive into our parking lot; specimens were taken from them, while they were in their cars.

"To facilitate the process, the AM radio station was deployed along with the information signs. When patients drove into our lot, they were instructed to tune their radios to 850 AM. They received all the information on the process and how they were to interact with our [public health] staff. This eliminated personnel from talking to each driver and exposing him/herself to a potential swine flu virus." The County also plans to use RadioSTAT for drive-through clinics and bilingual applications.

Steve Johnston
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Ventura County Public Health

Information Station Specialists is the sole provider in the United States of the exclusive RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station.

1. RadioSTAT is the only system of its kind comprised of a transmitter/audio system mounted in a weather-resistant shock case to allow maximum portability (via handles/wheels) and flexibility (it may be used on the ground or on a building roof).

2. Only the RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station features black antennas that discourage ice build-up. Also, they are finished with a special UV-resistant, architectural-anodization process to prevent color fading.

3. Only the the RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station includes a USB/MP3-based Digital Message Player and includes audio editing software to allow message creation and management on any standard PC or laptop.

4. Only the the RadioSTAT Portable Emergency Advisory Radio Station features a quick-erect antenna stand to support the antenna and connected groundplane that collapses and can be deployed within 10 minutes.

5. Only RadioSTAT uses an AM transmitter with a modern synthesized frequency system, so that if a frequency change ever is necessary, it can be easily done without component changes or board-level work. RadioSTAT's TR6000 Transmitter utilizes an efficient Class D amplifier, comprised of only two driver devices for highest reliability. Moreover, TR6000 is the only such unit manufactured and type-accepted for Travelers Information Station (TIS) applications in the United States.

6. Only RadioSTAT comes with no-charge message-recording service by professional announcers.

7. ISS' electronic designs are nonproprietary. This means that in the future, components may be changed as needed without the requirement to return to ISS; *i.e.*, simple wiring diagrams are provided, so users can service equipment themselves, if desired, or have a third party assist – all with full ISS support.

8. Additionally, only Information Station Specialists offers technical assistance for the life of the product. ISS supports today radio stations that first went on the air in the 1980s. ISS' staff of engineers has more than 80 years of combined experience specifically in the kind of radio technology under which RadioSTAT operates (FCC Rules, Part 90.242). This experience level is more than double that of any other company in the business.

RadioSTAT features an easy-to-go format but may be used in a fixed location when not needed on the road. Its low price makes it possible to acquire multiple stations for simultaneous operation at different locations.

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