Beyond Ham Radio – Getting the Information to Residents

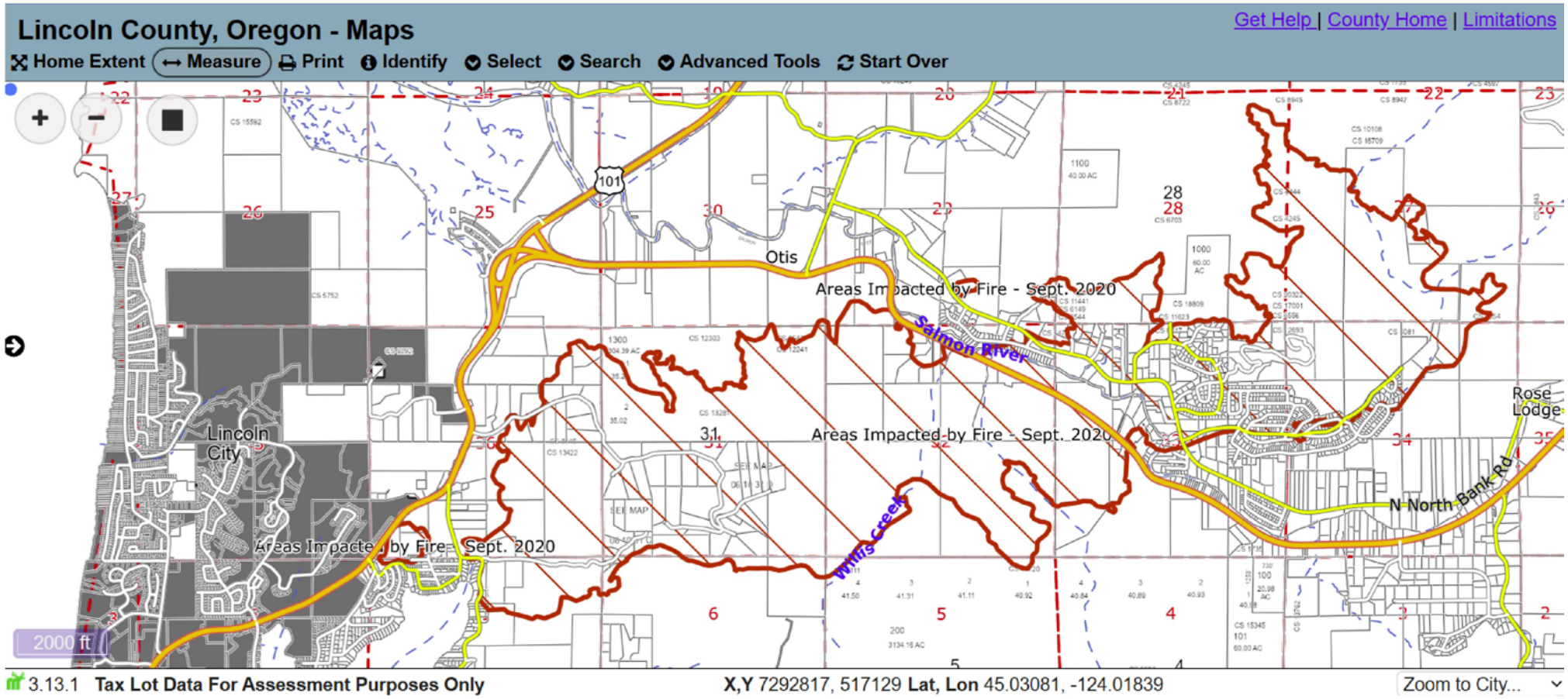
Little Whale Cove Safety Committee

Introduction

- Some coastal counties have established ham radio networks providing for:
  - Inter- & intra-governmental communications,
  - First responder communications,
  - CERT teams, &
  - Critical facilities;
- Nonetheless, how do we transmit important information to the general public?

A very real scenario – The Echo Mountain Complex (aka Otis) Fire (Sep 2020)

Why is this Important?



- **No electricity**
- **No cellular**
- **No reports on FM radio**
- **No or infrequent NWS reports**
- **Rampant rumors & misinformation**
- **Smoke turned day to night even on the coast**
- **Highway 101 jammed with evacuees in vehicles**
- **Long vehicle lines for gasoline**

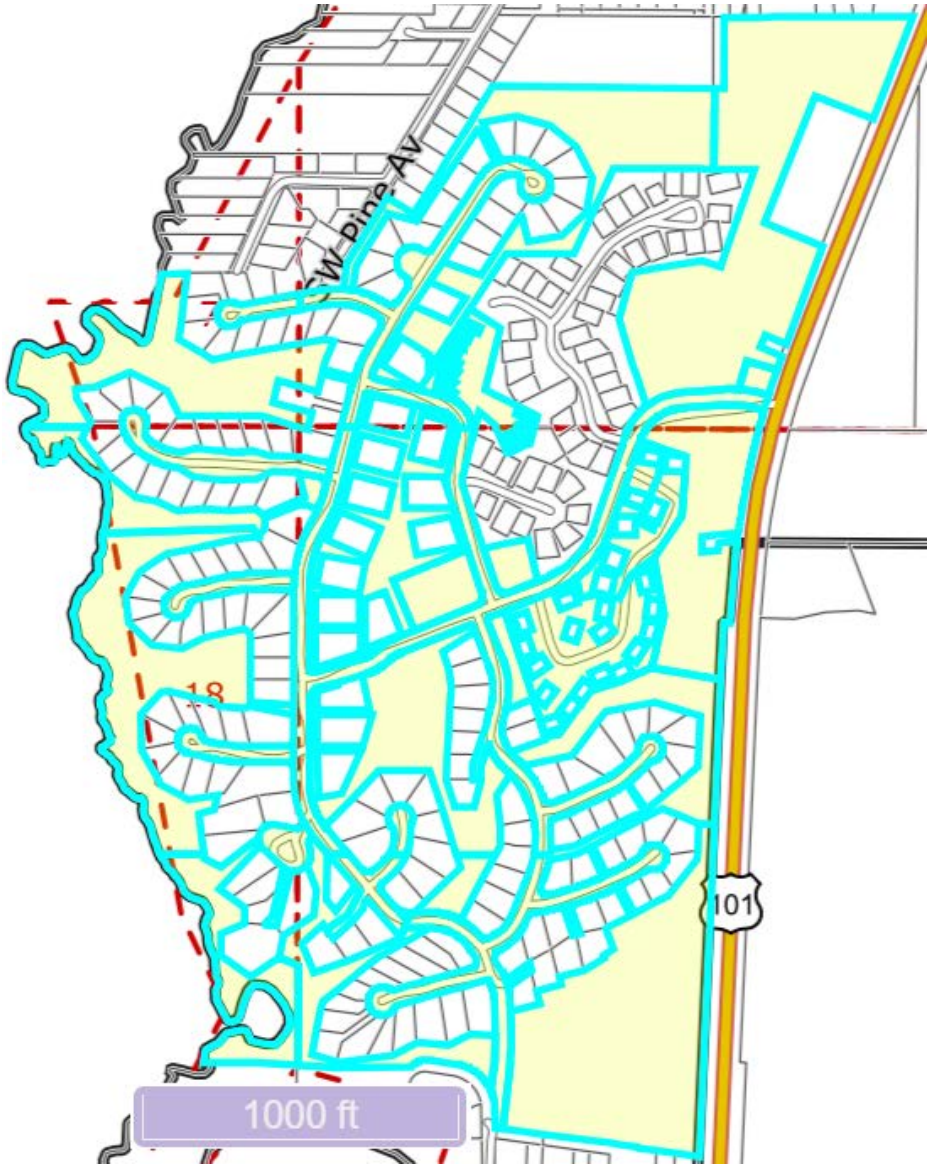
Now, imagine a full-rip M9 Cascadia earthquake (i.e., XXL) & tsunami!

Challenges

- Of the people >18 years old in the US, ~0.3% are licensed ham operators
- If some/all of the following services are down:
  - Electrical
  - Internet
  - Phone landlines
  - Cellular service
- Rapid dissemination of information throughout a community may not be possible

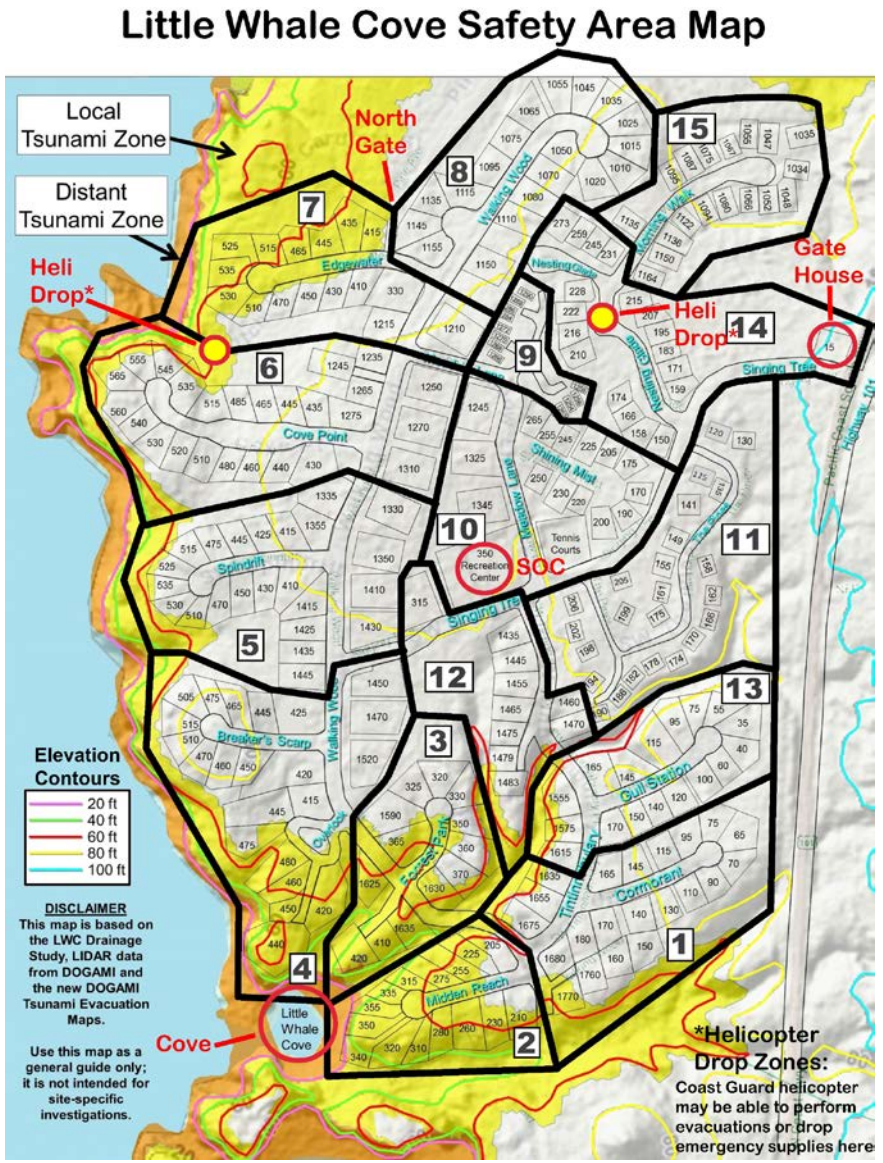
Little Whale Cove (LWC) Facts

- Oregon Planned-Unit-Development of 268 homesites in Depoe Bay
- 140 acres
- Topographically diverse terrain from 12 to 100 feet
- Heavily forested
- About 700 residents
- Some long-term rentals
- Rec Center is a designated Tsunami Assembly Area



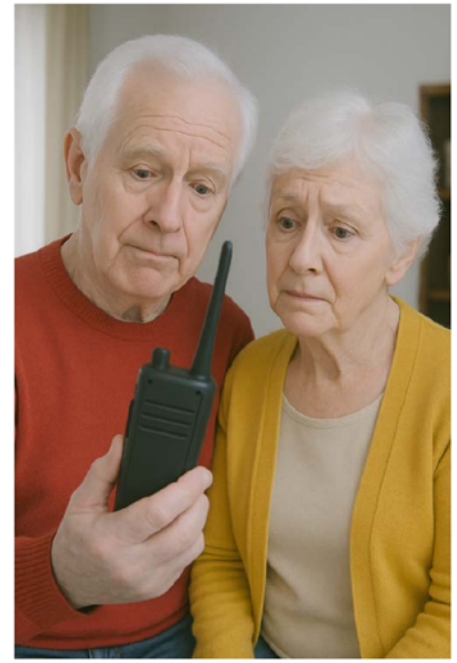
What LWC Is Doing

- LWC is divided into 15 Safety Areas, ideally with at least one Safety Captain per area
- Encourage people to serve as Safety Captains (to educate & communicate)
- Encourage people to buy walkie talkies & listen to the LWC Community Radio Service (CRS)
- Conduct routine monthly radio polls to check radios



Please consider serving as an LWC Safety Captain!

Your task? – To educate & communicate.



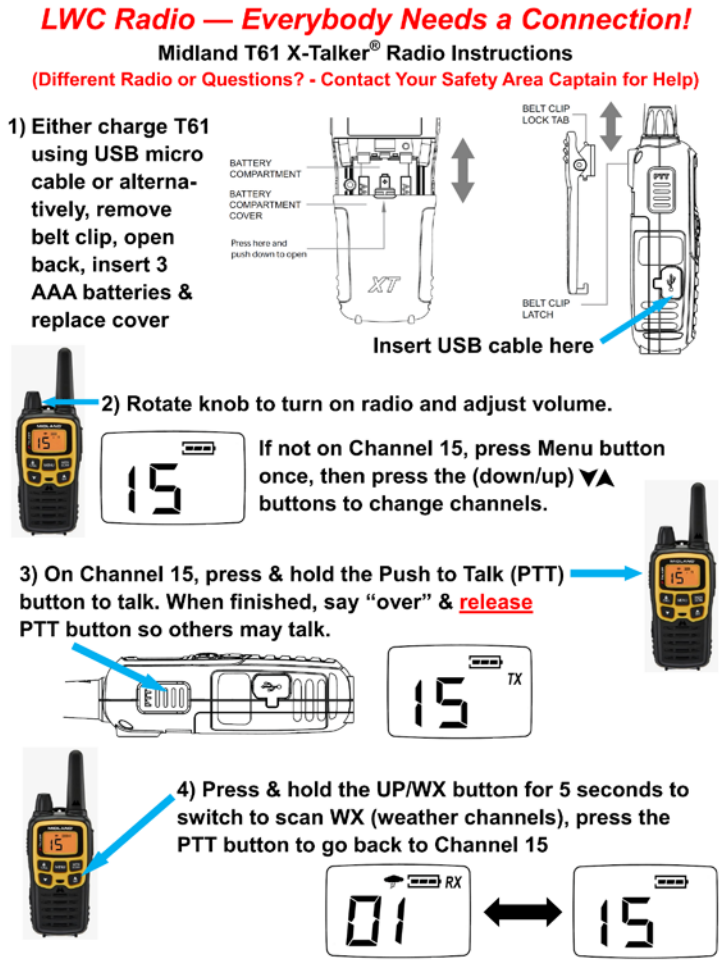
New radio? Wonder if it works? Listen in on the LWC Community Radio Service (CRS) Routine Radio Poll on the first Saturday of each month at 0900 Local Time on Channel 15

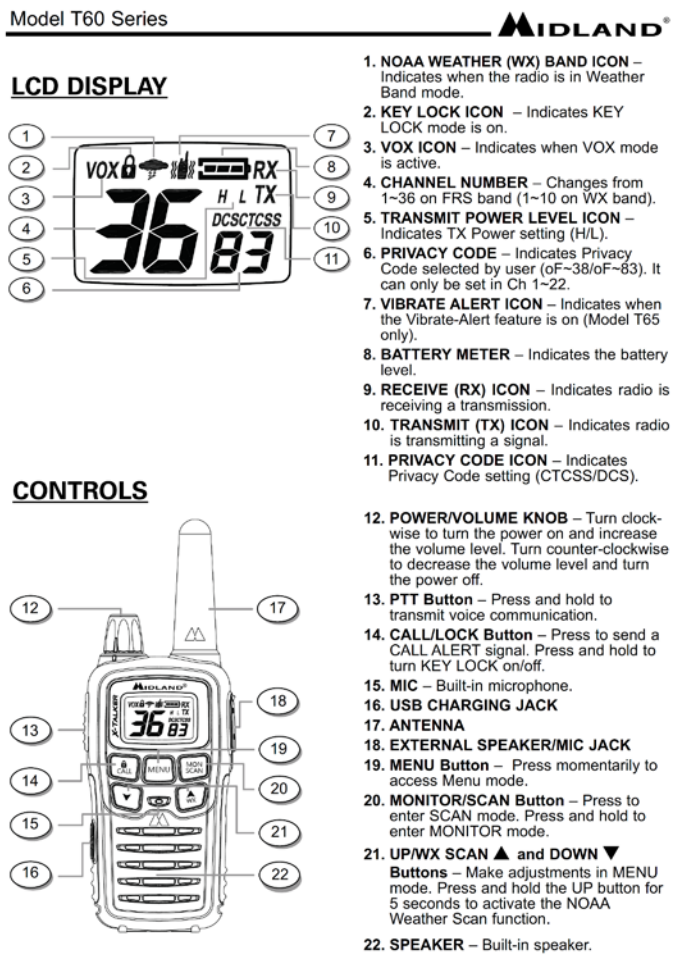
Remember, you do not have to talk, unless you want to talk. Please just consider turning on your radio so you are familiar with its operation & to make sure your batteries are OK!

For additional information talk to your Safety Captain, click on "Emergency Preparedness" on the LWC website (https://lwcha.org/), or scan the QR code ☛

What LWC Is Doing (continued)

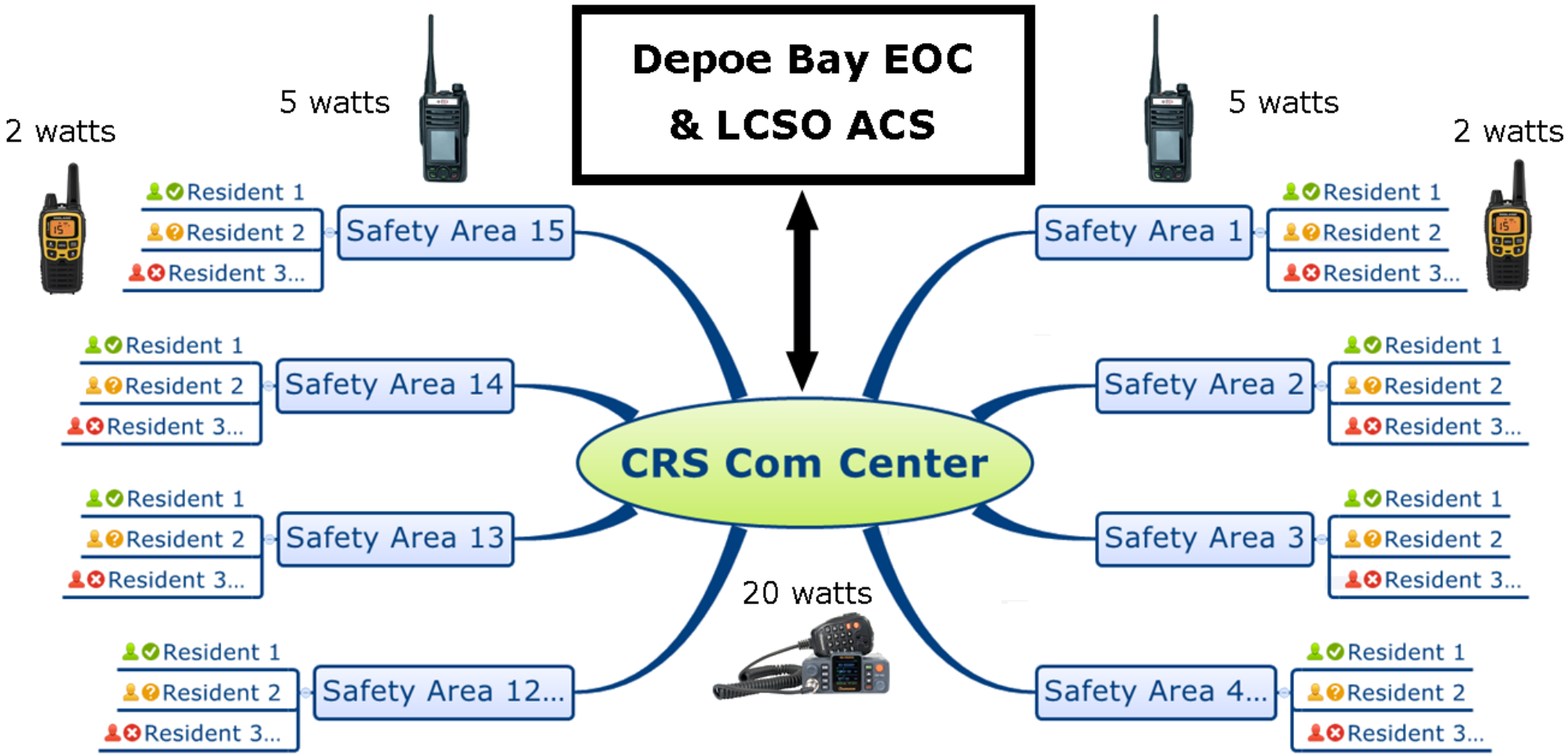
- **Simplified instructions for specific radios**





What LWC Is Doing (continued)

- **During emergencies, a Safety Captain will attempt to transmit every hour, on the hour, from the LWC CRS Com Center**



What LWC Is Doing (continued)

- **Maintains a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness information page on LWC's website**

What LWC Is Doing (continued)

- **LWC CRS Com Center with GMRS/FRS & ham radios & trunking scanner with PC**
- **Kiosk & programmable scrolling LED sign**

What LWC Is Doing (continued)

- In addition to hourly radio communication, use programmable, LED scrolling text signs
- Prepare After-Action Reports (AARs)
- Conduct Table Top Exercises (TTXs) for various scenarios (e.g., power outages, wildfires, earthquakes)

What Still Needs to Be Done

- More participation by all residents in the monthly LWC CRS Routine Radio Polls
- Set up trunking scanner with PC to monitor & record radio transmissions (more accurate, detailed AARs)
- Outfit Com Center with external GMRS/FRS, scanner, & ham antennas
- Devise method to alert residents to turn on their walkie talkies to Channel 15
- Further test electronic language translation of radio transmissions

What Still Needs to Be Done (continued)

- Establish a backup Com Center possibly at the LWC Gatehouse with GMRS & ham radios with external antennas & backup power
- Further test our existing mobile backup Com Center currently housed in a resident's camper van
- Implement fact-checking protocols to ensure accurate information is disseminated
- Continue to refine LWC's established Incident Command System (ICS)

Conclusions

- **While it is absolutely essential that ham radio networks be established, they are only part of the answer to information dissemination**
- **A solid network of GMRS/FRS radios also is essential for information dissemination & data collection**