

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Meet with RAGBRAI Staff

West	May 2/3
East	May 9/10

Chairperson's Role & Responsibilities

Advice from previous committee chairpersons of RAGBRAI overnight towns varies, but the top recommendation from all is to read the chapter pertaining to your committee. Familiarize yourself and your Co-chair (if you have one) with all the duties and responsibilities discussed in the handbook. Then educate your volunteers and co-workers about the content in your chapter. Reading the entire book is also recommended to eliminate duplication of effort among committees. Set up a budget immediately and establish a game plan. Then develop a timeline with specific completion dates for critical steps.

Keep these points in mind when conducting committee meetings:

- Have an agenda
- Keep meetings short, no longer than one hour
- Take minutes at each meeting
- Ask your Executive Committee Chair to attend
- Prepare for contingencies "What if?"

These are the overall responsibilities of a committee chairperson. And above all else-

DON'T LET GREED BE THE MOTIVATOR. YOU SHOULD GET ALL AGREEMENTS IN WRITING. A COPY OF ALL AGREEMENTS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE TREASURER.

An efficient and effective communication network is essential to quickly address all the challenges that occur when a city's population triples in size in a matter of a few hours. This communication network must be easy to use, readily accessible by RAGBRAI crews, city services, transportation systems, law enforcement and medical personnel, all while staying operational as long as needed. Good communication is a key to having a great RAGBRAI.

We have analyzed past needs, successes, and weaknesses to help avoid similar problems. A communication map was developed to assess

equipment needs and model system requirements. The communication map (see end of this committee section) is a helpful reminder of network capabilities.

Key advisers and committee members with communications expertise should be added early to the project. They have realistic knowledge of equipment capabilities, and can acquire all communication devices including portable two-way radios and cellular phones. Your phone company should be contacted about providing phones at the information and command centers. They are very helpful and can often handle all details of setup with one phone call to their business office.

Some helpful tips:

- Easy to use, two-way radios are the most useful. Everyone can monitor routine communication and be continuously informed of significant events. Be sure that if you rent them or someone lets you use theirs, that you obtain insurance for them.
- You should record all serial numbers of equipment prior to distributing them to individuals. Radios and cell phones can then be tracked if not turned in or misplaced. Be sure to inform all users when and where equipment should be returned. It is also helpful to label with name tags as all radios look the same.
- Cell phones should be used when secure, private communication is needed, i.e. first aid station to hospital. Otherwise, two-way radios should be your first choice in communications.
- Equipment drawbacks can be a short battery life. Have backup batteries and chargers.
- It is recommended that at least one hard line phone be installed in both the command post and the Main Information Center in addition to the cell phones and the radios. These should be non-published numbers that committee members and other involved individuals and organizations should have.
- Provide a directory to go with each communication device that lists important telephone numbers in the community and in the system. This list is necessary and should be small, laminated and on a lanyard for easy carrying. The directory should have basic instructions as to how to use the cell phone or radio, along with communication etiquette tips.
- You must establish communication needs very early and require all committee chairpersons to think about what their specific communication needs may be. Not all committee members will need a radio.

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- When securing your equipment, add an additional 25 percent to the number of devices for unexpected last-minute needs. (see the planning sheet at back of the section)
- Be sure to plan for equipment to communicate to the masses. Most fairgrounds and schools have public address systems. Most emergency vehicles have PA systems as standard equipment. Powerful bullhorns could also be used, if necessary.
- Build a relationship with your local TV stations for weather alerts and updates.
- Access to National Weather Service chat rooms provides great detail regarding local current and forecasted weather conditions.

The plan should allow for a wide variety of problems to be addressed, including:

- Storm information and disaster alerts
- Public address paging in campgrounds
- The transfer of meal status and campground capacity to buses and information booths.

It is critical to have a communication plan in place and thoroughly discussed in case there is a need to inform riders throughout your community of impending danger or crisis.



Command Post

Over the years the Command Post has developed its own identity with an increased level of importance. It is recommended that the Command Post remain separate from the Information Center while remaining centrally located in town. Some towns have utilized the police station or volunteer fire station as the command post while others have used mobile EMA trailers. An EMA team in Independence used RAGBRAI as a training exercise in 2014 to test the setting up of command centers.

It is suggested that the command post be operational beginning at 5:30 a.m. on arrival day and

in operation by 5:00 a.m. on departure day. Many command posts stay open all night when weather is questionable.

Cell phones, hard-line phones and two-way radios are probably the best choices for a successful communication system. Ham radios and radio stations can help supplement the system.

The communications command post is of vital importance to your organizing committee. In the event of a crisis, the command post will be the main area to disperse information through your communication network according to the policies that are detailed in your Crisis Management Plan.

We highly recommend that at least one of the four Organizing Committee Co-chairs be stationed at, or nearby, the command post at all times to swiftly handle any major decision should that need arise.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) is a public safety system that allows cell phone customers to receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages alerting them of threats to safety in the area. Visit the FCC website for more information on WEA: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea.

Training

The best equipment and network in the world is not effective unless your committee members are properly trained to use the equipment. Not only is it important to know how to operate the various communication devices, but it is also important to educate committee members on the proper etiquette and language used while communicating. Items that should be covered during training are:

- A brief 5-10 minutes of hands-on training a few days prior to RAGBRAI to operate all equipment distributed (communications devices, charging apparatus, etc.). Consider finding someone familiar with “on the air” radio etiquette to assist with the training.
- Provide instructional “cheat sheet” of how to operate
- Provide phone list and radio call sign list on easily accessible lanyards
- Use call names such as “Campground 1” instead of the person’s name.
- Follow protocol to call or respond to individuals
- Remember: Radios are public airwaves!
- When and where to return communication devices

General Recommendations

Members of this important committee could include the emergency coordinator of a ham radio club, city police and county sheriff communications officers, chair of Public Safety Committee and a retired telephone company employee. Meet with all committee chairpersons to find out their communication needs and suggestions. Utilize local radio stations, public address systems, two-way and portable radios, and cellular phones while RAGBRAI is in town. Seek communication companies such as Motorola or a cellular phone company that may loan you equipment to help keep expenses down.

Ham radio clubs have proven to be valuable assets to communication teams. They are well trained with their amateur radio equipment and typically are knowledgeable about the capabilities of equipment in the area.

Most communities include city crews (such as sanitation and water), security (police/sheriff), public information (radio and television station representatives), transportation, campgrounds, and food committees when they issue the communication equipment. Everyone should operate on the same frequency.

The Iowa State Patrol, RAGBRAI Director, the SAG Wagons and four RAGBRAI ambulances monitor the regular state patrol radio frequencies, AID and LEA. The ambulances also have a specific medical frequency. Matt Phippen, RAGBRAI Director, carries a cell phone (319-361-8771) as well as Marketing Director, Anne Lawrie (773-562-9337) and are available 24 hours a day during the event.

The RAGBRAI Frequency is 151.955

Plan ahead and be prepared for the “what if” factor. Throughout the day, and especially in times of crisis, it is crucial that you can communicate. Be sure to have a plan in place if the power goes out. Know the capacity of calls that your cell phone towers can handle.

Be sure to test the range of your radios in advance to make sure you can communicate in all the areas of town that you need. **The use of a repeater will improve the reliability of the two-way radios.**

Rider Services

The more services that a community provides for riders will be most appreciated. It is these little things that people remember!

Phones

Many riders carry cell phones on RAGBRAI. Most towers cannot handle the influx of calls during

RAGBRAI. Actively engage local cellular service providers to increase their tower’s capacity to handle the additional calls that come with RAGBRAI. Cellular companies like Verizon and US Cellular can bring in additional equipment (portable towers) or boost the capacity of existing towers to help with the added volume. If you are not contacted by representatives by May, please contact a local cellular dealer and ask if that provider plans to boost in your area during RAGBRAI.



It is best to locate portable towers, such as the one pictured above, away from campgrounds as they require a significant footprint and are powered by generators.

The better the cell phone coverage, the less questions of “Where is my group?” will be asked of your Information Center.

Communications Committees in the past have provided the service of cell phone charging. The rider would bring their phone and charger and sign a damage waiver. The community said the riders really appreciated the service.

Providing a land-line for riders to use can help in emergency situations when a cell phone won’t work.

Internet & E-Mail

Some riders will bring laptops on RAGBRAI. If you have areas that have free wireless access, be sure to indicate these areas in town on your town map. If your schools or library will offer the use of their computers for riders, be sure to publicize this. In the past, some towns provided free city-wide Wi-Fi.

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COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE TIMELINE & CHECKLIST

This is a schedule that worked for a town last year. Set a timeline that is reasonable for your community.

MARCH 2022

- Determine how many volunteers you will need
- Determine equipment needed and seek bids
- Budgets due to Budget/Fundraising Committee
- Attend Overnight Host Town Meeting in Des Moines
- Meet with Information Center Committee to secure a hard-line phone

MAY 2022

- Meet with RAGBRAI Staff
- Meet with Shuttles Committee
- Meet with Medical Committee

JUNE 2022

- Determine Command Center location
- Finalize communication needs
- Meet with Law Enforcement Committee
- Written communication plan
- Written guides & tips for workers – including pick up and drop off locations

JULY 2022

- Schedules and assignments for volunteers
- Hand out radios/phones
- Volunteer orientation and training meeting
- Community clean-up

AFTER RAGBRAI

- Send out thank you notes
- Complete surveys
- Wrap up meeting with RAGBRAI Staff

**RAGBRAI® COMMUNICATIONS BUDGET
GRINNELL, IOWA (JULY 28, 2011)**

REVENUE

Communications Income	Budgeted	In-Kind	Actual
Sponsorship	0.00	0.00	0.00
<hr/>			
TOTAL REVENUE	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

EXPENSES

Communications Expenditures	Budgeted	In-Kind	Actual
Cellular Phones Rental	2000.00	0.00	1,995.00
Two-Way Radios Rental	1,920.00	0.00	1,920.00
Miscellaneous	50.00	0.00	0.00
Hard Line Phone(s)	1000.00	0.00	330.00
Command Trailers	1,920.00	0.00	0.00
Internet Hot Spot Rental	1,500.00	0.00	0.00
Repeater Rental	275.00	0.00	0.00
Labor	960.00	0.00	0.00
<hr/>			
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$9,625.00	\$0.00	\$4,245.00

	Budgeted	In-Kind	Actual
Total Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expenses	\$9,625.00	\$0.00	\$4,245.00
TOTAL PROFIT/LOSS	-\$9,625.00	\$0.00	-\$4,445.00

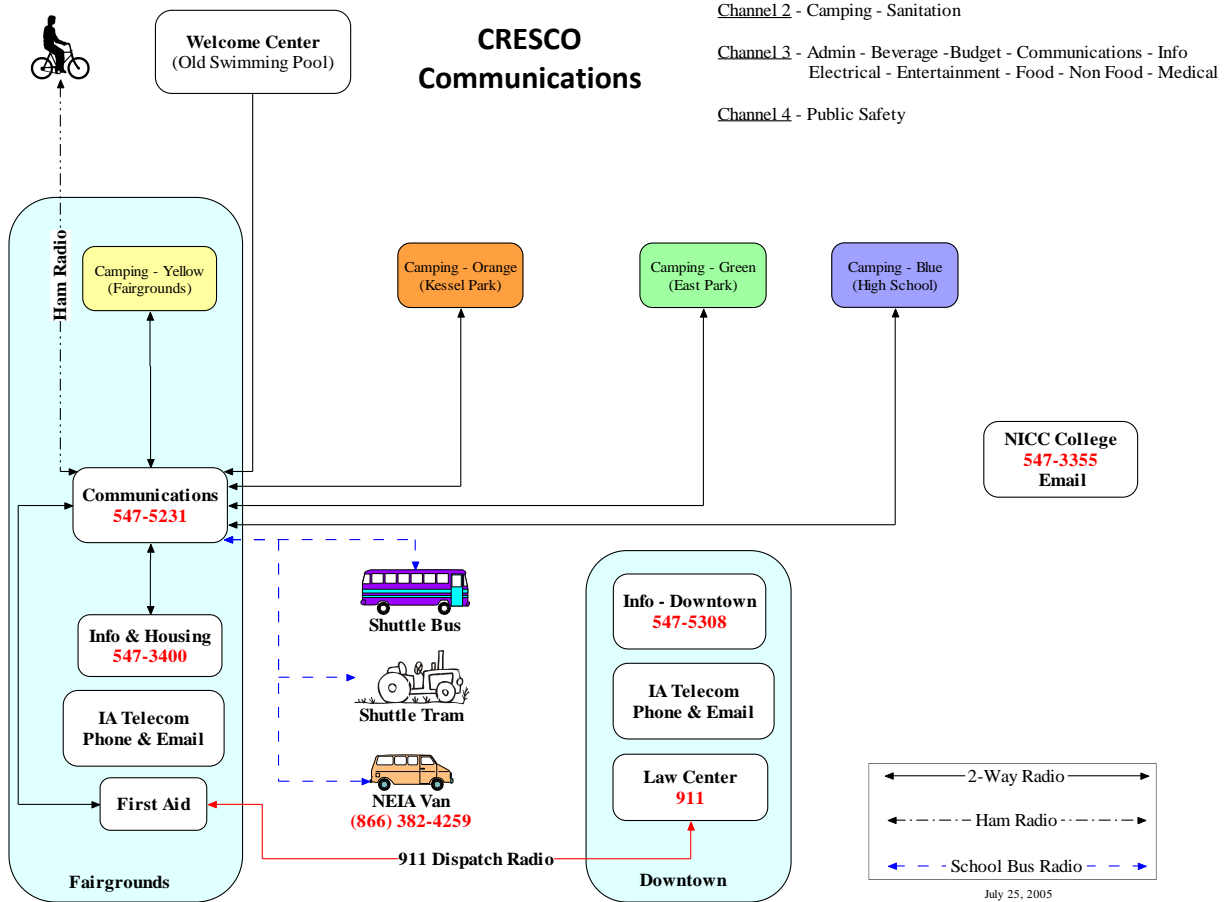
Communication Guidelines & Tips

Radio Operation Procedures

1. Turn on the radio by rotating the ON/OFF/VOLUME knob in a clockwise direction. DO NOT turn the volume all the way up. It causes distortion of the voice you want to hear. It also has **no effect** on outgoing transmission quality.
2. Turn the CHANNEL SELECT KNOB to the number of your assigned Channel.
3. Think about how best to make yourself understood.
4. Wait for the channel to clear (no one else talking). Only one person may talk at a time.
5. Hold the radio vertically, at face level, with the antenna in the clear.
6. Press the large PUSH-TO-TALK button to transmit. Wait before speaking to allow the other radios to activate.
7. Be brief and to the point. Speak across the front of the radio rather than into it to improve clarity. Use a natural speaking voice. If there is loud ambient background noise, the best way to overcome this is to shield the radio from the noise/wind, or wait until the noise passes. Do not shout into the radio. It only distorts your voice.
8. Speak clearly, and use the proper protocol to call a specific position. Ask for the intended party first, followed by your identification. Use call names related to the committee position when possible. For example “Food Vending from Main Street Information Booth”. Respond back “This is Food Vending, go ahead”. Always wait a moment before responding to make sure the other person is finished speaking.
9. ALL RADIO CONVERSATIONS SHOULD BE CONCISE, PROFESSIONAL AND PROVIDE COMPLETE INFORMATION!
10. The use of "Thank you", "Please", and "Be Advised" is not necessary or desirable as it uses valuable air time.
11. The FCC prohibits use of indecent, obscene, or profane language on any radio.

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Communications Plan (sample)



Radio Check Out Form (sample)



OTTUMWA RAGBRAI TWO-WAY RADIO CHECK OUT FORM

2016

RADIO AGREEMENT

As a two-way radio user for Ottumwa's Ride to the Party event, I hereby agree to be the party responsible for the proper care of, and the safe return of, the following two-way radio equipment.

RADIO (Includes antenna, battery & belt clip)	
Qty: _____	Style: _____

ACCESSORIES	
Spare Batteries: _____	
Speaker Mics: _____	
Chargers: _____	

DATE: _____
COMMITTEE: _____
PRINT NAME: _____
SIGNATURE: _____
PHONE #: _____

RADIO SERIAL NUMBER	✓ IN

For more information or questions, call McCall Communications, Inc. at 641-684-6566 or call Todd Carlo at 641-680-9474.

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Communications Planning Sheet (sample)

Cresco Communications

Channel	Committee	Radios	Phone Line
3	Administration	3	
3	Beverage	4	
3	Budget	1	
2	Campground	12	
3	Communications	3	547-5231
3	Electrical	2	
3	Entertainment	3	
3	Food	4	
	Hospitality	0	
	Housing	0	
	Information - Fairgrounds	0	547-3400
	Information - Downtown	0	547-5308
	Information - Welcome Center	1	
	Law Enforcement	0	
3	Medical	1	
3	Non Food	2	
	Publicity	0	
4	Public Safety	4	
	Ride Right	0	
2	Sanitation	4	
	Shuttle Service	0	
	Volunteer Recruitment	0	
	Web site	0	
	Spares & Charging Units	6	
	Total Requests	50	