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For the last several years I have also served as a COML on a county level Incident Management Team (IMT). During a recent IMT meeting, our OEM Director discussed what is on the minds of most emergency managers in the state and in much of the County. Considering the devastation of last year's Eaton, Palisade, and Altadena fires in California, we are in a new era for wildland fires.

Vegetation fires combined with hurricane-strength winds can cause severe destruction. In Colorado we experienced this during the Marshal Fire of 2021, during which 1,000 homes were lost. The Altadena Fire in California destroyed 16,000 homes. That fire moved faster than emergency management's ability to notify area citizens about evacuations.

The emergency management community is looking at serval ways to improve or change the way the public is notified during evacuation situations. First, they are looking to standardize the language used to describe the different types of evacuation notifications being issued. There have been several different terms used in the past, but emergency managers plan to standardize on "Evacuation Warning" to alert the public to prepare for a possible evacuation, and "Evacuation Order" to convey the public needs to go now.

Additionally, there is talk within the emergency management community to add an additional siren to public safety vehicles that is not in common use in the United States. That is the high/low siren that is more commonly used in Europe. They are considering a public education campaign that says, "High/Low Means You Need to Go". The idea is that if no time exists to be able to use a reverse-911 type of notification to citizen telephones and cell phones, police and fire vehicles could drive through neighborhoods sounding the high/low tone and it would be unique enough to grab people's attention and get them moving.

One last item, in the February QST on pages 63 and 64 is an article that describes how to structure a simplex net. Now that public power shutdowns (PSPS) are part of our reality during high wind events, being trained to effectively run district simplex nets is an important tool in our communications toolbox.

During last December's high wind event, several Northern Front Range repeaters were off the air because without commercial power their backup batteries failed. Also, we learned that some repeaters we thought were connected to generator power were not. Section-wide we need to give more attention and training to communication methods that are not dependent on repeaters. Running an effective simplex net during which you catalog the strongest stations and assign them as relay stations is one such method.

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