



FROM TOWN HALL

SKIP CRANE

An important part of the Town's communications responsibility is the set of processes, methodologies, and structured technologies that we employ to ensure that the most appropriate and accurate information for any "situation" is made available to the community when the information is needed. We are also responsible for the straightforward delivery of information—usually requiring more than a single format, as not all residents use the same tools. For example, mobile phone technology might work for one user, whereas tablets and personal computers are essential for another. For the most part, our "situations" are normal—keeping in touch with Town matters and events through either the Town website or mainstream social media apps such as Twitter and Facebook. Residents can follow a calendar of Town meetings and local events, or they can read through our meeting minutes as they are posted to the Town website.

SI residents are all too familiar with the fact that "situations" are not always normal.

Back-to-back years of hurricanes, King Tides, and heavy rain events—all since 2015—are a testament to that. Under these kind of circumstances the Town's communications are intended to provide (1) warning so the community can adequately prepare, (2) direction so residents know how best to respond, and (3) assessment as to how the community can best recover. The common thread for all of these is information.

The Town is always evaluating the best tools for providing timely information in these situations. Our local network of HAM radio users is the communications backbone for the Town's local response efforts. (HAM radios are important to us because they typically work when other commu-

nications services have failed). Each month we conduct a network test for officials, emergency response volunteers (Seabrook Island's members of the Community Emergency Response Team or CERT), and local amateur radio enthusiasts to assess our network's range and capability. In addition, the Town's 2019 budget provides for upgraded communications equipment beyond the HAM network so we can be in contact with local, county, and state response teams. Overall it is the Town's goal to have situations that are not normal be dealt with as "normally" as they can be under the circumstances.

This season's holidays have come and gone, and now we enter the "Quiet Time"—time with far less stress and many fewer distractions. Perhaps it is a good time for residents to evaluate their own information resources. For example, there are numerous free weather apps for every common communications device—customizable for our location—that can provide valuable forecasts and alerts. You can sign up to be part of the Code Red network to receive important warnings for impending storm emergencies, from flooding to high water and high winds (<https://www.scecmd.org/stay-informed/codered-alerts>).

Perhaps most importantly, we can use the "Quiet Time" to make decisions about how we will respond to emergency situations before those conditions are actually upon us. We can create our own personal checklists for what valuables we want to protect and how. There are many sources of information for guidelines in this respect from federal sites (<https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>) to the link on our local community blog, Tidelines (<https://tidelinesblog.com/hurricane-hints-resources-2018/>).▲