

Emergency Community Radio

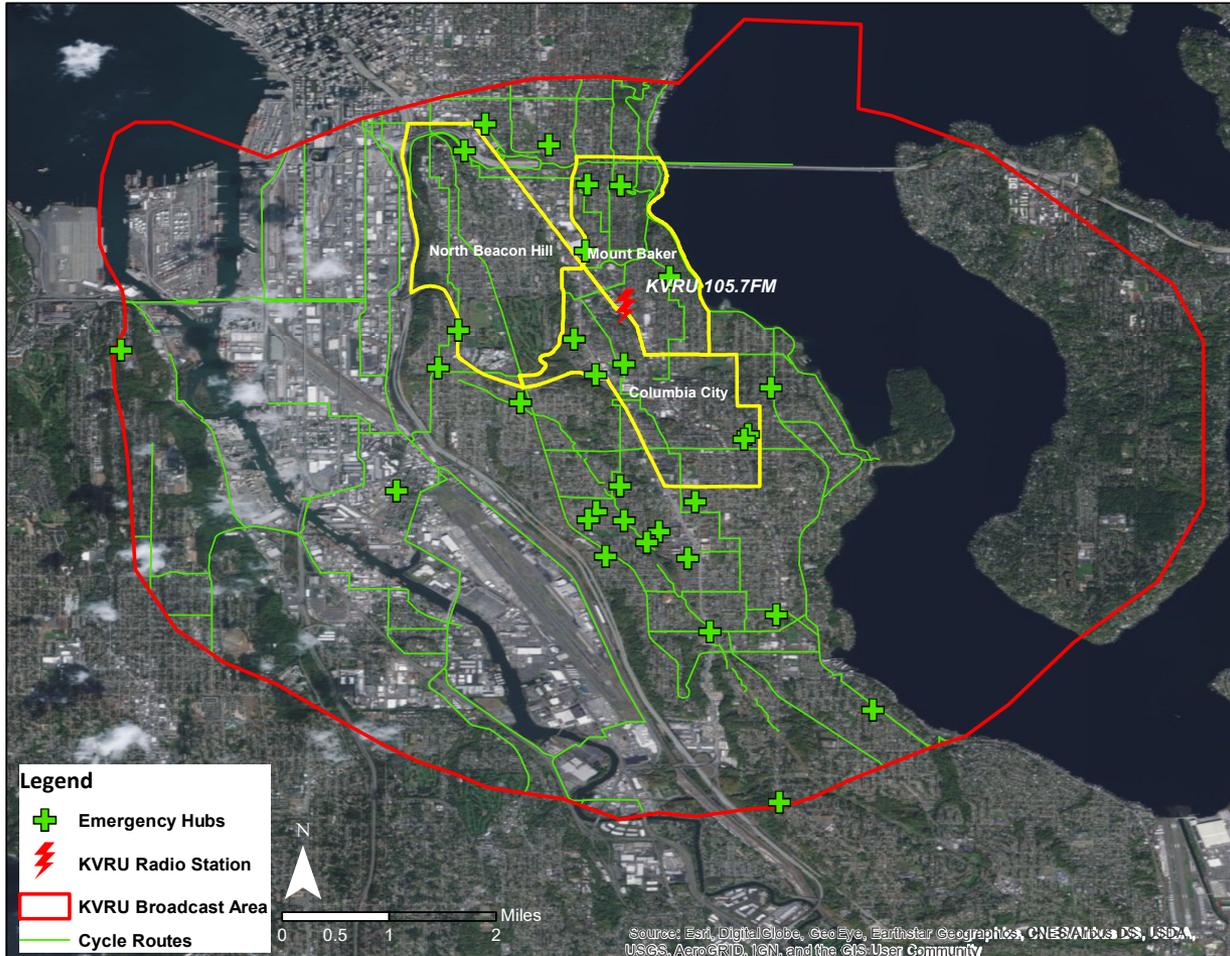
Using Radio “Pop-Ups” for Community Mobilization and Disaster Response



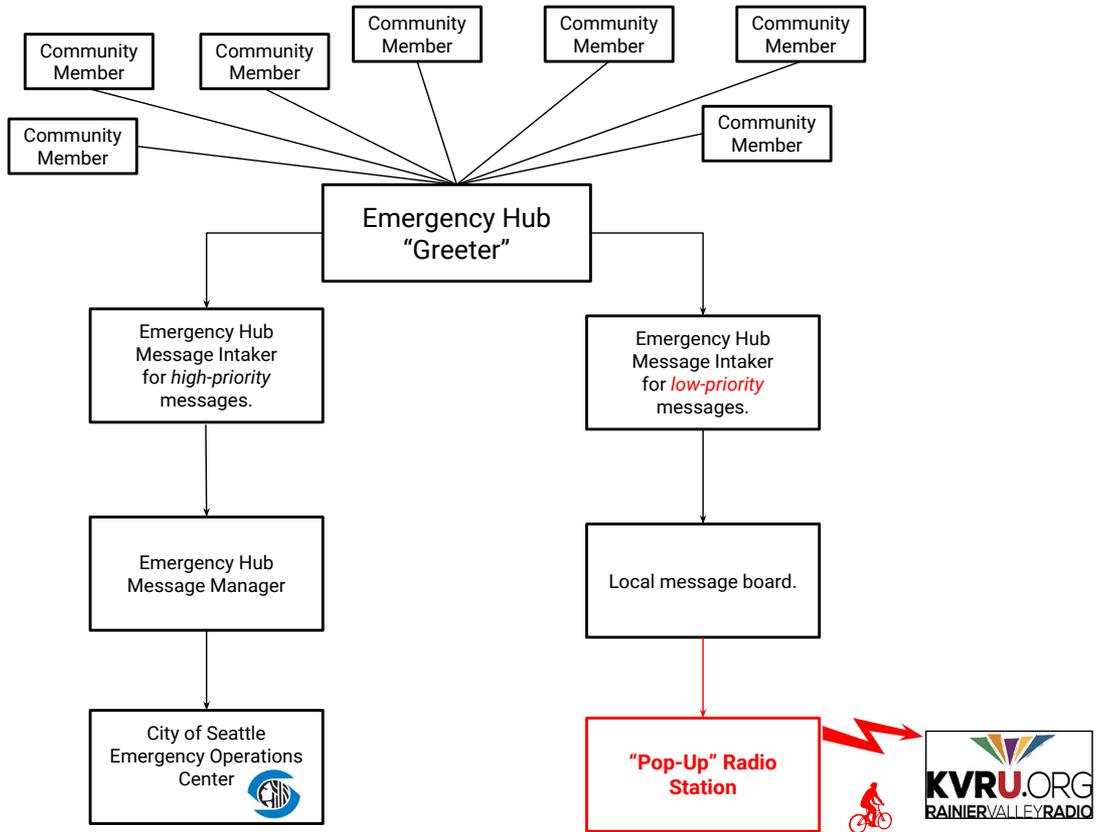
Overview

- Seattle’s half dozen Low Power FM (LPFM) radio stations – including KVRU 105.7 in Mount Baker – provide neighborhoods with “hyperlocal,” community-centered programming, focusing on local arts, history, culture, and events.
- As has been shown, LPFM stations can play a valuable role in disaster situations, notifying residents about emergency resources, potential hazards, and other vital information.
- The Seattle Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has designated numerous “hubs” throughout the city, where self-organized volunteers can gather to exchange information, supplies, and assistance during disaster situations. They also serve as communications outposts where the affects of local emergencies can be reported to city agencies. Of the 68 hubs in Seattle, 31 are located within KVRU’s broadcast radius.
- Pop-up stations are used by radio broadcasters to connect with potential listeners, spreading publicity and recording interviews. In a disaster situation, radio pop-ups could be placed at OEM hubs to collect information and broadcast it to residents.

KVRU Radio and Surrounding Emergency Hubs



OEM Emergency Hub Information Intake System



Research and Graphics Resources

- **Federal Communications Commission.**
- **Washington State Geospatial Data Archive.**
- **City of Seattle – Office of Emergency Management.**
- **The Prometheus Radio Project.**
- **The Stranger – Seattle’s Only Newspaper.**
- **Quake radio drama from BBC Radio 4.**
- **Brown Paper Tickets.**



LOCAL COMMUNITY RADIO (LPFM) IS ESSENTIAL IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Local Community Radio Act
H.R. 1147
S. 592

Emergency response is the coordination of government resources with local communities to facilitate communication and effective recovery and rescue operations during national security threats, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. In order to ensure a quick response to emergencies, governments work with different broadcasters to ensure that reliable communication infrastructure exists.

Stories of Low Power Community Radio providing vital information in times of crisis

WQRZ-LP BAY ST LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the in Mississippi, a low-power station, WQRZ-LP, was the only source of emergency information in Hancock County, Mississippi, broadcasting vital recovery information 24 hours a day. The city of Bay St. Louis, where the station is based, was ravaged as 125 m.p.h. winds destroyed bridges and other infrastructure. Throughout the county most radio, television, and phone services were down. Shortly before the storm, WQRZ had moved its equipment—including its home-made radio tower—to an Emergency Operations Center where it made its broadcasts. The station provided vital information long after the storm, eventually receiving a temporary full-power license.

WCIW-LP IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA

As Hurricane Wilma approached Immokalee, FL, the local low-power, WCIW-LP, alerted the community, first in Spanish, then in Haitian Creole and Central American languages such as O’anjob’al, Zapotec, and Mam. This radio station was attuned to the diverse languages spoken in this farmworker community in southwestern Florida, making it able to alert everyone working in the fields.

WRIR-LP RICHMOND, VA

Recognizing the valuable role LPFMs play in natural disasters, the City of Richmond entered into a five-year agreement with WRIR-LP to broadcast emergency response information in support of the City’s recovery efforts.

KZQX-LP CHALK HILL, TEXAS

During Hurricane Ike many residents in East Texas lost electricity for up to a week. While most television stations stayed on the air, people were simply unable to tune in. In Chalk Hill, TX, residents used battery powered radios to tune in to the local low-power station, KZQX-LP which stayed on the air using generators. KZQX-LP broadcasted vital information, such as reports from local authorities and interviews with the area energy company as well as the local Public Safety Director. Volunteer reporters ran live reports on road closures and damages. Reports continued after the storm passed.

KYGT-LP IDAHO SPRINGS, COLORADO

During severe snowstorms in March 2003, Clear Creek Radio (KYGT-LP) became a hub of emergency information for people trapped in their homes and cars under 30 foot avalanches. For four days the station sent out emergency PSAs and gave people a place to solicit and receive information using their cell phones. The station helped arrange the rescue of someone trapped in a snow drift after his family called in.

The **PROMETHEUS RADIO PROJECT** is a non-profit group in Philadelphia that has built dozens and assisted hundreds of stations in the United States and around the world.

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