



WNKI 578-1610 AM

A dba of Mile High Radio Club

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Cranston Fire – WNKI578-1610AM – Idyllwild

WINKY remained fully operational throughout the Cranston Fire. To date, thirty updates have been broadcast over the airways of 1610 AM throughout the greater Idyllwild area. Even when other local commercial FM broadcast stations went off the air due to the extended power outage effecting our area; WNKI578-1610AM remained on the air with 24/7 broadcast updates of emergency evacuation orders and escape routes.

The reader must know a vast majority of the entire mountain was without power for several days. Temperatures were 90 plus degrees, internet was not operational for many, there was no nightly news, nor were the telephones fully functional. For us at station WNKI, our source of communications was direct one on one within the Fire Department or via Ham Radio communicating with the Riverside County EOC – RACES operations all on an emergency power supply.

The very first emergency broadcast updates over 1610 AM were performed with live voice recordings. The early hours of our efforts were very fluid as the dynamics seemed to evolve every 30 minutes with new evacuation orders for each new update. As Wednesday wore on and Thursday rolled around we began expanding the messages and their content. At that point we switched to “Text to Voice” software allowing for a perfected broadcast to the listeners.

As our communities were allowed to re-populate WINKY began providing travel instructions in and out of the various locations as instructed by Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol. In addition, we reminded those returning home of the extended power outage and to clear their food supplies of any perishables.

Our corroborated broadcast operations were the result of working directly with the Idyllwild Fire Protection District, US Forest Service, Riverside County Emergency Management Department – EOC and RACES operations along with Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol. We also supported several safety and welfare broadcasted messages via details from non-governmental operations such as Southern California Edison and the Red Cross.

Over the next couple of weeks our team will be assessing their performance of communications, an after action of the Cranston Fire event will be prepared.

Bill Tell KD6KTV and Roland Gaebert KE6NPN

For Station WNKI578-1610AM and the Mile High Radio Club