

The Source

Information Radio Newsletter

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High on Safety

California Amateur Radio Club: Funding Now Likely for Emergency Radio Station Expansion



Left to right: Bill Tell of Mile High Radio Club; Bruce Barton, Riverside County Director of Emergency Management; Stacie Kelly, Emergency Services Coordinator - District 3.

IDYLLWILD, CA: Good things can come to those who wait, and that appears to be holding true for Idyllwild, CA's, Mile High Radio Club, which for years has been patiently planning a major expansion of their community's Information Radio System, which broadcasts on AM frequency 1610. Spokesman Bill Tell explains, "Our plan for expanding WNKI578's broadcast coverage has become a top funding priority."

"Winky," as it is affectionately dubbed, was first licensed at Idyllwild, California, in the 1980s to advise the public of wildfire, earthquake and storm dangers. Recent events such as the Cranston and Esperanza Fires have underscored the need for increased signal coverage, now possible through (1) [high performance antennas](#), (2) [GPS synchronization](#) and (3) signal strength waivers. The plan is to widen the station's coverage footprint so it can be picked up from Poppet Flats to Pinyon Pines, California, a radius increase from the current 3 miles to nearly 20 miles.

Tell adds, "On this mountain, we have the potential for complete isolation, as we experienced during major road washouts recently, severing our ability to freely commute in and out. With the possibility of wind events or power being turned off during peak fire season, communications have become very critical throughout our region for safety and possible evacuations.

"Station WNKI578 proved its worth during the [Cranston Fire of 2018](#). It never ceased to operate, even when power was shut off to our community for several days. It continued to keep residents updated as requested by unified command."

See a [video playback](#) of Riverside County Emergency Management Director Bruce Barton sharing news with the Idyllwild community about the County's support for a planned Winky coverage-area expansion.

See the below examples of how and why other municipalities use radio technology for emergency management:

- [Isolated Bainbridge Island, WA, and flood-prone Lago Vista, TX, prepare for emergencies.](#)
- [Montecito, CA, delivers critical info to evacuating residents over the air and by internet streamed broadcasts.](#)
- [Gatlinburg, TN, upgrades warning systems to include radio stations, warning sirens and special signage.](#)