

# Emergency Preparedness Gets ACTivated

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## Emergency Preparedness Gets **ACT**ivated

Bartow, Florida, in the seat of Polk County, recently purchased 20 six-bay Maintainers from Advanced Charger Technology, Inc. as part of the county's aggressive emergency preparedness program. The area that makes headlines as the site of devastating wild fires, tornado touchdowns and localized flooding prefers the distinction as host for the annual Sun and Fun Air Show at Lakeland Airport. Fun and Sun is the second-largest air show in the U.S., attracting an influx of 700,000 out-of-county visitors to the Lakeland area. This year, the entire public safety communications for Sun and Fun operated on an emergency back-up system. A daunting task for some, but not for Ben Holycross, Radio Systems Manager for Polk County Government, a veteran of two Hurricane clean-ups who manages communications for over 20 agencies every day. Holycross just stepped the readiness meter up a notch with the implementation of the **ACT**ivator emergency charging cases for two-way radio batteries.

“When faced with the need for public safety communications for the Sun and Fun event, as well as the Fire Index approaching the critical mark, the ability to have and maintain charged batteries to support portable radio operations is a necessity. There needs to be a way to charge batteries whenever and wherever they're needed and to have a large number of charged batteries available for emergencies at all times. We've installed six Maintainers each in two containers so we can take them on site wherever we go with our portable mobile radio system,” explains Holycross.

Holycross's department fitted the Maintainers into rolling storage cases for quick portability. Each case holds six, six-bay chargers mounted on plywood backboard above a six-plug power strip. A single plug from the bottom of the case fits into the wall. The Maintainers are designed to keep back-up radio batteries available at all times by providing patented charge and periodic cycling, assuring that fully-charged, dependable batteries are available in times of peak need. The unique Polk County set-up enables 36 batteries to be charged and ready for any situation. A fully-loaded case can be unplugged, covered and quickly moved to the necessary location when needed. The case can be plugged back in on location, and the **ACT**ivators serve as highly-efficient fast chargers which can put any radio back into communications in minutes. [The Maintainer charges a 1200 mAh two-way NiCd battery in 30 minutes].

“I've provided radio communications services after Hurricanes Andrew and Opal. What ever I learned from those operations has gone into the planning of Polk County's Emergency services program The pitfall in an emergency situation has always been the failure of back-up batteries stored on chargers for long periods of time. After using the Maintainer for six months, we know it can store batteries for that long and they'll still be dependable in an emergency. Other systems couldn't provide that back up,” Holycross adds.

Polk County is in the process of implementing a new, state-of-the-art 800 MHz trunking system that will unite the whole area – over 20 county agencies, and eventually include participation from many city agencies within the county. As part of the changeover, Polk



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County, the city of Lakeland and the state of Florida will co-locate a radio tower in Lakeland, so the city's existing tower had to be removed, reducing the normal strength of coverage.

The coinciding of Sun and Fun and the tower removal created a necessary opportunity to test the efficacy of the county's new emergency-backup communications system. The back-up system features an Aluma Tower trailer, which carries an 8 x 8-foot equipment shelter and a 100-ft telescoping tower and supports a five-channel portable trunking system that can communicate with military. It also includes primary and secondary mobile communications units and an emergency operations center (EOC), with two six-bay Maintainors at each. New radios for the 800 MHz system were pre-shipped for the special event, and preparations included programming radios and charging batteries for all public safety users. (formatting new batteries took less than two hours with the Maintainors, instead of the usual 16 – 24 hours). The "trial run" was a success.

"We ran the whole public safety side of the event on the back-up system," says Holycross. "Everybody from the city of Lakeland and Polk County who provided public safety services to the event was on the back-up system for the new 800 MHz system."

Polk County, with a population of about 500,000 people, is located in central Florida between Tampa and Orlando. The 2048-square-mile county is the ninth largest Florida county in population, and the fourth largest in size. It is also the home of 17 municipalities, ranging from Lakeland, population 75,000 to Highland Park, with a population of 220. More than 600 lakes occupy 225 square miles throughout the county.

Advanced Charger Technology, a division of enrev Corporation manufactures the **ACT**ivator battery chargers for two-way radios and portable iDEN devices. The **ACT**ivators incorporate patented enrev™ technology to deploy an intelligent charging system that eliminates classic battery headaches. The **ACT**ivator products condition batteries as they charge, fully charge batteries to maximum available capacity with each charge, triple battery life – as many as 2000 cycles for a typical NiCd battery, and eliminate memory effect to improve the performance of portable radios.