Civil Defense Office Here Serves Eight Area Parishes

By: FLO SMITH

The Louisiana Civil Defense Agency was established by the state legislature in 1950. State headquarters for the agency is at Jackson Barracks, New Orleans. The state is divided into six geographic areas, with an agency representative in each of the areas.

The local agency representative, Col. Thos. N. Ritchie, has offices in the basement of the Lafayette Parish Court House. His area is comprised of the parishes of Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, and Vermilion. However, because the representative in the Lake Charles area has retired, Col. Ritchie also heads that area which includes the parishes of Beauregard, Allen, Calcasieu, Jeff Davis, and Cameron.

Coordinates

The agency area representative coordinates the civil defense activities of the parishes under his jurisdiction. Each parish has an emergency operating plan, geared to handle civil defense operations during either a man-made disaster or a natural disaster.

In the event the area should become cut off from the state headquarters or the governor in Baton Rouge, the area representative for this net is in the Emergency Operating Center in the Court House. If needed, during periods of emergency, this station will be in contact with all parishes maintaining communication equipment as a part of the area net.

Area 6 also has a land line teletype connected to the state civil defense headquarters at Jackson Barracks, and to all the other six area representatives throughout the state. They also have radio capability for talking to state headquarters and all the other area headquarters in the state. This is separate from the Area 6 communications net and can be used as a back-up in the event of failure of the area net base station.

Volunteers

During periods of emergency, the area headquarters is manned by technical volunteers

The area representative is the liaison between the state agency and the various police and fire departments throughout the state. His responsibility is to assist local governments to develop their civil defense posture, to acquire equipment and manpower, through the state agency, and to assist the governments in getting back to a normal operational status after any emergency.

In the event the state should be cut off, KVOL, the only official station broadcasting information to the public in the 8-parish area, would be the only station in such an instance, used in case of an area disaster. KVOL, in such an instance, would be the only official station broadcasting information to the public in the 8-parish area.

The equipment furnished by the government is tested on a monthly basis and can be operational within minutes.

Mutual Aid

A Mutual Aid Agreement, signed by the area parishes, indicates that they will support within their capabilities any parish suffering any major damage which it is not capable of handling. The area office maintains records and files of what each parish has to offer and can direct efforts when mutual aid is required.

For instance, theoretically, if Vermilion Parish is hit by a hurricane, and if Lafayette Parish has equipment it does not need at that time, then the equipment would be loaned to Vermilion Parish.

Area 6 maintains a communications net with the parishes in the area. The base station should a disaster require its activation.

Personnel in the Lafayette office, in addition to Col. Ritchie, is his secretary, Mrs. Almarie Barilleaux.