

I got to the station area about 0415, a time when the roads were being closed. Parked at the Mile marker. The truck was unloading Mile equipment. When the station was set up, we had clock training and an on-time clock start. After the lead male runners passed, I performed the 0.6 mile walk, west to the Water Station and greeted the Captain (same as last year). Remained until the streets were swept about 1230, then checked out and went home.

Communications:

The UHF repeater seemed to have performed well throughout course. I used 1watt all day. The VHF repeater (147.000) was receiving interference at the beginning of the day-- I had to shut it out during those hours--no back-up guard. It cleared up late in the morning.

As the day developed and the heat increased, medical and drop matters absorbed much of net content. Would like to suggest that specific words be adopted to be promulgated and used depicting "tired and quitting"; "physical annoyances" like chaffing or joint matters; and "medical emergencies". Such could save much net discussion.

When a person sounds lousy on the radio, they should be told such. The mic's on ear buds and speaker mic's are second best the the mic in the HT. An operator can use the ear bud for audio and still speak into the HT. Day long events has it's toll on batteries. Some HAM's are not sensitive to the depleting batteries resulting in poor transmissions. Net Control could broadcast a "check your batteries" statement periodically. Many HT's can set a battery status indicator on the liquid crystal display window from their menu.

Roll Call was not conducted until after the launch of "Marathon" male runners. It should be much earlier.

Race Start Sequence:

Hand Cranks were reported on the track with no advance notice nor any mention that they were starting before the Wheel Chairs. (Did I miss the report of the Wheel Chair start?) I asked the question and was told "Hand Cranks, first" (I read the start sequence.) That matter needs refining to avoid confusion.

Hardly any HAM's reported bib numbers. Station 9 was looking up- sun and the athletes were often in a pack. Wheel Chairs and Cycles bibs are in locations difficult to observe. If the management really needs lead athletes bib numbers, perhaps a HAM on a bicycle with APRS or a HT could accommodate the info. (That's easier said than done).

Personalized Bibs:

Reading numerals is far easier than reading a group of letters that may not represent any dictionary word. Such letters necessitate more net talk. How about personalized numerical sequence? A lead female had a bib identification reported as "117", "17" and "F17". Such variables can cause much confusion in some situations.

Trucks:

Suggest trucks be identified as to what they do. The Water Station truck was a Budget 27000 GVW machine with 9 glass waxed on the front windshield. The Mile Marker truck was a Budget 27000 GVW machine with 9 also glass waxed on the windshield. Terms used by the year round crew should be avoided so as not to confuse the "one day" volunteers.

Information:

Volunteers depend on the HAM communicator for information. There were inquiries as to who won the Marathon. The response was that's not relevant. Why?

With the higher temps, we ran out of water cups (forcing the use Gatorade cups instead to keep the runners hydrated), due to the greater demand on hydration needs.

The one very noticeable thing at mile #15, was the overall number of volunteers that were available; it seemed we could use just a few more volunteers for the event. Also, it appeared that many of the student volunteers required a little more motivation and less time spent being idle, at times. The few adult supervisors did their best to keep the students engaged, as much as possible but the effects lasted for only a short term.

At Med22 we had a full-sized bus again, even though the driver also told them it was an issue. The medical staff did not like it either since it blocks the view of the runners, as well as blocking the view of the medical tent for the runners. At least the air cond. worked better than the heater did last year.

There are a couple of solutions for this. One is to get a shuttle, instead of a bus. Another is to move the medical tent so that the bus could be parked down-course from the medical tent. The lunch this year, specifically the sandwich, was actually quite good. Please give feedback to the responsible person as far too often only negative comments come back. I think that you said that this was the last year for

lunches though. On the other side, you might want to ensure that Hams who sign up actually have a 440 HT. Just having a 2m HT really does not do any good. As well, having the same Ham also show up 2 hours late is not a positive thing. In order to not have Mile22 without a Ham (the other person had not shown up), I had to walk down to the mile marker, which is around .5 miles away, to start the clock. S. Gretna Green was not blocked off from San Vincente, which resulted in some of the Farmer's market trucks from going onto the course. Perhaps some communication to the organizers of the Farmer's market would help to inform them of issues on race day. The median where the Fire Dept park was blocked off with the tape tied to the poles, instead of the movable barriers. This was not a big deal as the tape was moved and I doubt that

anything will change with respect to this.

One issue with medical is that none of the medical staff had ever worked a marathon. This means that the history of how to do things is lost every time the medical staff changes. I am not sure if it is possible to get a document made from the medical staff on how things work so that the next year the medical staff can be informed on what to do.

First gripe is regarding transport/drop-down shuttles for runners. I had 6 drop down runners at any given time at Medical 18 as well as 3-4 SRLA minors drop and never had a drop shuttle come by. Runners were waiting since 10 AM and shuttle came by around 1:45. For all the money LA Marathon charges participants, they should really spend money on "WORKING" cooling vehicles as well as constant shuttle service.

Second/Last gripe is regarding rag chew on net. It was hard to break in and quickly voice a concern or report in at times. Some of the ragging could have been pushed to another repeater frequency rather than tying up the main freq. It was frustrating and extremely annoying. Other times, I couldn't get net control to respond when calling in - busy/stepped away, not sure what the deal was.

First of all, thank you so much. I've done smaller races before, but this was my first experience in something of this scale. From my induction through the final bell, the process that you established went smoothly and respectfully. I felt I was well informed throughout, respected and appreciated for my volunteering. Good job.

"DROP-DOWNS"

As might be expected on a record-hot marathon day, there were legions of "poop-outs". As I was listening to the mile net, it became clear that there were several problems we encountered in handling this. First, in the briefing I attended on Saturday morning, I realized that I had some confusion about the jobs of the "drop-down" vans (a poor name, in my opinion, because it led to the terminology "down runner" which is very ambiguous). It was not clear whether the vans stay in their designated locations to receive tired runners, or whether they get called to wherever they are needed, like taxis. As a result, I heard conflicting instructions from net control (and presumably from MACC) about what those runners were supposed to do. There were no chairs or other support for tired runners at the mileposts or water stations, and they weren't informed that they'd be waiting for a time measured in hours before being delivered.

So a runner appears at a water station and is having problems. I believe that it is the station captain's job to assess the next step. The runner may say he is feeling tired, well that's pretty clear, but he may also complain of being dizzy, weak, headaches, heart pounding. Some even complain specifically about low blood pressure or blood sugar. Or leg cramps, or knee pain, etc. I saw a couple of runners actually fall down on the course. In most cases, these problems will resolve if the patient can just sit down in the shade for a few minutes, but it might also be the case that immediate medical attention is needed. I don't want radio hams to make these decisions. Therefore, I don't want to hear the MACC guy asking the ham for the patient's conditions, trying to determine if he is just tired or needs help right away. The station captain should decide, and if he says medics are needed for a specific symptom, the ham network should set that into motion without any question-and-answer back and forth.

Maybe my thinking here is wrong. At my station, Mile 20, we had an experienced captain from the V.A. and I watched him counsel and advise several runners in just that way. Perhaps that's one reason we had ZERO drop-down runners at my post. Maybe the captains at other stations weren't that good. But I felt the process I was hearing on the radio -- EOC asking the ham about the patient's symptoms -- was completely wrong. Perhaps, if there's any question about the need for paramedics, the next step should be a cellphone call between a medical professional and the patient. Hams can facilitate that call.

If the poor guy is just tired, I want the station captain to direct him to a shady spot to rest, and to inform him that, although there are vans, they're busy, slow, and the traffic is horrendous. Some water stations are isolated (accessible only on the course itself) and no van can arrive until near the end of the race when the foot traffic has dwindled. Therefore, the runner should be encouraged to walk to the finish line after having rested. The van won't get him there any faster.

For those who choose to wait for the van, the ham radio networks should keep track of the waiting runners and their bib numbers. We don't need to know the locations of the vans or their ETAs. We don't need to relay complaints about the wait time.

SUPPLY PROBLEMS

At our station, we had plenty of water but ran out of paper cups. We adapted by pouring water into the runners' own containers, or directly into their mouths or over their heads. We didn't bother to report it because resupply was impossible during the race. I'm guessing that, once the race started, there were near zero cases where a successful resupply occurred in time to make a difference. That being the case, let's change the paradigm. Some stations will run out of supplies, and that's just the way it is.

RADIO QUALITY

I sure wish that Net Control had an overwhelmingly strong signal into the repeater. That would have, in my opinion, smoothed over several interchanges where people were doubling over NCS. It also would have improved the "stuck

mike" situations we had in the early hours. S.O.P. in stuck mike cases is to ask every ham to check his partner's radio if possible.

I heard several times when it seemed like there was excessive "hang time" somewhere in the system, where a carrier continued into the repeater for maybe ten seconds after the talking station unkeyed. (I'm not talking about our 446.280 repeater's hang time, but something else that was feeding its input.) Perhaps the crossband arrangement that went into the MACC.

Some of the hams on the net had RF signal fading or poor voice quality -- low volume, for example, or muffled sound (poor treble). Net control should have informed these people, perhaps they could have done something about it (such as switch mikes or talk closer, or not used a belt clip).

LEAD RUNNERS -- REALLY?

Not complaining about my workload! But it seemed to me that in most cases the lead runners of every category were preceded by an entourage of police and news media. Who really is needing to know their locations?

The medical supply drop off/pickup was very efficient this year. All the supplies were actually there first thing in the morning and the pickup was slightly in front of the sweepers. Couldn't ask for anything better.

Perhaps it is just my sense of humor, but I had to laugh with many Hams asking for an ETA of the drop down shuttle. Net control does not know, will never know (unless a Ham is put in the shuttles).

The drop down shuttle only made one appearance at Med22, perfectly timed.

There was one runner who was dropped off at the medical tent by LAFD just as all the medical supplies were being picked up (still accessible, actually more supplies were available due to the truck being there). We received word of another runner who needed a ride, but could not make it to the medical tent and was sitting on a bench a couple hundred yards away, just as the shuttle showed up. He drove back down to the bench, with the doctor and the LAFD (walking) to check on the runner and give the runner a ride, then the sweepers cleaned up and we were done.

1) Great Event.

2) Drop-Down vans should be more roving like a bus than sitting at one location for an hour.

3) The cooling/heating buses need a sign letting runners there is comfort there but only if there operational and staffed.

4) There were a number of bikes using the Marathon streets.

5) Med 14 needed more water to serve runners taking medications.

6) Runners were asking for salt or salt tablets and there wasn't any, I don't know if we should provide or not.

7) We new it would be a warm day.

8) I feel this was the best operational day in my 3 years experience.

This one is not news to you, but just an observation. Mile 24 (as did everybody from 20 to the end) ran out of cups much earlier than the water caption and her crew said they did in previous years (that group has worked Mile 24 for several years now). With the increased temperatures I can understand the increased consumption of water at the water stations leading to earlier depletion. I was hearing reports of other station running out of Gatorade concentrate and water too. We had more than enough water, just no cups. However this makes it harder for runner's further back in the pack to get the hydration replenishment that they need and possibly increasing their level of heat stress and dehydration. The volunteers at 24 did what they could -- filling people bottles if they had them, or pouring water directly into the mouths of the runners. Perhaps resupply trucks could be more aggressive in picking up unused supplies as each station closed and delivering them to water stations closer to the end of the race where the need will most likely be greatest. I know with traffic issues this may be a challenge, but with GPS and side streets it may be possible. Trying to get supplies to the next checkpoint in a timely manner may be very difficult with road closures and traffic, but at least try for the last few miles.

Things appeared very organized at mile 24 regarding getting the water station set up and operational. They had plenty of volunteers through the day, but the numbers started to drop towards the end.

When I had the first of two downed runners in quick sequence at Mile 24, it took several tries to break into the MILE net with my emergency traffic. I am not sure if I had walked into a dead spot, although net control was loud and clear, or if it was because of operators quick keying. It may be good to remind everyone to be careful of quick keying. Perhaps repeater hang times can be adjusted down, at least on the mile net as that seemed to have the most traffic, with the cooperation of the repeater owners for race weekend so people won't have to wait as long before keying up with their traffic.

Overall I had the impression that things went smoothly as far as communications were concerned, even though I am sure it was controlled chaos at net control and at the MACC, but those operators didn't show it. At the end of the day I felt

proud to have been a part of this operation that contributed to the overall success of the 2014 LA Marathon. I am looking forward to participating again next year.

The obvious - not enough Gatorade or cups. I felt so badly for those runners who wanted/NEEDED Gatorade, and I didn't know what the further mileage stations had.

Numerous calls were made about Gatorade & cups, both by KG6QFL and one of the water captains (don't know who she called). I was told that the supply truck was at mile 18 and we would be next. Half an hour later, the truck still hadn't come. A little while later, I found that the truck was in the Mile 20's somewhere. I guess after an hour and more transmissions I was told that the status was not known about the supply truck. At that point, the runners were dwindling - but still asking for Gatorade.

No map was given for drop down shuttle. Water captain had a vague map, but it was not clear either to her or to us as to the EXACT location.

We found that the drop down shuttle was not consistent as to location. The shuttle needs to be consistently either NORTH of Santa Monica Blvd. or SOUTH of Santa Monica Blvd. at Veteran. Marty found them in two different spots. We cannot point the runner to the drop down site if the shuttle location is inconsistent. Plus, if they need to drop, they don't need to walk any extra steps more than necessary.

Cliff Shots: Water station captain had four tables (two on each side of the street) set up immediately before water tables. She found out later that the location for the Cliff Shot tables was three blocks away.

It might be helpful for the marathon to provide EZ-Ups as well as chairs at each station for a quick break for the runners to get out of the sun or to work out cramps. At Mile 19, one of the volunteers had an umbrella, and they held the umbrella up over one of our "patients" to get a break from the sun.

It would be good to bring this up with Marathon Management: we were all told to be at Sunset and Holloway (i.e. the hams and all the med staff!) but the equipment was transported to last year's location of San Vicente and Cynthia about half a mile away. So med set up at Sunset and Cynthia. Management must be sure not to do this next year.

Med tent ran out of supplies: ace bandages, ibuprofen, water, gatorade, cups.

The frustrating issue was the vendors who supplied cooling and transportation. The lady driving the cooling bus was very efficient and helpful. The bus never had any appreciable degree of cooling. LA Fire asked me several times to change buses as as they discribed it, it was almost better to keep the runners at the tent. The only issue with that was there was no room at the tent. Finally, the driver had her dispatcher find a bus from a med tent that was closed and had the buses switched. Unfortunately, the bus they sent arrived on the wrong side of Santa Monica Blvd. Although the original driver found how to get to the proper location, somehow, the new driver could not find the proper location. With some help and negotiation with LAPD, we had the bus parked in the turn lane out of the race or ongoing traffic on Santa Monica.

I had been at the location by 0600, the first time any van came to pick up passengers was about 1330. When this van finally arrived, it too was on the wrong side of Santa Monica and we had to make some difficult arrangements with LAPD to block traffic so we could load runners. Runners were tired and almost all of those arriving asking for transportation prior to 1200 found their own transportation or continued on the course (probably to a med tent which had transportation or had a relative pick them up.) My timing may be off, but the lack of transportation was untenable. Whe LAFire asked if the cooling bus could transport runners from the bus, we were told that the bus company only had a cooling contract and another vendor had the transportation contract (who couldn't find us after many many calls on the radio for a van.) You get tired of telling downed runners that we have called for transportation which never arrived.

While this is unexcusable for an organization which treats their customers so poorly, what happened at the end was horrible. As we saw the sweepers coming, we called for transportation as a shuttle should have been either behind or preferably, in front of the sweepers to pick up all remaining downed runners, NO BUS.

While improvement is always an important goal, I would set the clear expectation at EOC/MACC that you will not have perfection. I know the EOC people talk about how hectic things are for them, but keep in mind that field operations are hectic (and loud) as well. (Covering both ears reduces situational awareness in a complex and dynamic environment - I would not do it.) Recommendation: Be aware of the field conditions, expect to do polite and gentle coaching as to information needs, and improve training, as you suggest.

Clarity as to "bib 'numbers'"

When we reported bib numbers for elite runners, there seemed to be confusion when we reported names instead of numbers. I accurately reported Kleppin (eventual 3rd place woman) as lead with F17 2nd at mile 13. (I have the photo to corroborate.) There seemed to be a disregarding of the name report and a focus on the numbered bib in second place - leading to potentially inaccurate understanding of who was in fact the lead. The same happened with the men. I reported a name that looked like Aseto (in fact I believe it was Asefa) as lead at mile 13 (also reported today in the LA Times). That was disregarded. The men's bibs were very hard to see at all.

Names on bib numbers are MUCH harder to read than numbers - smaller font, unusual names (want to try to accurately report my name - "Palatucci" from a moving bib??); names have more characters than the elite numbers, arms pumping in front, bibs crumpling, chase vehicles and bicycles surrounding the runners...

Recommendation: Know what will be on the bibs if they are not just numbers and tell field operators. Do not ask us to report the leads, or give us a list of elites so we can try to at least get a sense of the names and/or numbers, or take what you get and be happy.

Clarity in terminology

"Drop down" is confusing.

Recommendation: Use "drop out" for those who discontinue by choice and "downed" for a runner having physical problems and needing assistance.

Clarity in what to report - drop outs

It seems unnecessary to report adult runners who drop out and go to the van. We did report as requested, but considering that there must have been hundreds or thousands who dropped out without saying anything to anybody, it seems, well, absurd. And since you will have more drop outs in harsh conditions, you will also have more medical situations - leave the air open for that.

Recommendation: We can log bibs of those drop outs who check in with us and then go to the van in case questions arise later. Have the drivers report who is in their van and keep that information off the ham traffic. I would make exception for minors - we could report a Minor's bib number. Specifically for the manual and briefings:

Keep a log of the bib numbers of all well runners who check in with you before going to the van. Log the time.

Report ONLY the bib numbers of dropout minors.

Medical issues

It seems that the assumption is that most medical traffic will happen at the even numbered miles with medical stations. However, more serious medical situations will happen anywhere - if the condition is serious, then the runner will not be able to get to the medical station. They could be anywhere and we might have to go to them. Train everyone to do medical logging and reporting.

Recommendation: Make sure the manual and any training note that medical issues can occur anywhere and all should be prepared to log and report.

Training

During briefings, people ask all sorts of weird random questions.

Recommendation: Provide 10 of the most common (or most awful) scenarios and ask everyone how they would respond. I bet you could rattle those scenarios off right now. (Drop out-adult, trouble breathing near mile 15, drop-out minor, possible death, media approach, violence, vehicle on course) Make sure everybody knows the right answer.

Observations for marathon organizers:

Call to use the eddie valves and hoses came 2-3 HOURS too late. We knew it would be hot days in advance.

Runners trickled to almost nothing (mile 13 - half marathon) much earlier than usual - 60-90 min

Street sweepers were much later than in other years (45-60 min it seems). Miles 14 and after were cleared before mile 13 (different jurisdictions) so that also seems to show that LA was late. (And there were virtually no runners for a good long while before that)

There seemed to be inadequate gatorade.

Our water station is extraordinarily well run.

We approached the station site easily without being stopped.

If there are semi-official events, like a half-marathon, please let the ham organization know. We get questions from the runners and public.

My observations on the Mile Net that may be appropriate to include in next years training plan:

Calling Net Control while medical emergency traffic is in process.

Interrupting roll calls in process with unnecessary status reports.

What that demonstrates is that those operators are either not listening to the net traffic all the time or they have not been trained in net protocol.

The other, more trivial observation is one I mentioned last year; assign each operator a unique tactical ALpha ID (i.e Water Station 18A, 18B etc and Medical 18C, 18D etc.

The use of the same Tactical ID for Mile Net operators and Medical Net Operators adds to the confusion when Med Operators cross over to Mile Net occasionally.

Early on, we were notified that we had an "Elite Female" runner down. The last thing on my mind as I was running the 2 blocks to find her was what the exact address was. My first thought was getting to the runner and getting more information on her condition. I was happy to find that she was off the course and someone was with her. Once I caught my breath and was able to radio in, I realized that she wasn't wearing a number but a name on her bib. While I understand it would be appropriate to relay that name by spelling it phonetically, in the moment all of that escaped me. I

spelled as slowly and clearly as possible. What I did appreciate was that once the name was relayed, someone reminded me to get the exact address. What I'm trying to say is that there will need to be some prompting by the Net/EOC in order to get all the necessary information and some of it may need to be repeated a couple of times to make sure everything is relayed. There is a lot going on in the moment - many people trying to communicate the problem, music being played loudly, etc.

There was a half marathon relay at Mile 13 that neither Kathy or I were aware of and there were several people asking questions about location and times. Information on other events would be appreciated.

I was monitoring the frequency after we were dismissed and on our way home, when someone at the EOC asked whether 13B had any updates on the 2 persons that dropped out - ??? Why ask these questions after we had been dismissed? Why just those 2 - we called in about 5 people who dropped out. The bib numbers were radioed in at the time and it was relayed that they had been directed to the vans. What else were we supposed to do? We need to know exactly what the expectations are - are we expected to keep track of these people once they have walked away? I could understand this if the event was an emergency/medical situation or a minor, but this wasn't the case.

I think Kathy's suggestion above about providing mock scenarios (and how they should be handled) would help prepare the operator (me) for things that could come up. I agree that medical emergencies can happen anywhere on the course and not always near the medical station. Also, we get a lot of angry drivers who don't understand why they can't get across the route, especially when they were told it would be open by a certain time and it's still closed.

Repeaters seemed to work well. Never heard either net switch to one of the backup repeaters, though the stuck mic @ T-20 minutes was probably long enough to warrant a move. The problem was that net control was too weak to override it, so couldn't tell everyone to move. This needs to change: the NCS needs to use a real antenna with a real radio.

Otherwise, "net control" has no effective "control" of the net.

Some stations (including the operator of Mile 25A) were operating simplex on the output of the repeater. This is completely unacceptable! So are stuck mics for that matter. The point of distributing the freq. list ahead of time & holding training meetings is to make sure everyone gets all the frequencies programmed into memories in their radios BEFORE the event. Anyone who can't do this IMO does not possess the requisite operating skills needed to volunteer as a radio operator for our event. I was surprised to see in your comments that, apparently, attendance at one of the training meetings was not mandatory.

if you make the orientation meeting mandatory, I will no longer be able to volunteer, as I was unable to make either of the meetings, not this year nor the previous year.

suggestion: maybe have an on-the-air training/practice net for people who cannot make it to the meeting? a practice net might even be more useful than just sitting in a meeting. there was no one to operate the clock at mile 22 - I thought that I heard 22 alpha check in before I arrived just before 0600 but then I could not locate him. I attempted to check with net control to see if 22 alpha was at the clock, however apparently I was not clear in my request, and/or understanding their reply... the bottom line was that Ken, KS3I who was working Med 22 had to go and re-start the clock, since I was all by myself at water 22 at the start of the race (22 alpha eventually showed up very late after the race has started)

maybe assign an operator to the clock, and give instructions how to operate the clock during roll call? note that this year roll call was not done after well into the race, though operators were expected to be ready for a roll call at 0600.

make sure that operators have radios which operate on the band used for the race, for example 22 alpha only had a 2m radio, and could not get on the 440 net.

apparently streets were closed at 0500, so when I arrived near my station at about 0550, I had to bypass and circumvent three closures, luckily they were unmanned so I did not have to deal with the police. not sure what I would have done differently, as there was no way I could have made it into the area before 0500.
