

# AMATEUR RADIO PULLS THROUGH

This is a story of how Ham Radio helped me out of a very dangerous situation.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005 I broke down on Interstate 5 just North of The city of Gorman. It was late, around 11:00 PM. The road was dry and clear. My Big Rig had just come out of the shop with an engine rebuild. It was under the repair shops care for 3 weeks. I picked up the truck that morning and done my vehicle inspection. I found no safety discrepancies. However unknown to me there was a problem.

It was early morning on March 3, 2005; I went to work with the intention to install my radio gear in my original truck from the one I was temporarily using. It took around 4 hours to transfer all my equipment and supplies into my assigned Big Rig. Once finished I picked up my cargo for the run to Modesto, California. I rested a while before heading out. I left at 7:45 PM and proceeded to head out of town. I followed the rout to Interstate 5 North and made a quick stop at a truck stop in Casaic, Ca.

While at the truck stop I found a small leak on the inlet water hose to the radiator. I cut the hose short and put it back on. This seemed to work so I continued my trip. I did not realize it at the time but when I shortened the damaged hose I actually put tension on the other side of the cross over tube. Well this added pressure led to my dilemma.

As I left the truck stop and started heading up hill I kept a close watch on the temperature gauge. It was fine. As my truck was climbing up the hill, and about 150 feet from the peak of the Grape vine pass, steam started blowing out from under the hood and my vent was open so the steam quickly filled the cab of my truck. I was literally blinded and had to feel the shoulder of the road where I brought the truck to a safe stop.

Immediately shut off the engine and put on my Emergency flashers. I waited until the steam cleared to access the damage. As I opened the drivers side door I realized that I was actually 2 inches over the white line and in the roadway. This was not too bad but I was also around a blind curve in the dark. The traffic seemed to be 75% trucks and they were in the right two lanes crowding the white line.

I tried to do my best to warn the oncoming trucks with my CB (11 meter radio) but they kept coming. I quickly grabbed my cell phone and dialed the emergency number to get roadside assistance but there was no signal. I was 150 feet on the south side of the peak and was not able to get a signal from the Frazier peak cellular service.

I got out of the truck and walked half way up the hillside to try and get a better location for my Cell phone. I did make contact with help services but the call kept dropping (Lost signal). I decided to get on the CB radio and ask for help from one of the passing trucks. This did not work as the truck drivers all but made a joke out of my situation. At this point I was getting desperate and seriously thought about walking to the nearest emergency phone but it was dark out and I had no idea where to find a phone.

I decided to sit in the truck and wait for help (a CHP officer) to arrive. I was concerned that one of the trucks passing might hit my vehicle since it was partly in the roadway. While sitting in my truck I figured I would try the Ham radio and was surprised to find that I could hit the Visalia 146.880 repeater. I never thought of trying it prior to this because I was on the south side of the mountain and my cell phone would not work either.

I called for help from anyone that could hear my transmission. No response, so after several tries I decided to use the IRLP system. I've used the IRLP on this repeater many times in the past so I knew how to dial out on it and I dialed node 3686, the KA6AMR repeater in Monrovia, California. At first no one responded so I persisted 3 or 4 times and then with no response I disconnected the link. As I searched for my Cheat sheet (A list of nodes I use while on the road) I heard the IRLP system on the Visalia repeater come on line. It was the KA6AMR node dialing back.

A familiar voice said "N6SGX, N6SGX this is KA1WCC". It was my friend in Monrovia, He heard my plea and was responding. I guess he must have been in bed or something and could not get to the radio when I called a few moments ago. I guess I should have waited a bit longer. Anyway I told him of my situation and he made the call to the roadside assistance company who showed up within a half hour and replaced the defective radiator hose.

Even though we have cell phones and people every day use them to call in accidents and road side emergencies, I for one will never disregard Ham radio as a "Has been" or "Dieing hobby" for lack of interest. We as Amateur radio operators still have the responsibility and ability to use our equipment in a manor which could save property or more important save a life. My situation may have been exclusive but without the radio I might have possibly been stuck there for some time or even struck by a tired passing motorist.

Amateur radio is a very big part of my life and will always be. I am grateful to have a Amateur License and even more grateful to have a friend like KA1WCC, who will be there in case of emergencies. Thank you KA1WCC and thank you Mr. Marconi.

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