

AMATEUR RADIO VOLUNTEERING AT THE BOSTON MARATHON

Gil Hayes WK1H

Credit:

Boston Marathon Amateur Radio Communications Committee

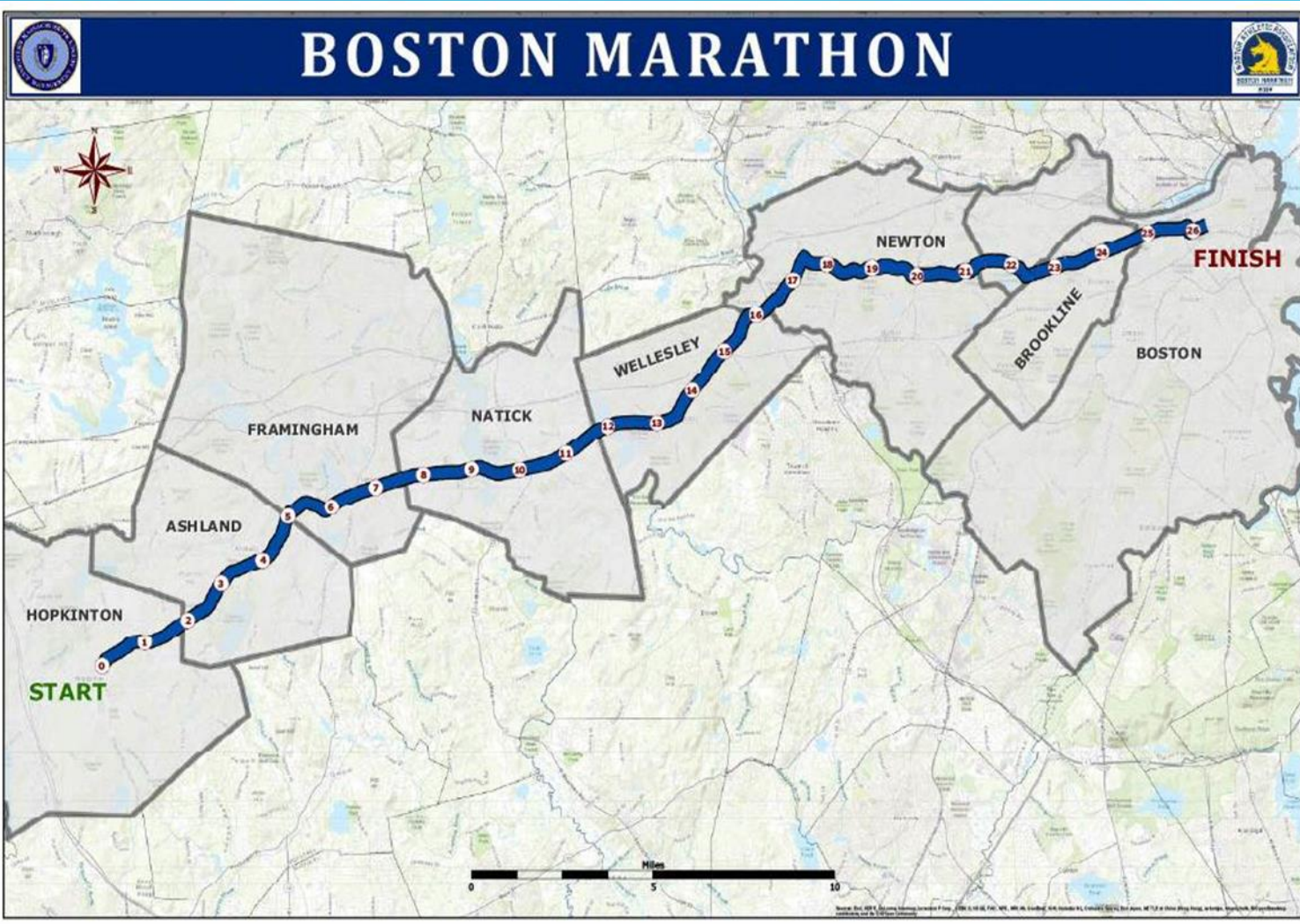
Rob Macedo KD1CY



ABOUT THE MARATHON

- ▶ Organized by the Boston Athletic Association
 - ▶ One of the largest and most popular world-class marathons
 - ▶ About 30,000 runners (registered, plus some unregistered)
 - ▶ About 10,000 volunteers
 - ▶ About 8500 public safety professionals
 - ▶ About 1,000,000 spectators
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THE CHALLENGE

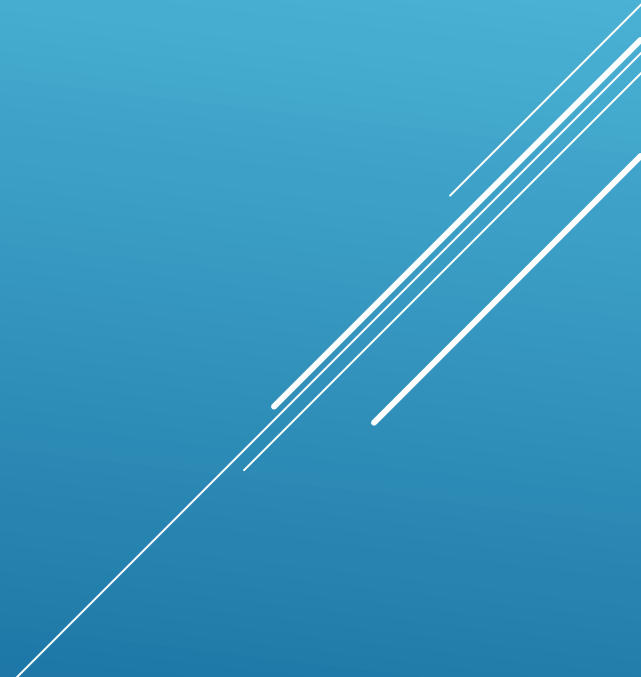


- The Boston Marathon is a “straightline” and spans 8 communities over a 26.2 mile stretch from Hopkinton to Boston
- Multiple cities/towns in a home rule state (no county government)
- State agencies are involved to help coordinate throughout the entire event
- Some FEMA resources assist with runner emergency medical needs
- Communications all along the route and multi-layer (public safety, commercial, Amateur Radio)

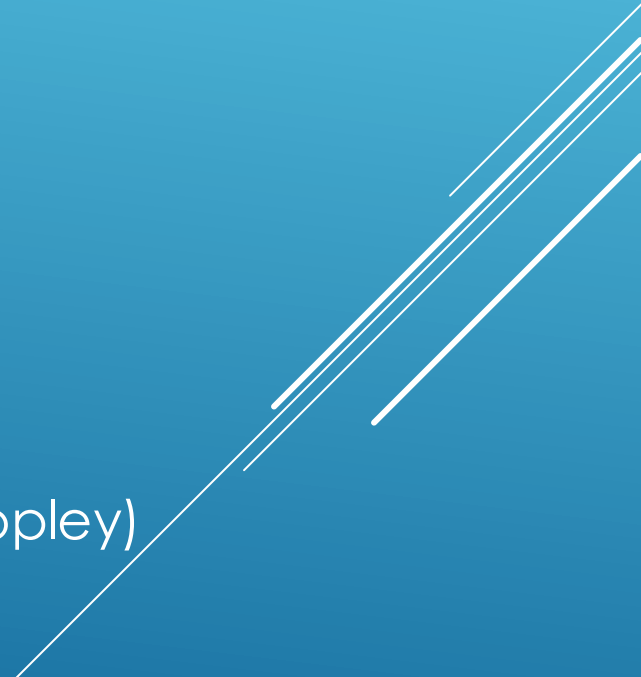
AMATEUR RADIO AT THE MARATHON

- ▶ Organized by the BAA Communications Committee
 - ▶ Made of several amateur radio volunteers appointed from each area of interest
 - ▶ Manages all amateur radio volunteers
- ▶ About 280 amateur radio volunteers are required
- ▶ Committee Planning begins in November
- ▶ Average 56% Returning Volunteers (2024 Marathon saw >70%)
- ▶ Average 14% Drop Out Rate

AMATEUR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SEGMENTS

- ▶ Start Area
 - ▶ Coordination of various start activities
 - ▶ Queuing and starting various groups or runners
 - ▶ Course
 - ▶ Coordination of water and first aid stations across the course
 - ▶ Reporting of supplies and other needs for the assigned station
 - ▶ Transportation
 - ▶ Coordination of bussing of runners back to Copley
 - ▶ Some position reporting apps and other tech are used
 - ▶ Written direction booklets and assistance with GPS also helpful
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AMATEUR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SEGMENTS

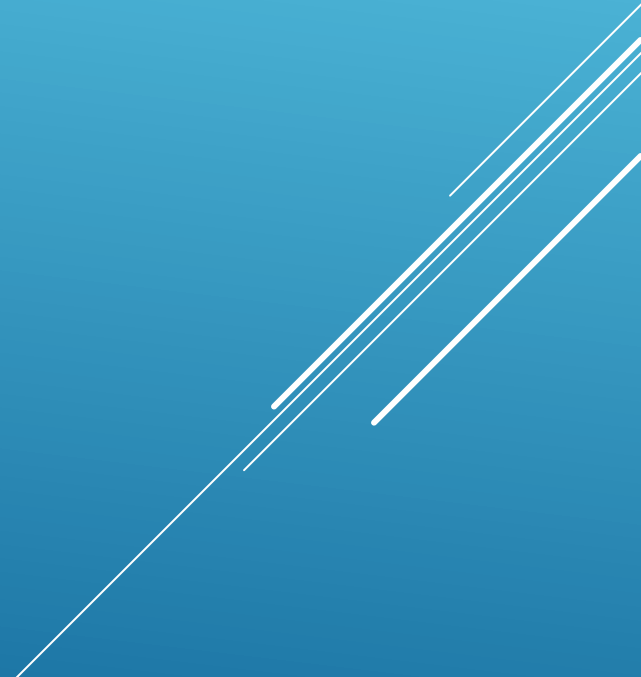
- ▶ Net Control (Start, Course, Transportation)
 - ▶ Located in Brookline
 - ▶ Works to deal with logistics and needs of all stations on their
 - ▶ Finish Area
 - ▶ Medical Sweeps
 - ▶ Logistics for medical personnel
 - ▶ Net Control (Finish)
 - ▶ Located in the Boston Library (directly next to the finish line at Copley)
 - ▶ Coordinated finish line activities
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THE BOMBING

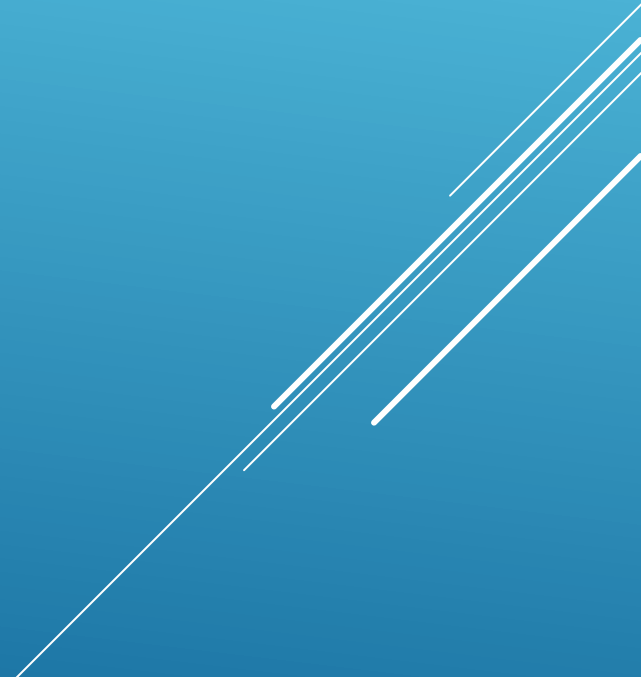


- The marathon bombings of 2013 brought forward how layered communications, Amateur Radio and the force multiplier of volunteers are critical
 - Cell phone calls and text messaging were inoperable for several hours
 - Amateur Radio, Public Safety and commercial radios remained operational
 - Cell phone data for Internet access and messaging apps such as Whatsapp continued to function
 - Our prepositioning along the route allowed for continuity of operations
 - Amateur Radio frequencies were monitored by FEMA and Red Cross for situational awareness

STANDARD EQUIPMENT FOR VOLUNTEERS

- ▶ Dual band HT
 - ▶ Headset
 - ▶ Performance antenna
 - ▶ Batteries for 12+ hours
 - ▶ Notepad and pens/pencils
 - ▶ Food and water
 - ▶ Outdoor clothing
 - ▶ Backup radio and accessories
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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

- ▶ Security
 - ▶ Signup deadline is early due to security checks
 - ▶ Recommended to invest in a clear security backpack
 - ▶ Your health and ability to be on your feet
 - ▶ Documentation
 - ▶ Training Session / Videos
 - ▶ Discussion forums at <https://www.hamradioboston.org/>
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HOW TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER



2025 Volunteer Registration Step-by-Step Guide

<https://hamradioboston.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/4400257-0599-2025-volunteer-registration-step-by-step-guide>



Registration Link for New and Returning Volunteers

<https://www.baa.org/races/boston-marathon/volunteer/volunteer-registration>