

The Frequency Between Storms

A student broadcaster discovers that reliable information can be as important as courage.

By four o'clock, the sky above Bellweather had turned the colour of bruised metal. Mara was alone in the community radio studio, recording the weekly youth program, when the emergency phone flashed. A dry storm had started several grassfires west of town. The official alert did not order an evacuation, but it warned residents to prepare.

Mara's first instinct was to read every message arriving on the station's social feed. One claimed the highway was already closed; another said the fire had reached the railway sheds. Neither report named a source. She remembered the station manager's rule: in an emergency, speed matters, but accuracy matters more. Mara called the fire control centre and wrote down only what the officer confirmed.

When she returned to the microphone, her voice sounded thinner than usual. She gave the verified locations, repeated the preparation advice and told listeners where to find updates. Between announcements, she played calm instrumental music. Then a caller reported seeing flames near the northern bridge. Mara asked for the caller's location and passed the information to fire control instead of broadcasting it as fact.

The storm moved east. Rain reached the fireground before the flames crossed the highway, and the alert was downgraded. Later, the manager found Mara surrounded by handwritten notes. He praised her, but Mara shook her head. She had not felt brave. She had simply kept checking each claim while the town listened.

On her walk home, Mara passed neighbours carrying radios onto their verandas. She realised that broadcasting was not about filling silence. Sometimes it meant leaving rumours unspoken until the truth was strong enough to carry.