



The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator



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The WEC Newsletter is sent monthly to all American Radio Relay League Emergency Coordinators in the State of Wisconsin. It intended to provide a forum for ECs to share ideas concerning the organization and training of their respective groups, and as a source of news concerning ARES and RACES activities in the state.

Comments, suggestions and articles (finished or in rough form) are solicited from the readers.

This newsletter and other important documents are posted on the Wisconsin ARES/RACES web page at:

<http://wi-aresraces.org>

in PDF format, shortly after each issue is published.

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September 11th

By Don Michalski, W9IXG, Section Manager

I think we all remember September 11. Always will. Afterwards, I recall looking in the mirror and asking myself "what if this had happened in Wisconsin?" Maybe, you did, also. Would we have been prepared to hit the trail running or would we stumble along? Would we have been able to immediately be of assistance to the various emergency agencies or told to go away or given some mundane task because they didn't know us? If we are going to be a viable emergency service, we had better get in bed with the emergency agencies **before** the time comes to respond. We had better understand what they do and vice versa. Also, do we have a plan and personnel to handle the multitude of untrained hams that will come off the street to help? We best train, train, train and get the habit of thinking: **What if...**

and train some more to cover that situation. It's time to raise our preparedness!

Below are some comments from the New York City – Long Island SEC, concerning the September 11th disaster, as he relayed them to me. Hopefully, we can learn something from what they experienced.

Hello Don and Wisconsin ARES:

It is true in NYC the untrained, non-ARES ops were used. In any large incident, hams come from everywhere and anywhere. As an emergency manager you can't turn them away. You use them. They were assigned to Red Cross shelter operations or some other non-critical position. ALL the trained ARES and RACES people were assigned to the Office of Emergency Management, and more sensitive and responsible assignments in and around ground zero. All of the recruiters and shift managers were trained ARES personal.

ARES must continue to promote, recruit and train new ARES members. Emergency preparedness is 24/7. You all know that. ARES must continue to train, drill and adapt.

As a sidebar, Public Information Officers are very important. Most of the published stories about 9/11 are incomplete and do not do justice to the volunteers on the inside, who deserve all our support and admiration.

God Bless America
Tom Carrubba KA2D
ARRL ARES Section Emergency Coordinator
Assistant Section Manager
New York City-Long Island
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A Way to Increase Your Membership

-by Don Michalski, W9IXG, Section Manager

Interested in contacting ARRL members in your county? ECs can order a listing and/or mailing labels for members in your county from the ARRL. Just download the Label Request Form from our own state ARES/RACES web site, (the address can be found in the masthead for this newsletter), fill it out and mail it to:

Leona Adams
ARRL Headquarters
225 Main Street
Newington, CT 06111

You must submit the request in the form of zip codes within your county. Just follow the directions on the form.

Format's Not a Floormat

By Dennis Rybickie, K9LGU, STM

Question: When is traffic not sent in NTS format?

Answer: That depends. Although the time-tested radiogram format serves the National Traffic System well on a daily basis, sometimes a variation or completely different form is appropriate.

For example, the Badger Weather Net, which handles almost 20,000 pieces of traffic each year, has a very efficient format for collecting weather reports for the National Weather Service. They use only a message number (since the station of origin, place, and date are understood) and an abbreviated text as follows: (1) high temperature (in the past 6 a.m. to 6 a.m. period), (2) low temperature (same period), (3) 24-hour precipitation (rain, drizzle), (4) 24-hour new snowfall (to the nearest 0.10"), (5) ground snow depth at 6 a.m., (7) total weekly precipitation (on Mondays) --rain, water content of snow. So an exchange of a BWN message would sound like this:

NCS: "N9TVT, send your weather to N9VE."

N9TVT: "Number 1 60 44 2 0 3"

N9VE: "Roger Number 1"

It's done very quickly, and that efficiency starts as early as 3 a.m. on 3.985 MHz. The reports are taken until 7:15 at the very latest. This is another example of where Ham Radio really makes a difference, since the NWS does, indeed, put these daily statistics to use in forecasting, documenting trends, and other activities.

During times of severe weather, efficiency is always of paramount importance, and reports in a specific format are much more useful to the duty forecaster. If you've participated in a local or area net during severe weather, you know reports are made in the TLCS format.

1. Time of the event (not the time you send the report).
2. Location of the event (SW Jefferson County, South City of Fort Atkinson, Hwy 26 and Foxhill Road).
3. Condition (1/2 inch hail, covering the ground).
4. Source (station making the observation - this must be an Amateur Radio callsign).

An exchange might sound like this:

Reporting station: "N9ZET, Hail and wind"

NCS: "N9ZET, go ahead."

Reporting station: "At 6:05, southeast Dane County, north of City of Edgerton, hail 3/4 inch, measured 40 mph wind."

NCS: "Roger."

WX Service (or liaison station): "Weather Service, roger."

There's a temptation to speak too loud or too fast in the excitement of sending important traffic. Too much volume can cause distortion. Speaking too fast often necessitates requests for repeats or clarification, so it actually s-l-o-w-s the process. If an operator speaks at longhand dictation speed - or writes it out while saying the message, this sets a good pace.

Traffic format is adjusted to the situation. The format is flexible -- just as all good operators must be.

TRAINING

By Jack Morrison, N9SFG, Asst SEC for Training

My new job as Assistant SEC for Training entails monitoring all aspects of training in the state, and making suggestions that increase and improve on the training offered to ARES/RACES members. I imagine that if I was to ask each DEC and EC throughout the state what my job should consist of, each would have a somewhat different response. Some might even question the need for help with training. In any case, I will attempt to provide you with ideas and sources of information that you can use to help your ARES/RACES group to learn and refine skills.

I should first make a few preliminary comments concerning the general approach to ARES/RACES training. Just as a beach is shaped by time and tide, our training needs will be determined by the events that occur in our portion of the world. On the other hand, rather than needing to train specifically to respond for a weather-related incident, or for a hazardous materials spill, or for a terrorist attack, we need to train first to respond to a generic "emergency incident". Why? The communications techniques needed to assist a community after a tornado strike are much the same that would be required after an ice storm or terrorist incident. Only after we are trained generically can we afford to specialize.

Another factor to consider in training approach concerns how we use our equipment. Most of us have a pretty good idea how to operate our own radios. What we need to improve upon is our ability to use that equipment in a mission as part of a team.

So then, the focus should be on general emergency communications, within the fabric of a team effort. Here are a few of the first of my tips for effective training:

The ARRL offers, for a nominal fee, three sequential Emergency Communications Courses. They are good, and represent the only comprehensive emergency communications training package available for hams at present, anywhere. You will find that they cover many different aspects of emergency communications operations and planning that may be applicable to your group. Further information can be found on the ARRL Web site at: <http://www.arrl.org>.

Your local county Emergency Manager can provide a doorway to a wide variety of training courses offered through Wisconsin Emergency Management. These courses last from one to five days and are held at a variety of sites throughout the state. The state will provide accommodations if the course is over 50 miles from your home. Some Emergency Managers will provide reimbursement for travel and meals. A list of the courses planned is contained in the calendar sent to each county EM Director. You can get a copy yourself from the WEM Training Section by calling (608) 242 3213, or requesting a copy from haberj@dma.state.wi.us. A word of caution - don't be misled by the course title. Be sure to read the description of the course before you decide that you would like to enroll.

More to follow!

A Quotable Quote

The ARRL Letter, Vol. 20, No. 49, 14 December 2001 had an interesting article containing some comments by FCC Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement, Riley Hollingsworth (K4ZDH). One of his comments struck a cord with your SEC, and I would like to share it with you in case you did not see it.

Mr. Hollingsworth was talking about amateur compliance with FCC rules, and he described our overall performance as "outstanding." He then commented that US hams "have a lot to be proud of". But his most interesting comment was his urging to "**participate in Amateur Radio with enthusiasm, celebrate it, enjoy it and share it, because you have made it an incredible national resource and the only truly fail-safe communication service on the planet Earth.**" That is quite a descriptor – "the only truly fail-safe communication service on the planet". His comments lead to the fact that we also have a big responsibility - to nurture, exercise, practice with

and grow the service, so that it is available when others fail.

Computers Galore

If you missed the EC Conference on 1Dec, you missed the announcement ... Your SEC has come upon another cache of 76 computers, donated to WI ARES/RACES by the government of Ozaukee County. They are rebuilt/refurbished, for use by ARES/RACES hams (only), especially for packet and other digital emergency communications. Here is a general description.

All are Pentiums and range between 100 and 133 MHz. The brands vary, but Compaq and Citus are the most common, Citus being a clone. Some are desktop, some are minitower, and some are full tower case styles. All have 1.44 MB A: drives and the hard drive varies in size between 1 and 3 Gb. All have at least one serial and 1 parallel port. Most have CD-ROM drives. A very few have sound cards. RAM varies between 16 and 48 MB. Of course, each comes with a keyboard, power cords and a mouse. I do have a few monitors, but only took 10 because they are typically not much in demand.

I clean, repair and test these units thoroughly. The partitions on the hard drive are removed, reinstalled and the drive is formatted. Windows 98SE (SE = Second Edition) installation files are added to the drive, and then Windows is installed from these files. In this way, if you add new hardware later, Windows simply gets the drivers from the installation files on the hard drive instead of asking you to insert the CD-ROM, since it knows it was installed directly from files on the hard drive. A Utilities folder (subdirectory) is added, as are a few Norton Utilities files (in a NU subdirectory). YAPP is also added (this simple but effective packet program will work from DOS or from a DOS Box in Win98). Finally, the drive is defragmented and considered ready to go if it has passed all tests.

Each unit boots into an MS-DOS 7 command prompt, and you can work in DOS if you wish. If you want to start Windows, type WIN <enter> and it will start. When you later shut Windows down, it returns to an MS-DOS prompt. You can then continue to work in DOS or shut off the power.

While slower than computers now on the market, these are excellent units that will give many more years of service. Getting one of these is a good way to have a dedicated ham computer in your shack, if you don't already have one. ECs can get as many as they need – perhaps some for members and a unit or two for the county EOC as a ham computer.

I need to know the call of each recipient, or the EOC if that is the case, so be prepared to provide that to me. Beyond that, all I need is your order. Just send me an email. We can work out a ride for the computer to any site in the state. As of this writing (8 Jan), 60 have been rebuilt and 36 have found homes. Please help me make my basement floor a little lighter and put an idle computer to good use!

Make that Scanner an ELINT Receiver

By Jack Morrison, N9SFG, ASEC for Training

The term ELINT Receiver is applied to those military receivers that are utilized to gather intelligence. Properly used, the information gathered can be used in many ways. A common use is to prepare for or to maintain watch on an upcoming or developing situation.

Many of us have a scanner (some of use have more than one) that can be used in this way. In some cases, they are just gathering dust, especially because local digital communications and trunking systems have placed limitations on their usefulness. However, if they are programmed properly, they can provide you with a wealth of information in emergency situations, such as during weather alerts, large fires or HazMat incidents. The secret is to program a single bank for emergencies and then to monitor only that bank. In that way, you listen to only those emergency frequencies on a routine basis, without the need to hear all the others you have programmed into the unit.

I recently did this with my own scanner. A single bank contains only those frequencies in use in Ozaukee and surrounding counties for dispatch and paging, statewide mutual aid, Coast Guard and those Amateur Radio frequencies likely to be used in emergencies. The receiver is set to scan only these frequencies on a routine basis. When a situation develops on one or more of these frequencies, I refine the list by locking out those that are not applicable. If you are operating your own transceiver, don't forget to lock out that frequency to avoid feedback when you key up.

Let me also provide you with an added aid. The following web site provides frequency data, by county, for Wisconsin and neighboring states: www.geocities.com/capecanaveral/lab/7646

STM Report

by Dennis Rybicke, K9LGU, STM

We have all been saddened by the loss of fellow hams such as WB9JJP, K9ZZ, and others in Wis-

consin who have become silent keys during the past year. As we honor their memory, and recall the good they have contributed to the hobby, perhaps we can take additional inspiration from their gifts to ham radio in Wisconsin.

It should be noted that we don't pay tribute to their financial success, recall their equipment or even their good signals on the bands - but we remember their spirit, their generosity, giving of their time and talents. Whether he was helping another ham with a technical question about radio or automotive operation, or handling eastern Wisconsin traffic, Tom gave freely of himself. Whether he was covering something for Badger State Smoke Signals or spearheading the circus train expedition, Jim was helping others and helping Ham Radio.

Time and energy. Yes, it takes time to check into a net. In order to fit into the National Traffic System, many nets are scheduled at disruptive times for family events. Sometimes, checking in isn't too rewarding, since there may be no traffic coming in your direction. The messages may have little significance other than to exercise the system. There are those who question the value of traffic handling in the era of the Internet and cell phones.

Nevertheless, stations continue to test their equipment, support traffic nets, and practice the skills of message handling, because they know from experience how important those skills could be. Nets continue to thrive because they provide the training and discipline operators need to stay in shape; they maintain a system that has proven its effectiveness. The operators who check in to nets, function as net control, or work as liaison to other nets, are doing just what Tom, Jim, and others have done. They are giving unselfishly of themselves.

A summary of our 2001 section net activity compares last year's check-ins and traffic with this year's. The check-ins are almost the same, but traffic has dropped about 16%. The 2545 sessions lasted 1060 hours (44 days). 70% of the traffic was handled on phone with the remaining 30% on CW. Packet was a useful adjunct

From the first yawning weather report on the BWN to the last GN after Late WIN, we find hams that care, which give of their time and skills to help maintain a system for serving the public. Thanks to all who keep our nets functioning so well.