



The Wisconsin EC Newsletter



Volume 06 Number 03

March 2004

Wisconsin ARRL/ARES Section Emergency Coordinator, RACES Chief Radio Officer and Editor

Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO

W8088 Hillcrest Court

Hortonville, WI 54944

920-779-0611

920-475-4819 (Mobile)

bniemuth@new.rr.com

The WEC Newsletter is sent monthly to all Wisconsin American Radio Relay League Emergency Coordinators. It is 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.

Deadlines: The newsletter is mailed between the 15th and the 30th of the month preceding the date shown on the issue. Thus, the February issue is mailed in late January. Articles and notices must reach the editor no later than the 1st of January to be considered for the February issue. Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter provided credit is given as follows: "Reprinted from The Wisconsin Emergency Coordinator Newsletter, KB9ENO, Editor".

News Flash

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, SEC, Wisconsin

This will be the last regular hard copy edition of the EC Newsletter distributed via Postal Service mail to all 85 representatives. For the few of you who don't have an e-mail address, we'll still continue to send you a copy, as well as a few other individuals. Every month when the newsletter has been published to our Web site, I will e-mail the link to the EC Newsletter electronic distribution list. All you'll need to do is click on the link and read or print the newsletter at your leisure. For those of you who don't have Internet access, consider getting it. The information available on the Internet is incredible, and with the built-in redundancy its reliability is excellent. We'll be doing some neat things with the Web site and you will not want to miss it. See you next month online!

Possible Upcoming Changes Regarding Red Cross Support!

By Michael Colvin, W6CUJ

Editor's note: Michael Colvin, W6CUJ, is EC for Yuba and Sutter Counties, California, ARRL VEC and Disaster Communications Coordinator for the Three Rivers Chapter of the American Red Cross covering five Northern California counties. Michael has been a ham since 1959.

During the training class held in Austin, Texas this last week for teams working with the new ECRVs (Emergency Communications Response Vehicles) some time was spent explaining what is probably going to be a new role for hams working in Red Cross disaster response. The national Red Cross organization is planning to increase the use of the Red Cross low-band frequency, 47.42MHz. The ECRVs can be used to create an ad hoc repeater at that frequency using the JPS switch and autopatch, which will also allow UHF and VHF HTs operating on Red Cross UHF and VHF frequencies to cross-band repeat on 47.42MHz. The projected result of this would be less reliance on strictly amateur radio frequencies for tactical Red Cross radio operations. Instead, hams would be used as net control operators on Red Cross frequencies, and as trainers of non-hams in radio procedures.

The real purpose behind the ECRV is to enable delivery of advanced wireless telecommunications systems (computer networks, IP telephones, etc.) to get Disaster Operations Centers at Level 4 and 5 (and probably some Level 3) disasters up and running ASAP. Once the initial assignment is completed, ECRVs typically do other disaster communications jobs. Enhanced satellite Internet capability will take over a lot of the DWI work that hams once did for the Red Cross.

Of course, there will be an increased need for hams who are Red Cross DSHR certified to be driver-operators of the new ECRV fleet. The training course for the ECRVs includes traditional ham radio communications and much more: setting up mobile satellite Internet capabilities, WAP (Wireless Access Point) computer networks, IP phones, public safety radio operations, the JPS switch, etc. All of these systems are onboard the new ECRVs, which will be placed in 9 locations around the US: Falls Church, VA; Atlanta, GA; Louisville, KY; Kansas City, KS; Chicago, IL; Houston, TX; Phoenix, AZ; Spokane, WA; and, last but certainly not least, Sacramento, CA. Driver-operators will be certified to operate the ECRVs after taking a training course that covers the operation of the vehicles and their systems. Further, they must be available to deploy on a 4-hour notice for a period of 5 days up to 3 weeks.

The ECRVs have already been deployed in this year's hurricanes and at the Southern California fires.

Each ECRV is equipped with a hydraulically operated 52-ft. mast, which can handle a number of antennas. Amateur radio gear onboard includes an Icom 706 MkII G, Kenwood TS-2000, an SGC HF whip, an NVIS antenna system, Mosley TR-33 Jr. beam, and an SGC Smart Cube 500-watt amplifier.

The national Red Cross is anxious to get the vehicles out to hamfests, amateur radio club meetings, hamventions, etc.

So, change is in the wind. Amateur radio operations will probably remain pretty much as they have been in smaller disasters involving the Red Cross, but our responsibilities will be shifting with respect to larger disasters. Hams will no longer simply be local responders. There will be a need for highly trained and disciplined amateurs from beyond their local areas to respond to larger events.

The ARECC courses should begin to include some of these changes in upcoming modifications to the course, so that we can stay current.

Michael Colvin, W6CUJ

ARES/RACES COMPUTERS

By Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, skaplan@mcw.edu

I may be done with the SEC/CRO job, but I will continue to provide rebuilt computers to ECs for ARES/RACES use. They are free, but must be used for packet or other digital communications modes (even in a ham's home), or for any other ham-related purpose in a county EOC. Furthermore, we have computer couriers to get them to you. Keith Lodahl (KB9NUM) and Dave Parker (WB9WHG) travel the state frequently. They have volunteered to will pick them up and deliver them to you, or close to you, as their travels bring them near your QTH.

How does a ham get one? Since I only take orders from ECs and will only send computers to ECs, they must get them from their EC. ECs simply contact me with your needs and I will place the order on a numbered list, which is filled from the top down.

What can be expected? Most desktops that I have received recently are 350 MHz Pentiums or faster, most with CD-ROM and sound card (I will add these to units without them if I have spares in stock). Each is opened, thoroughly cleaned and the hardware is tested. The hard drive is repartitioned, reformatted, and a fresh copy of Windows 98se is mounted and tested to be sure all is working properly. Finally, the hard drive is defragmented, and the unit is ready to go.

I mount Win98se in a unique way. The installation files are first copied from the CD to the hard drive in a separate folder, called W98FLAT (per suggestion by the Microsoft technical team). Then, the CD is removed and Win98se is installed from the files on the hard drive. That way, in future if a file is corrupt and needs replacing, or a driver is needed that exists in the files from the CD, Win98se knows where these are stored and simply gets it, without asking the user to put in the CD. This is a useful technique, and it works.

Each computer comes with a keyboard, mouse and power cables. If a monitor is needed, I need to know that ahead of time, since I normally do not accept monitor donations if I do not have a taker for them. Be sure to tell me if you do need a monitor.

Do I have any computers in stock now? No, and there is one unfilled request for a desktop on my list at present. However, I may get in 3, or 15, or 40 (!) next week. I never know when that will happen. In 2002, Ozaukee County gave me 75 units, all in a single day. Last year, the Medical College of Wisconsin gave me 18 in one shot. And, they trickle in from time to time between the "big hauls". The message? Get on the list.

What about laptops? Three came in during the first week of January. These were processed and promptly sent out to fill part of the 10 requests on my list. All were 486's, without CD or sound, but just fine for packet work. Laptops come in much less frequently than desktops, but they do trickle in, so get on my laptop list if you need one. Incidentally, laptops frequently arrive in beautiful bags, often worth much more than the computer itself!

So, get on my desktop or laptop list if your folks can use a computer.

Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association Frequency List

By Skip Voros, WD9HAS, MASA Executive Director

The Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association (MASA) is seeking your input to update a statewide list of frequencies used for Skywarn and severe weather reporting. According to Skip Voros, WD9HAS, the MASA Executive Director, "because the National Weather Service is one of amateur radio's most served agencies, having accurate and current frequency listings is an essential part of any emergency communications plan."

Voros also notes that an accurate database also provides immediate community awareness for local clubs wanting to promote themselves, the benefits of ham radio, or generate new members interested in public service.

ARES/RACES team leaders can view and submit updates at: www.mke-skywarn.org/~svoros/radio.html

ARES/RACES, What's the Difference?

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, SEC Wisconsin

We have been getting questions about the roles of ARES and RACES in the state, so this is a timely article.

First, ARES is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League, which is a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Newington, Connecticut. ARES began in 1938 and has changed and evolved since. As ARRL/ARES SEC for Wisconsin, I report to Don Michalski, W9IXG, who reports to the Central Division Director, who reports to ARRL headquarters. We have a defined chain of command. ARES can be activated by any of our customers and we can self-activate. ARES is a well-developed and mature, "organization." Although we call it an organization, most ARES units are just units, they are not legal entities. Some ARES groups have incorporated and become legal entities. Operating under ARES we can serve any customer as long as the service provided is within Part 97 of the FCC regulations. See http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/pscm/sec1_-ch1.html for more information.

RACES, on the other hand, is an "organization" developed and defined by the Federal Government in 1952 and now governed by the FCC and FEMA. See the following Web site for detailed information about RACES <http://www.races.net/what.html>. It is important to note RACES is governed by government, specifically, Emergency Management. There are significant limitations in operating under RACES. See the following Web site <http://www.races.net/fcc.html>. The FCC limits RACES activations to emergencies and disaster assistance to civil defense organizations only. RACES stations may only communicate with other RACES stations, or

similar official station. See <http://www.fema.gov/library/civilpg.shtm> for more information. I am the Chief Radio Officer for RACES in Wisconsin and Sam Rowe, KG9NG, is the Alternate Radio Officer.

So, what does all this mean? Since 2000, membership in Wisconsin ARES/RACES has been cross-organizational, meaning if you are a member of ARES you are also a member of RACES and visa versa. The official Wisconsin RACES roster is shared with Wisconsin Emergency Management at least quarterly for accountability purposes. The organizations are not combined; they are separate, stand alone organizations with different purposes (see <http://www.wi-aresraces.org/do.cs/vecsplan.pdf>). The big difference is the limitation of RACES. Under ARES, you have more control and ownership. It is your organization. Under RACES you have very limited ownership and control. If you are activated as RACES, you act and are accountable to the local Emergency Management Coordinator, State Emergency Management or even FEMA. To my knowledge, there has never been a declared RACES incident in Wisconsin, including the Weyauwega train derailment. We acted as ARES because we were not requested to activate as RACES. Today, if a similar incident were to occur and we began the operation as ARES and Wisconsin Emergency Management declared it a RACES incident we would be able to use the same people and not miss a beat. In 1995, when Weyauwega occurred, ARES personnel would have had to get up and move away and RACES personnel would have had to move in. Since we were already taxed because of staffing limitations, the communications support operation would have been extremely difficult to carry on with the limited folks registered as RACES. That is the power of cross-organizational membership.

We will continue the cross-organization because both organizations serve their own purpose. I have been working on a proposal to the ARRL recreate ARES and RACES as we know them and have only one emergency services organization, which can service anyone for any purpose. Having two organizations might have made sense a half century ago, but today it is cumbersome and creates too many difficult issues. This will take years to accomplish so in the meantime ARES/RACES is the best we have. If you have specific questions about ARES and RACES, please let me know.

WEM Duty Officer Report

Supplied by Mack Brophy, N9NTB, WEM Hamshack Manager

Editor's Note: The attachment is a list of the types of Wisconsin Emergency Management reports by year. It is interesting to see the number of incidents that may have involved ham participation if they had escalated.

2001 Report - Total 952

Air Crashes – 9
Civil Air Patrol Missions – 24
Level A Requests – 15
Hazardous Materials Spills – 769
Nuclear Power Plant Drills – 26
Terrorism/Threats – 16 (*Not include 600 Anthrax threats*)
Severe Weather – 23
Other – 70

(Reported from the above incidents) Evacuations – 19

2002 Report - Total 763

Air Crashes - 3
Civil Air Patrol Missions - 13
Level A Requests - 16
Hazardous Materials Spills - 569
Nuclear Power Plant Drills - 24
Terrorism/Threats - 5
Severe Weather - 46
Wildfires - 2
Other - 82

(Reported from the above incidents) Evacuations – 10

2003 Duty Officer Report – Total 514

Airplane Crashes - 2
Civil Air Patrol Missions - 23
Level A Requests - 6
Hazardous Materials Spills - 379
Nuclear Power Plant Drills - 30
Terrorism/Threats - 7
Severe Weather - 20
Wildfire - 1
Other - 46

(Reported from the above incidents) Evacuations – 4