



# The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Newsletter

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Wisconsin ARRL/ARES Section Emergency Coordinator and ARES/RACES Newsletter Editor

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*The WI ARES/RACES Newsletter is published monthly in .pdf format to the Wisconsin ARES/RACES Web site <http://wi-aresraces.org>. It is intended to provide a forum for WI ARES/RACES leadership and members to share ideas concerning the organization and training of their respective groups, and as a source of news concerning Wisconsin ARES and RACES. Comments, suggestions and articles (finished or in rough form) are solicited from readers.*

**Deadlines:** *The newsletter is published between the 15th and the 31st of the month preceding the date shown on the issue. Thus, the February issue is published in late January. Articles and notices should reach the editor no later than January 1 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 ARES/RACES Newsletter, Bill Niemuth, Editor".*

## **ARES Leadership and Organizational Changes**

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, SEC WI

To concentrate on his responsibilities as Linked Repeater Coordinator, **Rich Maier, KC9NW**, has stepped aside as Marathon County EC. Rich has been instrumental in developing the central WI Skywarn program. We will keep Rich busy with his other responsibilities and I am sure he will continue to be active in Marathon County and Central WI.

Replacing Rich is **Michael Martens, KB9VBR**. Michael has been one of Rich's AECs and extremely involved with the ham radio community in Marathon County. Michael will bring new ideas to the group and consistent leadership. Please join me in welcoming Michael to his new position!

As most of you know, I travel a great deal for my "paid" job. In 2006, my international travel will increase significantly. As a result, it is increasingly difficult to keep in touch while I am gone. As a result, **Skip Sharpe, W9REL** and ASEC for Training, will become my operational backup while I am away. In this capacity, Skip will be more closely involved with all issues of WI ARES/RACES. Whenever I am traveling the senior leadership team knows where I am and how to contact me. If you activate while I am traveling, follow the chain of command and ensure your DEC is notified. He will notify Skip, who will deal with the activation and interface with Don Michalski, W9IXG and ARRL Section Manger, and WEM, with Sam Rowe's, KG9NG and ASEC for WEM, help. Skip will notify me, but he will work the issue. Thanks to Skip for stepping up to the plate and helping me!

I am sorry to report **Mike Podawiltz, KF9X**, has stepped down as Wood County EC because of greater work demands. We thank Mike for his efforts and wish him the best. We are presently searching for Mike's replacement.

## **Kickoff Meeting Held with NWS Decision Makers in December**

By Tom Kucharski, W9TJK, ASEC for NWS and EC WFO Milwaukee/Sullivan

A meeting with the Warning Coordination Meteorologists for the Wisconsin based National Weather Service offices (this includes the La Crosse, Green Bay and Milwaukee Forecast Offices) and the existing Wisconsin ARES/RACES EC's assigned to those offices was held on December 17, 2005. The topics of discussion included;

a general introductory session (many of us met for the first time) and the current state support of the Wisconsin-based Weather Forecast Offices.

After introductions the EC's were provided 30 minutes each to present an overview on their current support plans. The methods of presentation ranged from a PowerPoint slideshow and handouts to verbal presentation that highlighted the requested topics.

The intent of the session was to learn/understand the mechanisms and relationships from the eyes of the EC's and to tie names to the faces of the people responsible for the coordination. Although gaps in service were disclosed during the presentations, there was no intention to fix anything during this session. It appeared all participants were appreciative of the intended purpose.

Where do we go from here? That is a difficult question to answer right now. An important point we as team leaders need to consider is that although many of us feel the teams we manage can (or should) be doing more to support this agency (or local office) in Wisconsin, it is up to that agency (or local office) to determine its needs and how to best meet those needs. Is there potential for improvement? I think there is, but the extent of what, how and when depends on several factors, many of them beyond our control.

Does it mean we stop planning and preparing? No. In fact, we keep planning, preparing and training like we always have and keep doing the things we always have been doing until we are asked to do otherwise. Volunteer services are a key element to the National Weather Service's ability to achieve its mission and goals.

In consideration of the above, I have always viewed my role as a problem solver, looking for opportunities to make one's job or life better. With this in mind I see benefit in having this group meet at regular intervals to discuss successes, failures, pains and progresses on the activities in their areas. At some point there will be a need to get others involved at various stages in various processes. When that time comes it is in our best interest to lend our best hand as we always do.

As time progresses I will provide informational updates. If you have any questions or concerns in the mean time, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to working with all of you in the future.

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## **2006 WI ARES/RACES Priorities**

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, SEC WI

The following was presented as our 2006 priorities when the senior leadership team met on January 21, 2006:

### **2006 WI ARES/RACES Objectives**

1. Design and engineer the statewide repeater system and install three sites by year-end.
2. Design and engineer the statewide digital networking system, including the further deployment of Winlink 2000.
3. Complete the Hospital Bioterrorism plans.
4. Increase ARES/RACES recruiting efforts.
5. Complete required NIMS training for all leadership and general members.
6. Update the WI ARES/RACES Emergency Communications Plan (VECS).

Each year it is important for us to focus on important areas which can be realistically achieved. We will strive to complete these priorities. In a future article I will detail each of these, but will concentrate on point five in the next newsletter.

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## **Recruiting New ARES/RACES Members**

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, SEC WI

As ARES/RACES leaders, we often ruminate about the perceived lack of numbers on our teams. It is amazing how much a small, effective group can accomplish, but a larger effective group can accomplish more and

provide better service. We often try to recruit existing ham radio operators, with little success. It is important to realize many existing hams got into ham radio for a variety of reasons, but service may not have been one of them. Volunteering for service, especially in this day in age, is also much different than it used to be and is more demanding.

So, what do we do? I think we need to look for people who are service minded and want to find an outlet for their service desires. We also need to look at the service we provide and consider what is most attractive to the masses.

When thinking about this, I always come back to the weather spotting service we provide for the National Weather Service. There are a lot of weather lovers out there, and we provide a unique service that is extremely interesting. Training is free from the National Weather Service, and the amount of severe weather training material on the internet is mind boggling. As an EC, I had limited success with recruiting new members. One area I failed to leverage was the interest in weather and weather spotting.

I use two examples. A couple of years ago I attended the joint weather spotter training session for Oneida and Vilas Counties. I was shocked to see about 120 people in the session; less than 10 were ham radio operators. Last year at the Outagamie County weather spotter training over 100 people were present, about 15 were hams.

If you are an AEC, EC or DEC consider taking 15 minutes at these National Weather Service training sessions and talk with the attendees about ham radio. Talk with them about how to earn a ham radio license and how they can serve their communities by weather spotting and other services through ARES/RACES. We need to realize the masses do not know anything about ham radio other than their perceptions. Unfortunately, the popular perceptions are not flattering.

Out of 100 people attending a weather spotter training session, if you could get five new licensees, this would help your programs tremendously and our service as a whole.

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## **La Crosse National Weather Service Office to Hold Coordination**

### **Seminar**

By Todd Shea, KB9YXS, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service Office La Crosse

Our office, with cooperation from local operators who frequently assist us during SKYWARN operations, is planning a coordination seminar on **Saturday, March 4** at our office just east of La Crosse, WI. The seminar will start at **10 a.m.** and be held in our conference room. The goal of the seminar is to make contact with all servicing clubs or groups, discuss current SKYWARN operations, and share ideas on how to improve communication flow and spotter activation issues.

Due to limited space (25 or so), attendance will be limited to one or two people per club/group. **RSVP is requested so we know who and how many are coming.**

The agenda for the seminar will likely include:

- \* Introductions
- \* Summary of NWS La Crosse Operations
- \* Summary of current amateur radio capabilities from NWS La Crosse
- \* Area repeater updates and link ideas
- \* Spotter activation issues
- \* Open discussion
- \* Office tour

The focus will be on SKYWARN or spotter related communication.

If your group would like to attend and be represented, please let me know. Space will be limited. If interest is high, we may be able to find an alternative meeting site.

Editor's Note: It is important you work through your ARES/RACES organization if you are interested in attending this meeting! As noted above, attendance will be limited.

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## **First Quarter WI ARES/RACES Senior Leadership Conference**

By Jeff Schmeichel, KB9BYP, ASEC for Administration

On Saturday, January 21, 2006, the WI ARES/RACES senior leaders met to discuss several items. We will be meeting three to four times per year, once in person, to discuss issues concerning ARES/RACES, service levels and projects. We had excellent attendance with only one senior leader who was unable to attend.

The following is a brief summary of the meeting, less the priorities covered above.

### **Hospital Bioterrorism Plan Update**

Skip Sharpe, W9REL, ASEC for Training, reported he has received only 15 Phase II surveys. Deadline for completed surveys is January 31. Skip stated some counties want to adopt their own activation plan. The contract with the Hospital Bioterrorism group is based upon a standard activation plan, which will be produced for each county hospital automatically with the reception of the Phase II survey. There is some room for modifications, but it is important to have one template. Pete Sweeney, WD9JIB, Southwest DEC, said a lot of his folks are still working on the Phase II survey, and the forms should be forthcoming. Ed Jacobsen, KB9KJE, Northwest DEC, said his are in progress as well, and he will keep working toward ensuring the plans are completed. Mark Smick, N9UNW, West Central DEC, asked if he could get a list from Skip reporting which counties in his district have not completed their surveys. He will contact those EC's and check on their status. Dan Lenz, KB9IME, East Central DEC, said he believes his counties are coming along. There is a new EC in Brown County so he may need a bit extra time. Rick Abbott, WX9M, Northeast DEC, said he has not heard much from his EC's on this project, and will send a reminder to them. Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, WI SEC, stated he knows there may be some delay with certain counties, but we need to continue to do pursue this project because it will open up huge opportunities for WI ARES/RACES.

### **National Incident Management System (NIMS) Requirements**

With all the disaster communications failures lately, there is a renewed effort for training. Federal officials are now requiring incident command training for any group which responds to emergencies. We have training requirements in place for ARES/RACES leadership, but we may need to have some requirements for general ARES members as well. Dan Lenz suggested a DEC training team, which could help train and certify members at the county level. Dan also asked about a list of recommended training requirements. Sam Rowe, KG9NG, ASEC for WEM, stated he would like to see some links to training opportunities posted on the WI ARES/RACES web site. Skip Sharpe said he would gather a list, and work with Sam and Todd Dorschner, N9MY, WI ARES/RACES Webmaster, to get these items published. Everyone agreed a standard presentation should be developed or provided by the ARRL to be used by ARES/RACES leadership in their selling our service to clients. Don Michalski, W9IXG, ARRL WI Section Manager, said he would contact the ARRL to determine if they had such a presentation. Bill Niemuth said he has a presentation which may work well with a little modification. Bill said he will send this to the group for their review and use.

### **Next Senior Leadership Conference**

The next Senior Leadership Conference will be Saturday April, 29th. The WECOMM Ltd. annual meeting will be in the morning, and the Senior Leadership Conference in the afternoon starting at 1:00 p.m. Rich Abbott will begin researching a venue.

### **Other Items**

All the DEC's generally reported activities are much better than in the past, but there are still improvement opportunities. There are still a few counties without ECs and a few with little or no activity.

There is some interest in setting up a Winlink 2000 workshop. Jim Darrow, KB9MMC, ASEC for Digital Communications, will work on planning this workshop.

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