



# The Wisconsin 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 activities in the state.

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

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## Changes to the EC Roster

Effective 1999Apr11, Wes Jones (N9PHS) took the vacant EC position in Sawyer County. Wes is now covering three counties (Sawyer, Burnett and Washburn). A busy man!

William Maves (NB9H) has stepped down from the DEC position for Northwestern Wisconsin after well over ten years in that job. The position remains vacant (hint, hint).

Jack Lukes (WB9QXO), EC for Wood County is now on the web at

jflukes@tznet.com. Please add his address to your roster.

Some "musical chairs" are in the works for 1999Sep29, a time when all involved feel our severe WX season is safely over. Tom Fleming (N9SZF), currently EC for the National Weather Service, will step down from that position. A replacement for Tom is being developed and will be announced later. Tom will assume the EC position for CWRA (Central Wisconsin Radio Amateurs - Baraboo, 146.88 MHz repeater) on that same day. The current EC for CWRA, Tom Weeden (WJ9H) will step down from his position on that day.

## Training, Training, Training!

Some of the sessions I've heard about recently:

Chippewa Valley ARES held advanced SKYWARN training on 13Apr, with 156 people from fire, law enforcement, EMS, local government, hospital and hams attending (via Jim Staatz, KG9MV, EC Eau Claire).

Racine EC John Rusfeldt (KA9RZL) and Racine EM hosted a severe WX training session on 15Apr. Both NWS's Rusty Kaplella and WB9RQR were speakers.

Bill Stolte (N9VBJ), EM Director for Ozaukee County was himself the instructor for the 22Apr OZARES session on Message Handling in Emergency Management Operations.

## Flash: Your SEC Becomes State Radio Officer

Well, I really didn't want anything else on my plate, but the opportunity to do good stuff toward combining the efforts of both ARES and RACES in the state took precedence when Bill Kimble (WA9OAY) resigned from the position on 1 May. The State Radio Officer is appointed by the Director of Wisconsin's Division of Emergency Management (Steven Sell) upon recommendation of the Wisconsin Communications and Warning Officer (Alan Wohlferd). The Radio Officer is a volunteer who works directly for the Communications and Warning Officer, managing all RACES operations in the state. The main mission of RACES is to provide essential back-up communications between the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Madison and other State and local EOCs, as well as with the EOCs of adjoining states.

*I plan to integrate the activities of ARES and RACES in our state insofar as this is legally possible, and will also attempt to include SkyWarn and other volunteer communications organizations useful in emergencies. ARES is, of course, a private organization of radio amateur volunteers under the aegis of the ARRL. RACES is a governmental organization of ham volunteers (created in 1952) sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency*

(FEMA), but the responsibility for establishing and training RACES units is vested with the State of Wisconsin Division of Emergency Management. Each local Emergency Management Director may also appoint a local RACES Radio Officer, *and there is no reason why that Radio Officer should not also be the EC for that county.* What I am saying here in print for all to see is that I will be doing everything I can to have the ARRL EC in a given county appointed also to the post of RACES Radio Officer in that county. Furthermore, each and every ARES member should also be registered as a RACES member. We have done just that, with complete success, for nearly ten years in Ozaukee County, and there is no reason why it cannot work just as successfully in your county. That way, each operator works and trains simultaneously as both an ARES and RACES member, and if RACES is activated, the transition is seamless. Good stuff for both ARES and RACES and the people they serve! More on this subject will follow. For now, my assignment is to update the state RACES Communications Plan, which should be well underway by the time you read this. Expect to receive a copy of the plan, as well as other documents, from the Division of Emergency Management in Madison.

## Emergency Preparedness

By Jim Wades, WB8SIW

[This is a great article! It is thought provoking and does an excellent job of bridging the chasm between ARES/RACES hams and NTS traffic handlers. I learned from it, and I hope you will, too. Reprinted by permission from the May 1999 issue of WorldRadio; we send thanks to the editor for his generous and useful reprint policy.]

Recently, much press has been given to the supposed 'demise' of Amateur Radio as a disaster communications resource due to the deployment of such systems as cellular telephones, the internet, and the Iridium satellite system. Often, this argument is based on the idea that the commercial or military communications systems are capable of much faster data rates and have higher circuit capacity than Amateur Radio networks. As a matter of fact, in a recent editorial in a major national Amateur Radio magazine the writer attempted to compare CW circuits with a digital communications system being deployed by the U.S. Army Signal Corps (no doubt costing millions of dollars). His argument may be paraphrased as follows: "Ham Radio is doomed to obsolescence because we can't match the data rates achieved in commercial and military systems."

While the prophets of doom are prostrate at the altar, worshipping the god "baud," or worse, making maximum use of the Internet's sizable circuit capacity by playing interactive electronic games, let's consider just one of many characteristics, which will continue to render Amateur Radio of value in the future:

**Training.** In recent years, I have had the responsibility of supervising disaster communications during a number of national-level operations for a well-known relief agency. Interestingly, I have yet to see one or two, let alone hundreds of every-day citizens report to our headquarters offering to provide disaster communications services with their cellular telephones and PCs. Why? They don't know how (not to mention that the infrastructure upon which those devices rely, often fails during emergencies).

While working with numerous Emergency Management Agencies, I have yet to see a local Director recruit citizens with personal wireless devices for emergency communications. Why? They're not trained! They don't understand how the agency works, how to interface with the public safety or relief personnel, how to process and deliver message traffic, nor how to improvise when their beloved wireless device fails (i.e., the batteries die or the circuit crashes).

While there is no doubt that it is necessary for Amateur Radio to integrate newer technologies into all of its public service activities in order to remain viable, the most valuable asset we have remains that of the trained operator. This means:

- Understanding the concepts of message prioritization, how to use standard prowords and prosigns, net discipline, proper message transmission techniques (for accuracy).
- The ability to conduct effective disaster communications planning and emergency communications resource allocation.
- Having access to redundant communications networks and emergency power supply capabilities.
- Knowing how to improvise in an emergency (for example, how to construct an emergency antenna, or perhaps rig two lantern batteries for a temporary source of power, or how to debug unfamiliar software).

Amateur Radio continues to offer public and private relief agencies access to a wide range of communications technologies and skilled personnel in a highly cost-effective manner (namely "free"). The fact that Amateur Radio operators are organized through such programs as ARES and RACES insures that our disaster communications resources are allocated in a far more efficient manner than typically occurs through the random application of public communications facilities.

While participating in ARES and RACES organizations is valuable for the knowledge of emergency planning and deployment it imparts, traffic nets offer a different type of training geared to the art of "communicating." Unfortunately, there seems to be a dichotomy between the NTS and ARES programs in many parts of the country. This is to the detriment of Amateur Radio. The traffic handler needs to understand how public safety and relief agencies operate and how to prepare for an emergency. Likewise, many ARES programs seem to be in need of the basic skills taken for granted by the experienced traffic handler. ARES

leadership should encourage their members to become involved in the NTS, and more traffic handlers should join their local ARES program (or an equivalent organization).

**Health and Welfare Traffic.** While the need for originating health and welfare messages in time of emergency has diminished in recent years, situations still arise where it is necessary in the absence of "traditional" communications infrastructure. Problems arise when inquiries arrive from outside the disaster area and delivery is attempted. Large disasters displace individuals. Landmarks and street signs disappear. Local phone service is often inoperative and not enough personnel are available to track down addresses. In addition, each message that arrives as a disaster welfare inquiry requires a response, thereby doubling demands on already limited communications circuit capacity. As a result, little of this traffic is ever delivered and even fewer timely replies are originated.

For traffic handlers and ARES programs, a simple rule to remember is that "it is better to give than to receive." Have a plan in place for originating health and welfare messages on behalf of displaced individuals (in shelters and otherwise). A convenient tool for originating such messages is ARRL Form FSD-244 entitled Disaster Welfare Message Form. Quantities of these forms can be distributed to shelter residents, each having specific identical ARL texts checked-off (e.g., "ARL One ARL Six"). Through the use of "book traffic" techniques, large quantities of this traffic can be originated and quickly delivered outside the disaster area via local or section NTS nets, or via special point-to-point circuits using packet radio or a simple telephone and fax machine. For example, volunteers at a nearby Red Cross Chapter in an unaffected area could place phone calls to deliver traffic received from the disaster area via a temporary point-to-point circuit, resulting in timely and efficient delivery of health and welfare traffic.

Another important rule to remember about handling health and welfare traffic in an emergency is this: Do so only with the consent of the originating party. Many relief agencies, such as the American Red Cross, have policies

in place protecting the confidentiality of shelter residents. One may also wish to consider the use of such modes as packet radio, CW and other methods not easily intercepted by the general public.

#### **Winter Storm Emergency Activation.**

During the New Year's Weekend Winter Storm, which struck much of the Midwest, NTS members in Michigan provided a service to the National Weather Service, which may be worth imitating in other areas. Under the auspices of the Michigan Net (QMN), NTS and ARES members made snowfall observations every three hours throughout the storm's duration, and transmitted their reports to the NWS using the standard ARRL radiogram format. The radiogram format offers some significant advantages for organized reporting of weather conditions since the format is already structured to include such data as:

- Station of Origin
- Place of Origin
- Date and Time of Origin

Reports were transmitted on the QMN frequency of 3663 kHz (CW) and the Michigan ARPSC frequency of 3932 kHz (SSB). Alternate frequencies on the 40-meter band were used during the afternoon hours when necessary. Some participants in SE Michigan used VHF packet radio as well.

The use of NTS facilities provided the NWS with data from many rural areas which lacked sufficient amateur population to support a fully staffed two meter Skywarn net typical of more urban locations. Likewise, many smaller ARES programs took advantage of the "ready-made" infrastructure provided by Section level NTS Nets to transmit regular reports. This type of activity is a fine example of how quality public service communications can be accomplished when CW, SSB and digital interests work together.

The Michigan Net has had Standard Operating Procedures in place to provide the NWS with both routine and emergency weather data for several years. The data collected through this system is used to supplement existing precipitation data, which is often obtained through automated

observation systems. Many of these systems tend to under-report snowfall or are to widely dispersed to provide a complete "picture" of local variations in precipitation. If you are on the Internet and wish to learn more about the QMN-NWS program, check out the QMN Web Page at <http://qrp.cc.nd.edu/qmn/>.

**A Final Thought.** Consider this: mere possession of two-way radio capability is no longer enough to make Amateur Radio unique nor a valuable national resource. We must be trained and prepared. One can not obtain this training by sitting at home and rag-chewing or through participation in DX contests (all perfectly fun and honorable activities). If you wish to make an investment in the future of Amateur Radio, join your local ARES or RACES program, check-in to an NTS Net and originate some meaningful traffic, and be prepared to help in time of emergency. When you do help, be sure to let the media, your elected representatives, and the public know!

## **Circus Train Op Support Needed**

Jim Romelfanger, K9ZZ (editor of our wonderful Badger State Smoke Signals) is organizing some help during stops of the Great Circus Train, Jul 2, 3, 4 and 5. Here is what is needed.

One ARES member with HT is needed to shadow PR person Keri Olson while she is off the train so that she can be advised of incoming message traffic. Tentative frequency is 146.55 MHz simplex; the onboard Special Event station call is W9R.

The list of stops/counties where help is needed is as follows (there are other stops, but those listed here are where those on board are scheduled to detrain):

Fri 2Jul: Madison (Dane), 12:10 to 1:10p.

Sat 3Jul: Whitewater (Walworth), 9:00 to 9:30a. Waukesha (Waukesha), 10:45 to 11:45a. Oshkosh (Winnebago) 3:35 to 4:35p.

Sun 4Jul: Green Bay (Brown), 11:33a to 1:30p.

Mon 5Jul: Germantown (Washington), noon to 12:40p.

ECs in each county listed are requested to query their members for a volunteer. Please have the ham contact Jim (smokesigs@baraboo.com), who will supply the shadow with a map and other necessary information.

Anyone else who would like to, please turn out to see this famous train, running its route for the 14<sup>th</sup> year. ECs, feel free to contact Stan (skaplan@mcw.edu) for an email copy of the map showing dates, times and stops. Let me know what format you prefer (jpg, tif, bmp, etc.). And thanks for your support!

## Another FLASH: New SM To Take Office 1 July

Roy Pederson (K9FHI) is stepping down from the post of ARRL Section Manager after many years of good service. Don Michalski (W9IXG) of Madison will take over the position on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Don works for the UW Space Astronomy Lab in Madison. Welcome, Don, from all your Emergency Coordinators!

FYI: Wisconsin has only one section in the ARRL hierarchy, so the Section Manager actually manages all ARRL operations in the state. The SEC reports directly to the SM and is appointed by him.

## All ECs: Wisconsin DEM Needs Help

Mack Brophy (N9NTB) of Wisconsin Emergency Management needs help with updating the state RACES roster. In the near future, you as EC, will

receive a RACES roster for your county from the WEM. Please examine the roster carefully and do the following. Using colored ink or a highlighter (so it is easy to spot), circle the names of those on the roster from your jurisdiction who are NOT registered members of your ARES group. Return the edited list. Those individuals you have highlighted will be dropped from the RACES roster.

**In other words, as of now, in order to be a member of RACES in Wisconsin, a ham must be a registered member of an ARES group.** The only exception is in those counties that do not currently have an EC and ARES group. We will leave RACES registered hams in those counties as they are, and the culling will occur later when we designate an EC and develop a group.

This is a major step, designed to both clean up the state RACES roster and begin the integration of ARES and RACES in Wisconsin. Controversial? Perhaps, but it is the only way to truly interdigitate ARES and RACES, which is a goal that many of us believe is useful and necessary. Any current RACES registered ham who wants to continue can do so by simply joining your ARES group.

Also, if you or any of your ARES members are not now registered with RACES (the names are missing from the list sent to you), please register. To do this, have your county Emergency Manager send Alan Wohlfert (Communications and Warning Officer) a completed RACES application form (Pages E-1 and E-2 of the current State RACES Communications Plan). Your Emergency Manager should have the forms, or you can send Mack an email at brophm@dma.state.wi.us or call him at 1-608-242-3323 and he will mail you a copy. The application can also be downloaded from the

WEM web page: [http://badger.state.wi.us/agencies/dma/wem/libr\\_h.htm](http://badger.state.wi.us/agencies/dma/wem/libr_h.htm). A certificate of RACES registration will be sent to you, which you can present at a meeting if you choose.

FYI: In ARES, only ECs need be members of the ARRL, and they must hold a Technician Class or higher license. AECs and other members are NOT required to be ARRL members. They do, of course, need to be licensed hams, any class. In RACES, members need only be FCC licensed hams. County Radio Officers and Alternate Radio Officers must be at least 18 years of age, with a General Class license (required to use assigned RACES frequencies, which fall in the portions of the bands open to Generals or higher). More on this later.

Your help will be greatly appreciated. This is an important job!

## How is this for a logo?



Got a better idea? 73, Stan