The Wisconsin ARES/RACES
Emergency Coordinator

Wisconsin EC

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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.

Monthly Reports, RACES and Misc.

I know that John Leekley, (WB9SMM) requested that each EC file a monthly report (FSD 212A) when he was SEC. We are all volunteers, busy people, and I have added an additional paperwork burden by requesting a list of all your registered ARES members so that they can also be registered as RACES operators. This RACES registration is really important, not just to RACES but also to ARES and our general ability to serve the public in time of emergency. Accordingly, until further notice it is not necessary for you to file the monthly ARES reports. Work on that RACES list if you haven't done so already, and if you have, keep me posted of any changes to your roster. That includes changes in license class, phone numbers, addresses and the like, as well as new additions or deletions from your group's list. That will be sufficient for now, until we get the RACES data up to date. Oh, if you have significant stuff to report, like support for a real emergency or other happenings you feel motivated to send in, by all means do so. But give those RACES membership lists first priority; they are extremely important at this time.

Let me clarify the relationship between ARES and RACES, because there seems to be continued confusion.

You all know how ARES is organized. You are the EC and you have a group of hams registered that, together with you as its head, make up the ARES organization in your county or other political subdivision. Indeed, the ARES group exists because you have been appointed as EC. It would be possible for an ARES group to exist with only one member, so long as that person has been appointed EC for that county or other political unit. Conversely, if there is no EC, then there is no ARES group. Simple enough.

RACES is a bit different. Each county in the state is supposed to have a ham Radio Officer (RO) and Alternate Radio Officer (ARO), appointed by the Director of Emergency Management. Apparently, not all counties have accomplished this, or the RO is inactive, but that is a different issue, to be addressed at a later date. At least theoretically, the RO is supposed to be the head of RACES in the county, and to organize nets and drills and the like, as well as overseeing the training of registered RACES operators. I am not aware of any such freestanding RACES organization in the state. Insofar as I am aware, all RACES nets and training activities are as a sort of side issue handled by existing ARES groups.

Aside from that, the RACES RO is not a true counterpart of the ARES EC. Even if there is no RO in a county, hams in the county can be registered RACES operators. A ham RACES operator is simply a licensed amateur who has registered with the state to make their talents and abilities available in case of emergency. At this point in history, registered with the state means registered with me, because I am the state Chief Radio Officer and holder of the RACES registration database. It is sitting on the same hard drive in the same computer that I am using to prepare this newsletter. When I make significant changes to the database from time to time because an EC has sent me a list of ARES members to be registered as RACES operators, I send an updated copy to Mack Brophy (N9NTB) in Madison. Mack honchos the Wisconsin Emergency Management Hamshack, which is physically located in the WEM Emergency Operations Center. He represents us by acting as our

liaison between all ham operations in the state and Wisconsin Emergency Management. This task that Mack quietly and efficiently accomplishes is extremely important, and a boon both to me and to WEM. Although I am Chief RO, I live over 100 miles from WEM Headquarters. Thus, if Alan Wohlferd, WEM Communications and Warning Officer was to pop into the hamshack during an emergency and ask "How many RACES ops do we have in County X", Mack can look that up for him in a flash, using the latest copy of the data Mack received from me. Good stuff for WEM and for ARES and RACES hams, as well.

The point of this all is that there does not need to be an organized RACES group in a county for a ham in that county to be a registered RACES operator. To be an ARES member you have to be a registered member of an ARES group headed by an EC. To be a RACES operator you simply have to be an ARES member whose EC has registered you in the RACES database.

I think I can help to avoid any future confusion by adopting a new naming convention: ARES member; RACES operator. Member implies part of a group, while operator does not. I will try to use this convention in the future.

Here is a list of ARES units that have completed updating their RACES registrations so far. Several other ECs are in the process now. Have you gotten your list in?

> Burnett
> Calumet
> Dodge (Watertown)
> Eau Claire
> Green
> Marquette
> Ozaukee
> Rock
> Washburn
> Washington

Wood

Did you find the 2-meter discone antenna article in last month's issue interesting? I received a couple of positive comments from ECs, and Rick Lindquist, ARRL Senior News Editor asked for permission to publish it in the ARRL Web Extra. It was posted there (along with a couple of photographs of the antenna that did not appear in the original article) the end of the first week in August.

Popular Y2K Course Available Online

[From the 1999-07-12 issue of the Auxiliary Communications Service Newsletter of the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. FYI, in California all ARES, RACES and other ham and non-amateur volunteer activity is combined into a single ACS organization. Forwarded to Stan by Mack Brophy, N9NTB, our ham-government liaison in Madison and Wisconsin Emergency Management Hamshack Honcho. Thanks, Mack! Also FYI, as a Wisconsin EC, the course is available to you in any form (see below). That is, you may register and take it for credit and a certificate or you can just download the materials and read through it at you see fit.]

Washington, July 2, 1999 -- FEMA's popular Y2K course for local and state emergency managers, Getting Ready for Y2K, can now be completed online. You can get to it by going to http://www.fema.gov/Y2K/y2k701.htm

The course's goal is to provide the emergency management community with information and tools that will allow them to prepare for the Year 2000 conversion. The course consists of five lessons:

- Understanding the Y2K Challenge

- Assessing Y2K Readiness
- Developing Y2K Contingency Plans
- Promoting Y2K Public Awareness
- Exercising Y2K Plans

Also included in the course are a toolkit that contains actual documents to be used in Y2K preparedness activities, links to other Y2K resources, and a glossary of terms.

The course is also available from FEMA's Publications Distribution Facility by calling 1-800-480-2520 or the material can be downloaded from a link at the bottom of http://www.fema.gov/y2k/y2k701.htm

Type Accepted? Using Ham Radios Outside the Ham Bands

[Another goodie from the ACS Newsletter, 1999 July 13th.]

Mike Krueger, N6MIK, Orange County RACES Assistant Radio Officer and Training Officer, explains the situation clearly. To quote Mike:

Expanding the frequency of your amateur rig is legal, but using that rig to transmit on Public-Safety frequencies IS NOT legal. Amateur radios are not FCC certified for operation outside the amateur bands.

All Public-Safety, marine, aviation, and commercial frequencies are regulated by the FCC. All equipment used must be FCC-approved for use in that particular service. MARS and Civil Air Patrol users are the only exceptions, and only because the military spectrum they use is governed by the NTIA, not FCC.

The police chief can grant YOU (an individual) permission to operate on 'his' frequencies, but cannot grant your radio the same privileges. Remember, the agency doesn't 'own' the frequency.

The penalties for operating a non-type-accepted transmitter outside the amateur bands can be quite severe, including heavy fines and revocation of your amateur license, and possibly the agency's license. As an EMCOMM unit participant, you should be familiar with the operations and capabilities of your agency's radio systems, since you are there to serve the agency, and may NEED to use that system some day. "We have all heard stories about hams using Public-Safety channels to summon assistance in times of emergency. The outcome depends on the emergency, the agency, and the person involved.

Personally, I couldn't justify the risk. "Unauthorized or accidental transmissions on Public-Safety channels can be very serious. Imagine if your accidental transmission covered an officer reporting shots fired or 'blew the cover' of an officer searching a building for a burglary suspect. There is severe personal liability at risk as well for operating without a license/authorization and interference with police communications.

Mike concludes, *An honest mistake is usually forgiven, depending on the person and circumstances. However, this is an easy situation to avoid. Program your amateur radio so it will not transmit on the Public-Safety frequencies by using 'odd splits' (nonstandard transmit offsets) or other means to keep the RF in the ham band.*

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

[Editor's Note: This important article, taken from the ARRL web site, lays out the ARES organization in somewhat more detail than the simple job descriptions you have seen printed here in past issues. The article is too long for this issue and will be continued next month.]

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization, is eligible for membership in the ARES. The only qualification, other than possession of an Amateur Radio license, is a sincere desire to serve.   Because ARES is an amateur service, only amateurs are eligible for membership.   The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but is not a requirement for membership.

1.1 ARES Organization

There are four levels of ARES organization--national, section, district and local.   National emergency coordination at ARRL Headquarters is under the supervision of the ARRL Field Services Manager, who is responsible for advising all ARES officials regarding their problems, maintaining contact with federal government and other national officials concerned with amateur emergency communications potential, and in general with carrying out the League's policies regarding emergency communications.

1.2 Section Level

At the section level, the Section Emergency Coordinator is appointed by the Section Manager (who is elected by the ARRL members in his or her section) and works under his/her supervision. In most sections, the SM delegates to the SEC the administration of the section emergency plan and the authority to appoint District and local ECs.

Some of the ARRL sections with capable SECs are well organized. A few have scarcely any organization at all.   It depends almost entirely on who the section members have put into office as SM and whom he/she has appointed as SEC.

1.3 Local Level

It is at the local level where most of the real emergency organizing gets accomplished, because this is the level at which most emergencies occur and the level at which ARES leaders make direct contact with the ARES member-volunteers and with officials of the agencies to be served. The local EC is therefore the key contact in the ARES. The EC is appointed by the SEC, usually on the recommendation of the DEC. Depending on how the SEC has set up the section for administrative purposes, the EC may have jurisdiction over a small community or a large city, an entire county or even a group of counties.

Whatever jurisdiction is assigned, the EC is in charge of all ARES activities in his area, not just one interest group, one agency, one club or one band.

1.4 District Level

In the large sections, the local groups could proliferate to the point where simply keeping track of them would be more than a full-time chore, not to mention the idea of trying to coordinate them in an actual emergency.   To this end, SECs have the option of grouping their EC jurisdictions into logical

units or "districts" and appointing a District EC to coordinate the activities of the local ECs in the district. In some cases, the districts may conform to the boundaries of governmental planning or emergency-operations districts, while in others they are simply based on repeater coverage or geographical boundaries.

1.5 Assistant ECs

Special-interest groups are headed up by Assistant Emergency Coordinators, designated by the EC to supervise activities of groups operating in certain bands, especially those groups which play an important role at the local level, but they may be designated in any manner the EC deems appropriate.

1.6 Planning Committee

These assistants, with the EC as chairman, constitute the local ARES planning committee and they meet together from time to time to discuss problems and plan projects to keep the ARES group active and well-trained.

There are any number of different situations and circumstances that might confront an EC, and his/her ARES unit should be organized in anticipation of them. An EC for a small town might find that the licensed amateur group is so small that appointing assistants is unnecessary or undesirable. On the other hand, an EC for a large city may find that even his assistants need assistants and that sometimes it is necessary to set up a special sub-organization to handle it. There is no specific point at which organization ceases and operation commences. Both phases must be concurrent because a living organization is a changing one, and the operations of a changing organization must change with the organization.

1.7 Operation and Flexibility

We have discussed how a typical ARES unit may be organized. Just what shape the plan in your locality will take depends on what your EC has to work with. He/she uses what he/she has, and leaves provision in the plan for what he/she hopes, wants and is trying to get. Flexibility is the keynote. The personnel, equipment and facilities available today may not be available tomorrow; conversely, what is lacking today may be available tomorrow. In any case, bear in mind that organizing and planning are not a one-person task. The EC is simply the leader, or, as the title indicates, the coordinator. His/her effectiveness inevitably will depend on what kind of a group he/she has to work with; that is, on you and your cohorts. Make yourself available to your EC as a member of his planning committee, or in any capacity for which you think you are qualified.

Local ARES operation will usually take the form of nets--HF nets, VHF (repeater) nets, even RTTY, packet or other special-mode nets, depending on need and resources available. Your EC should know where your particular interests lie, so that you can be worked in where your special talents will do the most good.

It is not always possible to use the services of all ARES members. While it is general policy that no ARES member must belong to any particular club or organization to participate in the program, local practical considerations may be such that you cannot be used. This is a matter that has to be decided by your EC. In some cases, even personality conflicts can cause difficulties; for example, the EC may decide that he cannot work with a particular person, and that the local ARES would be better served by excluding that person. This is a judgment that the EC would have to make; while personality conflicts should be

avoided, they do arise, more often than we would prefer. The EC on the job must take the responsibility for making such subjective evaluations, just as the SEC and DEC must evaluate the effectiveness of the job being done by the EC.

1.8 ARES Operation During Emergencies and Disasters

Operation in an emergency net is little different from operation in any other net, requires preparation and training. This includes training in handling of written messages--that is, what is generally known as "traffic' handling." Handling traffic is covered in detail in the ARRL Operating Manual. This is required reading for all ARES members--in fact, for all amateurs aspiring to participate in disaster communications.

The specifications of an effective communication service depend on the nature of the information that must be communicated. Pre-disaster plans and arrangements for disaster communications include:

- Identification of clients who will need Amateur Radio communication services.

- Discussion with these clients to learn the nature of the information that they will need to communicate, and the people they will need to communicate with.

- Specification, development and testing of pertinent services.

[TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH]

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