



# 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 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.

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## The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES): Part II

[Continued from last month.]

### 1.8 ARES Operation During Emergencies and Disasters (continued)

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, which 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 which they will need to communicate, and the people they will need to communicate with.
- Specification, development and testing of pertinent services.

While much amateur-to-amateur communicating in an emergency is of a procedural or tactical nature, the real meat of communicating is formal written traffic for the record. Formal written traffic is important for:

- A record of what has happened--frequent status review, critique and evaluation.
- Completeness which minimizes omission of vital information.
- Conciseness, which when used correctly actually takes less time than passing informal traffic.

- Easier copy--receiving operators know the sequence of the information, resulting in fewer errors and repeats.

When relays are likely to be involved, standard ARRL message format should be used. The record should show, wherever possible:

1. A message number for reference purposes.
2. A precedence indicating the importance of the message.
3. A station of origin so any reply or handling inquiries can be referred to that station.
4. A check (count of the number of words in the message text) so receiving stations will know whether any words were missed.
5. A place of origin, so the recipient will know where the message came from (not necessarily the location of the station of origin).
6. Filing time, ordinarily optional but of great importance in an emergency message.
7. Date of origin.

The address should be complete and include a telephone number if known. The text should be short and to the point, and the signature should contain not only the name of the person sending the message but his title or connection also, if any.

Point-to-point services for direct delivery of emergency and priority traffic do not involve relays. Indeed, the full ARRL format is often not needed to record written

traffic. Shortened forms should be used to save time and effort. For example, the call sign of the originating station usually identifies the place of origin. Also, the addressee is usually known and close by at the receiving station, so full address and telephone number are often superfluous. In many cases, message blanks can be designed so that only key words, letters or numbers have to be filled in and communicated. In some cases, the message form also serves as a log of the operation. Not a net goes by that you don't hear an ARL Fifty or an ARL Sixty One. Unfortunately, "greetings by Amateur Radio" does not apply well during disaster situations. You may hear an ARL text being used for health and welfare traffic, but rarely during or after the actual disaster.

Currently, no ARL text describes the wind speed and barometric pressure of a hurricane, medical terminology in a mass casualty incident or potassium iodide in a nuclear power plant drill. While no one is suggesting that an ARL text be developed for each and every situation, there is no reason why amateurs can't work with the local emergency management organizations and assist them with more efficient communications.

Amateurs are often trained and skilled communicators. The emergency management community recognizes these two key words when talking about the Amateur Radio Service.

Amateurs must use their skills to help the agencies provide the information that needs to be passed, while at the same time showing their talents as trained communicators who know how to pass information quickly and efficiently. We are expected to pass the information accurately, even if we do not understand the terminology.

Traffic handlers and ARES members are resourceful individuals. Some have developed other forms or charts for passing information. Some hams involved with the SKYWARN program, for instance, go down a list and fill in the blanks, while others use grid squares to define a region. Regardless of the agency that we are working with, we must use our traffic-handling skills to the utmost advantage. Sure, ARL messages are beneficial when we are passing health and welfare traffic. But are they ready to be implemented in times of need in your community? The traffic handler, working through the local ARES organizations, must develop a working relationship with those organizations who handle health and welfare inquiries. Prior planning and personal contact is the keys to allowing an existing National Traffic System to be put to its best use. If we don't interface with the agencies we serve, the resources of the Amateur Radio Service will go untapped.

Regardless of the format used, the appropriate procedures cannot be picked up solely by reading or studying. There is no substitute for actual practice. Your emergency net should practice regularly--much more often than it operates in a real or simulated emergency. Avoid complacency, the feeling that you will know how to operate when the time comes. You won't, unless you do it frequently, with other operators whose style of operating you get to know.

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## Dunn County Exercise

Jim Ley (NX9F) reports 28 hams helped 28 August when his group provided communications for the Tinman Triathlon, held in and around Menomonee. There were 235 participants who swam a mile, biked 60 miles over hilly terrain, then ran 20 kilometers. Some did

the short course, half of the above. Communications were provided for over 8 hours.

While technically a public service event, Jim reports it served as a great test of emergency communications since hams were spaced around a 30 mile loop, with hills and valleys representing a 450 foot change in elevation. Hams aged 15 through 75 worked together during the event. While most were Dunn County ops, a significant number of hams from Eau Claire, Chippewa and Pepin counties helped out, and there was even one ham from the Twin Cities area. It was a good example of hams from several geographic areas working together.

ECs, do not overlook these public service events as terrific training grounds for emergency communications. Groups can practice using tactical calls, net control operations, message relay operations and a whole host of other techniques that you may well need in emergencies. And, the icing on the cake is that you are visible to the public and providing public service for a worthy cause.

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## Two New ECs

Manitowoc County has a new EC, effective 10Aug, replacing silent key John Glaeser. The new guy on the block is Fred Neuenfeldt, W6BSF, 4932 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Manitowoc 54220-9121 H:920-682-9312 fredw6bsf@lakefield.net. Welcome, Fred.

Jim Staatz, KG9MV, stepped down as EC of Eau Claire County. Jim recommended, and Stan appointed his successor effective 25 Aug. The second new guy on the block is Rob Indrebo, KB9SDF 2126 Altoona Ave, Eau Claire 54701 Home phone 715-839-7006. robme@cheerful.com. Welcome to you, too, Rob!

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## Rosters Received

Integration (read integration, NOT merger) of ARES and RACES continues, as ECs from around the state send in their data. Needed for each ARES group: Call, name, home address, city, zip, county, home phone and class of license. Your SEC personally enters that data into the official RACES database, and prints out a copy for the EC for checking and file. Once in the database, a ham is a registered RACES operator. The database is a legal document, and regardless of what wallpaper you may have showing you were a RACES operator in 1978, you just gotta be in the database to be duly registered. If RACES is activated and a ham is injured in the line of duty, he or she is covered under state law by Workman's Compensation (did you know that?). That even goes for duly authorized RACES training sessions, and an ARES training meeting can also be a RACES training session if the hams are registered RACES ops!

I share updated copies of the database with Mack Brophy (N9NTB), WI State Hamshack Manager in Madison, who will make the info available to Al Wohlferd, the Communications and Warning Officer, during emergencies. No one else gets copies of the database in case you are worried about confidentiality of data. On the other hand, there is nothing in there that can't be had by anyone with the latest copy of Buckmaster or some other callbook program, so confidentiality is really not much of an issue.

Therefore, ECs, get your data in. This is not an optional program, but rather a full-blown statewide effort to integrate ARES and RACES. The rosters are rolling in. Counties that have completed their RACES registration so far are:

1. Adams
2. Brown
3. Burnett
4. Calumet
5. Dodge
6. Dunn
7. Eau Claire
8. Grant
9. Green
10. Marquette
11. Oneida
12. Ozaukee
13. Polk
14. Racine
15. Rock
16. Washburn
17. Washington
18. (Watertown)
19. Winnebago
20. Wood

## SE WI Regional Y2K Exercise

Probably the best way to tell you about the exercise held on 1999-09-09 is to show you the letter I mailed to Darrell Welch (K9ABC), 22/82 honcho. Copies were sent to WEM and ARRL officials and the Director of Emergency Management in each county involved. It was a good exercise!

*Dear Darrell:*

*I would like to thank you, on behalf of several hundred people, for the use of the 22/82 repeater during the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Y2K Exercise held yesterday. The exercise was a first-time-ever simultaneous communications link of the counties in SE Wisconsin with each other and with the State Hamshack in Madison at Wisconsin Emergency Management. Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Waukesha, and Washington counties used ham HF, VHF, UHF and public service frequencies to exchange messages and confirm communications links. While various repeaters were used by the hams for communications within each county, your machine was the backbone. Its geographical position, power and reliability enabled each of the counties to establish communications through it with all the others and Madison. Your repeater played a pivotal role in the*

*exercise, and we all thank you for its use.*

*This test clearly showed that hams could establish and maintain good communications paths over a wide area in southeastern Wisconsin. We staffed 35 9-1-1 centers, each county's Emergency Operations Center, hospitals, power stations and other critical sites. There were only two glitches in the system, and since the exercise revealed them, we can now fix them. Packet communications to and from the State Hamshack were not reliable, and UHF communications worked from the Hamshack to the counties but not back to it (!). Even so, we had redundant communications paths that functioned perfectly (including your repeater) so the paths that failed did not really affect our ability to maintain good communications.*

*More than just the hams send along their thanks. Your cooperation was also appreciated by the staff of Wisconsin Emergency Management in Madison and the Emergency Management departments of each of the counties involved. Please pass this along to your repeater supporters and managers.*

*Darrell, now that we have thanked you, can we ask another favor? We would greatly appreciate your permission to use the repeater again, this time for the real thing. Of course, I am talking about New Years Eve. We would like to set up and maintain communications links that night. Since Europe and the East Coast will experience any Y2K glitches before we do, we should have early warning and will want to start the links immediately. If there are no major glitches (which everyone expects to be the case), we will still want to make and maintain links from about 10:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m., just in case. Again, it will be greatly appreciated,*

and a real service to the residents of southeastern Wisconsin.

Sincerely, (Stanley Kaplan, WB9RQR)

## Brown County Y2K Exercise

I received the following letter from Lisa Kolbusz (N9VJL), EC for Brown County:

The Y2K exercise in Brown County on September 8-9 was a great success. We used VHF/UHF/HF frequencies and covered the county with 33 ham operators. Net control was located at the electric utility, Wisconsin Public Service, which also served as Brown County's EOC. We also tested communications to several of Wisconsin Public Service's district locations in northern and eastern Wisconsin, including the Kewaunee Nuclear Plant.

Everything went well except for a couple of lessons learned. First, it was very noisy in the EOC, and we hadn't thought of headphones. Second, we concentrated communications on the two main repeaters, 147.27 and 147.12, and had liaisons ready, but we didn't use them enough. They were there in case of overflow, of which there was none so we didn't test it properly. We intend to tweak that situation without much difficulty. For the real situation in December, we will use a couple more liaison operators to the main repeaters, and certain stations will be dedicated to local repeaters, the same as we do for our SKYWARN nets from Green Bay.

We used seven local repeaters, and all the owners were extremely cooperative in making sure everything was operating well and backup was available.

I'd like to thank you, Stan, for your valuable assistance in what was basically our first large endeavor in

Brown County. I'd also like to thank Andy Nemec, KB9ALN, who provided all of the technical assistance and served as net control with me. Thanks are especially due all the ham operators in Brown County who took off from their jobs, worked late hours and did a super professional job!

## Here Comes the Winter

The cold months are not far away and I thought it might be a Good Thing to share some thoughts with you about what that means for us emergency services folks (that is what we all are).

Let's ask the simple question: what type of hazardous weather situation poses the greatest risk to our Wisconsin population? The other day, I received a copy of the MASA (Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association) newsletter that answers the question in a single table (printed next column). Look at the table.

It covers deaths in Wisconsin due to various types of weather hazards for a 16-year period. Clearly the leader is heat waves, with 86 deaths (yes, that number was verified as correct by Skip Voros, WD9HAS, MASA's leader), but most of those deaths were caused by a single event in 1995. If you look beyond that, it is clear that the next greatest hazard is a tie between tornadoes and cold waves. Each of those two hazards accounted for 23 deaths over the 16 years. Clearly, both tornadoes and cold waves can be killer events.

Keep that in mind when preparing yourself, your families and your emergency communications capabilities in the coming months. Can you make it OK if the power goes out and your furnace has no electrical supply to make it work?

Do you have plenty of extra blankets and warm clothing for yourself and your family? Is that spare battery pack for your HT on its last legs and is it time to replace it? Is your car battery up to snuff?

:Wisconsin Hazardous Weather Deaths - 1982-1998

	T O R N A D O	W I N D	F L O O D	L I G H T N I N G	W I N T E R S T O R M	H E A T W A V E	C O L D W A V E
82		1		2	3		4
83							1
84	12						2
85	4	1		3			4
86			1			1	
87		1					
88				4		1	
89		1					
90		1		1			
91	1	1		1	2		
92	1						
93		1	1	1		2	
94	4		2				
95				2		81	1
96	1	1			1		10
97		3		3		1	1
98		7	2				
	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>23</b>

Source: NWS Sullivan, tabulated in the August 1999 MASA Newsletter

The time is now, during the fall months, to think about these things and to prepare. Don't wait until the snow is flying horizontally and you cannot see more than 10 feet in front of you. Do it now!

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