



# The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator



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## WISCONSIN SECTION EMERGENCY COORDINATOR, CHIEF RACES RADIO OFFICER AND EDITOR:

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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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## Liability Issues, Part II

By William F. Stolte (N9VBJ), Director, Emergency Management, Ozaukee County

*[Bill adds some caveats to last month's short review concerning ARES/RACES, Workman's Compensation and tort liability. I think you will see from this discussion that coverage is not a simple matter. It pays to follow the letter of the law, so that none of us comes up with a big surprise after volunteering for an incident. – Stan]*

*[The following article is based upon training and review of case law, however the author does not offer legal advice and an attorney or court may interpret the law and cases differently. References to statutes are only partial and readers are advised to review the*

*entire section and to seek legal counsel for detailed advice. Bill]*

Let's explore some practical applications of the worker's compensations and tort liability issues presented in the last issue of the Emergency Coordinator Newsletter. The world of the legal beagles is a highly complex environment, often open to vastly differing interpretations. There are some things we can do to reduce the potential for problems.

Part of Wisconsin Statute 166.03(d) states that "volunteer emergency management workers are employees of the emergency management unit with whom duly registered in writing." What exactly does this mean and what constitutes being duly registered? **DON'T ASSUME THAT BECAUSE YOU ARE ON A RACES OR ARES ROSTER, THAT YOUR ACTIVITIES ARE AUTOMATICALLY COVERED BY WORKER'S COMPENSATION OR TORT LIABILITY PROTECTION!**

Of course, being on the roster is a critical aspect of proving your "employment," however you cannot jump into the middle of an incident and expect to be automatically covered.

Volunteers CANNOT act under the protection of Chapter 166's Workman's Compensation or liability coverage unless the "employer" specifically authorized them to act on the employer's behalf. For example, suppose you are traveling on the expressway, witness a severe traffic accident, and stop to render aid. Just because you are a registered RACES member does NOT extend liability coverage from the municipality where the accident occurred. Neither the local town, village, city, county nor state government will assume liability for your actions unless you are duly

registered, in writing, to act for that incident. Your "home" agency would also not extend coverage, since they knew nothing about the incident and did not "order" your participation. Your actions will be construed as being your own, not those of an emergency management unit.

In situations like floods and tornadoes, hundreds of volunteers may flock to the stricken area to help. I'm sure you can see how quickly the liability and worker's comp issues would fly out of control if coverage automatically extended every time something bad happened. Volunteers are NOT covered by the local community's protection for injury or tort liability UNLESS they specifically register, IN WRITING, with the local emergency manager upon "orders" to respond. ARES/RACES registration alone does not extend coverage. It may provide you with greater privileges to access an area or use certain radio frequencies during emergencies. This depends on the situation, your relationship with local law enforcement and whether your services have been requested by "competent authority."

Who is this competent authority? In order to be covered, you must receive authorization from a municipal official to act on the municipality's behalf. This may be a police officer, fire fighter, or emergency manager. Chapter 166 specifically covers authorization from the emergency manager. Other statutes cover other officials' authorities to request assistance. In fact, it is a criminal violation to fail to help a police officer upon his or her request!

Why wouldn't a community automatically extend coverage to volunteers? Injury and tort claims can

easily reach six and seven figure dollar amounts. One factor that increases an employer's liability involves a failure to train responders. This extends to volunteers, too. Training is absolutely critical in all aspects of emergency response. Not knowing the level of training volunteers who arrive at the scene of an incident, the municipality will not open itself to this tremendous liability.

So what can we do? First, make sure your unit is pre-registered so you can identify your resources and potential liabilities. Develop clear job descriptions or task lists for your unit, identifying what functions you expect your personnel to perform. Then develop training programs to ensure your personnel are properly trained. Be sure to validate your training to ensure it is effective. Seek assistance from your local emergency program manager and other local officials to develop and implement training for your volunteers. Develop standard operating guidelines (SOGs) to direct your volunteers' actions.

Examples of SOGs should include the following concepts. Whenever an ARES/RACES unit is activated by local officials, it is important for the EC to log who requested assistance, the types of assistance required, and immediately start a net to log in and document responding members. In Ozaukee County, every activation of ARES/RACES personnel starts with the County Emergency Management Department. Close communication is maintained between the Net Control operator and the Emergency Management Director, including providing a list of available amateur radio operators as soon as possible. That check-in list becomes our documentation or registration for the specific event. This way we ensure that our members are properly covered by Workman's Compensation and li-

ability coverage while helping at the scene of a disaster.

## Basic Communications

*[Our SM, Don Michalski (W9IXG) came across this and shared it with us. By Rob Roller, N7LV, from the Colorado Amateur Radio Emergency Service website: <http://www.iex.net/ares/>. Our thanks to Rob and CARES for this succinct, excellent guidance. ECs, this would be a good article to reprint on a single sheet of paper, to be handed out and discussed during an ARES/RACES training meeting some evening.]*

Generally, we think in terms of our language structures. An example of this is the Eskimos, who have many different terms for snow which allow the Eskimos to think about it in a different manner than those of us who have just one term for the concept. In choosing our language, we choose the definitions we can use for what we see and think. For ARES purposes, our definition base is English at the twelfth grade level.

Many say that we learn to communicate so we can better convey the ideas that have formed within ourselves. Add to that, the perspective that individual communicators have depends on their previous experience. Therefore, it is important to provide a common experience base for ARES communication via consistent training.

Communication is problem solving in that you must find the correct words to completely define to another, the idea you or someone else has. The best way to communicate is to focus on the subject involved.

Communication tends to move from concept, to writing, to revision, to transmission, but the stages are not distinct. For example, determining what information needs to be conveyed will occur at the beginning of the process, but

as the writing process begins, the problem will often need to be redefined, ceasing to be redefined only when the originator determines that he or she has a complete definition.

If YOU originate a message, insure you have revised the text sufficiently that others will easily find the meaning. You can do this by omitting the irrelevant. Say only enough to completely describe the subject of the message. Any words used that can be left out and not change the meaning, should be.

### Communications Techniques.

Plan your communications at least as well as you plan what you say when you know you will be quoted. When ever reasonable, write down what you will say before you say it.

Communication IS:

- A two way exchange of ideas/information
- The fewest words that completely define the thought
- One complete thought/task at a time
- Sometimes eloquent but usually not, because it is precise
- Unemotional

Communication will be acknowledged.

Communication is NOT:

- A bunch of unstructured words
- Fill noise such as Aaahhhhhh
- Vindictive or argumentative

**Standard ITU Phonetics.** While it may take less effort to speak into a microphone and listen than to operate CW, it does take some care to quickly and accurately convey exact information. Speak distinctly at all times. If information is to be written, pace your speech accordingly. For critical information, or under noisy conditions, spell words with standard ITU phonetics. ITU phonetics were chosen so that each word sounds completely different from all others. A list of ITU

phonetics is available in the ARRL handbook and the ARRL logbooks. A compressed copy follows.

A-Alpha, B-Bravo, C-Charlie, D-Delta, E-Echo, F-Foxtrot, G-Golf, H-Hotel, I-India, J-Juliet, K-Kilo, L-Lima, M-Mike, N-November, O-Oscar, P-Papa, Q-Quebec, R-Romeo, S-Sierra, T-Tango, U-Uniform, V-Victor, W-Whiskey, X-X-Ray, Y-Yankee, Z-Zulu

**Numbers.** Numbers are pronounced as individuals. The number 60 is pronounced six zero, not sixty. The number 509 is pronounced five zero nine, not five hundred nine and NOT five oh nine.

**Formal written traffic.** Insure you have asked all questions necessary to obtain the following:

1. Who is requesting and from whom?
  - A. What is the requestor's full name/title/agency and location?
  - B. What is the recipient's full name/title/agency and location?
2. What are they requesting and how many do they want/need?
  - A. Is it a list or single item?
    1. If it's a list, do all items come from the same place?
      - a. If multiple sources then multiple messages.
    - B. Is the subject the transportation of an item, or the acquisition of that item, or both?
3. Where will it come from (not always the same as the location of the person receiving the request)?
4. Where will it go to (not always the same as the location of the person requesting the item(s))?
5. When is it needed?
  - A. Time/date as applicable

Or simply: Who-What-Where-When-Why.

As communicators, we will seldom ask a served agency why. But if you have a message requesting something that is clearly outside of reality (such as having Slick Willie meet Monica at firebase three), you may want to ask for additional information.

**Served Agency Messages.** When you receive a message from a served agency, read it. If there is any part you cannot read, ask for clarification before accepting the message. You can't accurately transcribe what you cannot read.

When you transcribe a message from a served agency, MAKE NO CHANGES! It does not matter if you do not understand the technical meaning. It DOES matter that you pass traffic exactly as written.

Let's revisit the last sentence. PASS TRAFFIC EXACTLY AS WRITTEN! If you are the author, make your corrections before you are ready send. If ANYONE else initiated the message, MAKE NO CHANGES!

## Staffing Overview

[Another goodie from the Colorado Amateur Radio Emergency Service website at <http://www.iex.net/ares/>. The document was developed by Colorado hams from an outline extracted from the November 1997 CQ VHF article by Rich Ferguson, KAXDXM. Thanks to Rob Roller, N7LV. Edited slightly by WB9RQR to fit our Wisconsin needs.]

1. Have a Call List that includes the following for each ARES/RACES member:
  - a. Name.
  - b. Call.
  - c. Phone Number(s).
  - d. Training/Proficiency (Packet, ATV, NCS, etc.).
  - e. Availability.

Get clear statement of event needs from your served agency. Each situation our served agencies have

to deal with tends to have unique requirements. As such, it is up to the EC to insure that he/she has enough information to start staffing for the event at the correct level (five people may be able to handle a small event, yet twenty may not be enough for some large ones). How many sites and what skills are needed?

3. The size of the event determines your response.

- a. Small: Local Telephone call-up only.
- b. Medium: Local call-up progressing to a net.
- c. Large: Local call-up then net, then mutual aid per your ARES/RACES Emergency Plan.

4. The staffing person needs to know the skill set of most of the ARES/RACES members in their group. This will allow the matching of skills to assigned positions. It will also insure persons with physical limitations (unable to lift heavy objects, for example) will not be asked to do something that could hurt them.

5. Pre-Assignments. Whenever possible, have people pre-assigned to locations that are most likely to be needed. This allows people to become familiar with the location as well as the served agency people who will likely be there. Trust born from experience will enhance our ability to serve.

6. Whenever possible send teams of three or four persons to each location. You may send two if you are short on people or if the situation dictates less. Insure that you:

- a. Match individual strengths to assignments.
- b. Pair persons with limited training to experienced people.
- c. Verify each team member has proper equipment with them.

7. Safety. State CLEARLY that each person has three priorities IN THIS ORDER:

- a. Their own safety.
- b. The safety of their team.
- c. Their mission.

8. Staging area. A staging area is a location where hams meet before going to their work site. The ideal staging area will be outside the affected area, easy to find and near a main road. The location of the staging area must be selected after consulting with other involved groups to minimize conflict with other groups.

9. Shifts. Shifts will vary from 6 to 10 hours (depending on the number of people available and the need of the served agency) and must include a 30-minute overlap to facilitate inter-shift information exchange.

10. "Problem" help. Every group has people who are driven to be "sleepless heroes." These people tend to let their enthusiasm overcome good judgement. Try to find assignments for these people that will keep them busy but not allow them to impede the communication effort.

## New Additions

Richard Deering, WB9RJB, became EC for Kewaunee County on 14 January. Rick is and has been the RACES Radio Officer for the county since 1984. This note is just to welcome him here, since you already have his data in the EC Roster mailed to you in mid January. WELCOME Rick!

## Holes in our Hat

The South Central and Southeast Districts now have their full complement of ECs, and the East Central District is missing only one EC – for Door County. Your SEC has put out a call to hams in that county; we will see what develops. Here is a list of counties that have

no EC, ARES group (or RACES operators), in case you know a willing and able candidate. If so, your help would be greatly appreciated. Have the candidate contact WB9RQR:

1. Barron
2. Buffalo
3. Door
4. Douglas
5. Florence
6. Iron
7. Juneau
8. Lafayette
9. Langlade
10. Marinette (N)
11. Menomonee
12. Oconto
13. Pepin
14. Pierce
15. Portage
16. Rusk
17. Vernon

## WISCONSIN 1999 CONVECTIVE/ SEVERE WEATHER WRAP-UP

By Rusty Kapela/Milwaukee NWS, Jeff Last/Green Bay NWS, Todd Shea/La Crosse NWS, Todd Krause/Minneapolis NWS, Carol Christenson/Duluth NWS.

[From the Jan 2000 edition of the Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association (MASA) Newsletter; our thanks to Skip Voros (WD9HAS), editor. Abridged and edited. Your SEC though this article would be an appropriate "heads up" for the upcoming severe WX season. Note that the Farmer's Almanac predicts temperatures in April to be a whopping 8° above normal, and July to be 6° above usual in our region!]

The 1999 severe weather season across Wisconsin was quieter than what has been experienced in 1998. It started early, in February

and ended late, in November, but there were several long stretches where the weather was very quiet. All parts of Wisconsin experienced some form of severe weather, but the northern half of the state had more of the stronger storms.

Unfortunately, 15 people died due to the direct effects of summer heat and thunderstorms: 12 from heat waves in July, 2 from thunderstorm winds, and 1 from lightning. An additional six people died in July where excessive heat was a contributing factor (indirect death). As for injuries, eight people were injured by severe thunderstorm winds, 3 from tornadoes, 15 from lightning strikes, and 1 in a flash flood.

Only eleven tornadoes were documented or verified: two in Polk county, and one in each of the following counties: Lincoln, St. Croix, Washburn, Rusk, Barron, Buffalo, Wood, Jefferson and Waukesha. The tornado (F1) in Buffalo County was the strongest in Wisconsin for 1999. Normally, about 21 tornadoes occur each year in Wisconsin.

Typically during the warmer part of the year, Wisconsin residents will experience a variety of convective or severe weather elements such as tornadoes, damaging thunderstorm winds with large hail, damaging lightning strikes, floods/flash floods, and urban/small stream flooding. Most of 1999's activity occurred in June and July. The list below gives the number of days in each month in which some type of convective weather elements, or heat waves were documented:

Jan – 0; Feb – 1; Mar – 0; Apr – 3; May – 4; Jun – 12; Jul – 22; Aug – 8; Sep – 3; Oct – 0; Nov – NA; Dec – NA.

