



# 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 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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## Milwaukee County Gets New EC

John Leekley, WB9SMM, has spent over 22 years as a major player in shaping Wisconsin ARES. He was, of course, the previous SEC, and is serving as District Emergency Coordinator for South-eastern Wisconsin and EC of both Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties! Wow! What a tremendous contribution to the citizens of this state, as well as to the Amateur Radio community! All on top of a full-blown law practice!

John has expressed a desire to gradually step back from these jobs, and let some of the talented

younger folks take their turn. I have been working with John to identify replacements. The Milwaukee/Waukesha ARES group will be divided into two, each with its own EC.

We have been successful with the Milwaukee EC slot. I am pleased to announce the appointment of Jeananne Bargholz, N9VSV, effective March 8th. Jeananne is a bright, very capable young woman, as you will see if you have the opportunity to work with her. She has considerable previous experience, having been John's AEC for Milwaukee Emergency Management up to now. Welcome, Jeananne, to the head honcho position of one of the largest ARES groups in the state!

## All Is Quiet!

At this writing (mid-March), things have quieted down considerably since Y2K (with the exception of a bout of severe WX in Milwaukee County, including a tornado!). My daily email load has come down from a peak of about 45 per day to a more manageable 15 or so

**COMPUTERS:** As of today, 53 have been distributed to ECs around the state. My basement floor is considerably more free than it was, having held upwards of 35 completely rebuilt machines at one time. Right now, there are only a dozen or so left down there, all good machines if you want a couple. All it takes is letting me know, and arrangements for you to pick up what you need. A couple of ECs from halfway up the state even picked up machines for neighboring counties further north, so it is not hard to make the ar-

rangements. Every machine comes with DOS 6.22, Windows 3.1, MS-Word 6.0a, utilities, a virus scanner, and packet software (YAPP). The hard drives range from 50% to 85% free. I have optimized the memory, so all have about 620kb free out of a possible 640kb DOS memory after booting up. Each is Y2K compliant and in perfect working order. There is zero risk that any are virus infected because every hard drive has been repartitioned and formatted, then loaded with software I know is free of infection. These are machines, ready to give you good service. Most of the 486s are IBM Value-Points, which will take standard cards such as internal modems. Each also comes with a Norton Rescue Disk, prepared by me, which will restore CMOS data if the battery ever fails in the future. I am getting a bit low on keyboards, and can no longer provide a monitor with each unless more come in. Most of the PS/2s are gone, but a couple are left for packet use. Now is the time if you can use a computer! Let me know.

**RACES MANUAL:** One of my jobs as Chief Radio Officer is to update the state RACES manual. I completed a rough draft, called the **Volunteer Communications Support in Emergencies (VCSE) Plan**, in early February. The new manual will serve several purposes, some of which are brand new in our state: 1. It will replace the old manual dated September 1998. 2. It will serve as the very first ARES emergency plan in the state, which, by the way, is required of the SEC. 3. Of course, it will integrate ARES and RACES in the state. 4. It will also speak to

the utilization by Wisconsin Emergency Management of other volunteer communications units, which may or may not contain hams, such as Skywarn and REACT. 5. It will even cover utilization of volunteer communications experts who are not part of any particular organization, as for example, a non-ham, consultant Systems Analyst.

With so many new facets, the document raises several issues that have not been addressed in our state before. In addition, since it will serve as the main emergency plan for several organizations, it clearly cannot be written without input from representatives of those units. Accordingly, I have distributed the draft to several individuals for their suggestions and input. These individuals are:

1. Alan Wohlferd, WEM Communications and Warning Officer, who must approve it and who will issue the final version from his office. Al is my direct supervisor in RACES.
2. Don Michalski, W9IXG, our ARRL Section Manager. Don is, of course, responsible for all ARRL functions in the state, and is my boss in the ARRL Field Organization scheme.
3. Sam Rowe, KG9NG, Dane County EC, Assistant SEC and state RACES Deputy Radio Officer.
4. Skip Voros, WD9HAS, head of Skywarn in our state.
5. Mack Brophy, N9NTB, State Hamshack Manager and Liaison to WEM for Amateur Radio Affairs.
6. Bill Stolte, N9VBJ. Bill is full time Emergency Manager in Ozaukee County, and can offer insights from that vantagepoint in addition to being a ham.

In addition, I have consulted with Larry Fry, K9FRY, head of REACT in our state, and have discovered that our colleagues in REACT are

largely an untapped resource for ARES/RACES. You know, those folks do some fine communicating jobs, as well as being a potential source of new hams!

I really respect the opinion of this group of individuals, and expect them to provide a balanced, comprehensive review of the initial draft. We may go through several drafts before all feel comfortable with a final document. The target date for release: July 2000. All ECs are on the final distribution list.

## Coast Guard Thanks Hams

*[Don Michalski, W9IXG, forwarded the following email message to me in early January:]*

BULLETIN – The United States Coast Guard would like to thank the amateur radio community for their willingness to assist the National Response Center (NRC) by being prepared to relay NRC reports during the Y2K event. Your preparedness and willingness to assist are heartily commended. We thank you! v/r LT Charles Pugh, USCG Office of Communications Systems (G-SCT) Policy Division (G-SCT-1B).

ARES/RACES scores again!

## Wanted: Web Page Guru

The time has come for Wisconsin ARES/RACES to have its own web page. Your editor has definite thoughts about the content, general design requirements, and so on, but I do not have the time to design and maintain it. Hence, I am looking for an ARES/RACES member who would be willing to be our WPG. I can generate both the initial copy and later changes, provide the web page home and all that stuff. Need a Guru to work up the initial design and take charge of the continuing maintenance.

Salary? Exactly the same as your SEC's! Any volunteers?

## Getting Ready for Severe Weather

By Skip Voros, WD9HAS, Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association  
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*{ECs, please share this important primer on ham radio severe WX operations with your membership, over the air, at meetings, or in your newsletter. If you reprint it, don't forget to give Skip credit. Skip is head of Skywarn, one of Wisconsin's most important volunteer organizations. He specifically made this new document available first to the ARES/RACES community by giving permission to reprint it here, before releasing it elsewhere. Thanks, Skip!}*

The year 2000 severe weather season is rapidly approaching, and once again, the National Weather Service (NWS) will need the assistance of Wisconsin's ham radio and repeater club operators statewide for the SKYWARN program.

Skywarn is a nationwide program, originally developed by the NWS in the late 1960's to promote severe weather Identification, Evaluation, and Reporting. Today, Skywarn is associated with severe weather reporting by hams and non-ham communicators alike. While hams make up the majority, Citizens Band, UHF General Mobile Radio services, and REACT team operators are steadily increasing.

The Badger State is served by NWS forecast offices located in Milwaukee/Sullivan, Green Bay, La Crosse, Duluth, and Minneapolis. Each year their Warning Coordination Meteorologists (WCM) conduct statewide storm spotter training programs for the public and emergency response personnel on the *what, where, when, and why* regarding severe weather observations and when to make reports. These programs are also always

eagerly attended by hams interested in public service activities for their club or community.

If you are a new licensee, a new ARES/RACES appointee, a seasoned ham, or just want to be a ham storm spotter for your area and repeater, now is the time to attend the training programs. There is always a need for more spotters, especially in the rural areas. Even if you are a veteran ham you should attend a "spring refresher" training program. Spotter training dates and education are available from NWS web sites listed on the Milwaukee Area Skywarn Association web page <[www.execpc.com/~svoros](http://www.execpc.com/~svoros)>.

Amateur radio storm spotter reports are a critical and essential part of the NWS severe weather programs. The fact is that no amount of remote sensing technology (such as Doppler radar, weather satellites, smart weather networks, and so on) can take the place of a trained storm spotter. Why? The spotter offers ground-truth, real-time observations. Let me highlight again the most important aspect of what we provide: ***ground-truth, real-time observations.***

Our Amateur radio community and its operators are ideal candidates for gathering and reporting ground-truth reports because we already have in place an extensive network of voice and digital repeater systems, plus a lengthy and proud history of volunteerism, accompanied by established, and disciplined radio operating procedures. Furthermore, we can provide all this even when other communication systems fail (try making a cellular phone call in your area after a weather disaster!).

The National Weather Service has demonstrated its confidence in the emergency communications capability and organizational skills of amateur radio operators by signing a "Memorandum Of Understand-

ing" a few years back, pledging mutual support and cooperation between the NWS and the ARRL. It is now commonplace for an amateur radio station to be present at all NWS forecast offices.

April 10th - 14th is Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness week in Wisconsin, as proclaimed by Governor Thompson. During that week, on April 13<sup>th</sup>, a simulated statewide Tornado Watch and Warning will be issued at 1:15Pm, and 1:45Pm respectively. This test is done to insure that all emergency responders are capable of receiving the weather warnings, then activating their personnel and response systems. Skywarn/weather net repeaters should also test their operations during this statewide drill, since it provides us the same opportunities to evaluate our systems and personnel, plus educate newcomers to our functions during actual hazardous weather.

If severe weather is possible on the 13th, the drill will be rescheduled for Friday the 14th. If heavy weather is also imminent on Friday, the test will be cancelled and not rescheduled.

Severe weather reporting is serious business. There is no room for egos or politics. It is a team effort and we must all work together. The NWS is not interested in petty politics or club squabbles. Lives could be at stake and seconds can make the difference.

Severe weather reporting can also be dangerous. Unless you have actually experienced a first-hand weather scare or had storm spotter training, you may not recognize the dangers facing you. If you need to think about your safety prior to making a report, then it is not safe to make the report just then. Operators should only make reports when it is safe to do so. The absolutely highest priority when doing weather nets is YOUR SAFETY.

Think safety first, then accuracy and speed of reporting.

What to report? The exact reporting criteria are very similar from one region to another around Wisconsin, but there are minor differences. The exact reporting criteria are determined by each NWS office working with their ham liaison or ham coordination group. The same rules also apply with the reporting procedures. As always, first listen to a local net and see what the Net Control station is requesting.

Speaking of reports, here are a few points to remember that have been learned the hard way: Do not report "hearsay" traffic from other frequencies, TV, scanners, or the Internet. They are considered to be second-hand sources. If you did not see the actual weather event, don't report it. The nets need first-hand observations only. If you previously observed a reportable event, but could not make a timely report when it happened, call the net with a delayed report and indicate that it is delayed.

When passing wind speed and hail size reports, indicate to the net if your report is an actual measurement or only an estimate. The NWS considers measured reports as more credible.

It is a good idea to first mentally compose and rehearse your report before pushing the microphone button to pass it. One bad sounding report can ruin the efforts of 10 good sounding reports. Know the reporting criteria, reporting procedures, and your location.

When describing your location, keep in mind that not everyone monitoring is familiar with your area. Location information should be referenced against a county, a quadrant of the county, the distance to the nearest city, the city itself, nearest or major cross-streets, highways, or very, very well known landmarks. Mobile sta-

tions on the freeway should not use mile markers or exit numbers.

On-the-air remarks like "The sky is very dark here," "It's really coming down," "We just lost our power", "The lightning is really close," are certainly not viable reports and should be discouraged by the Net Control operator. This type of remark indicates that a certain amount of Stress, Excitement, and Tension (SET) is developing. This 'SET' effect can alter judgement and reporting accuracy. During these times, a good Net Control operator will impart some calming words to all listeners. SET can also create some on-air ill will and harsh words. Remember that we **never criticize a station on the air**. Rather, politely correct them for obvious mistakes. This approach will encourage newcomers to follow the correct procedures, and it will not push people away.

Although we are amateur in name, we must strive to be professional in our presentation. Credibility is everything!!

Always keep in mind that there may be many non-ham listeners in the background. Our severe weather nets often attract large audiences from among the media, firefighters, police, scanner buffs, radio stores, and emergency managers. These non-ham listeners have increased because people have learned that they can obtain first-hand weather information on our bands.

Earth curvature causes a radar beam to propagate steadily higher into the atmosphere as distance from the radar site increases. While Weather Service Doppler radar units use antennas 28 feet in diameter which focus 750,000 watts of power into a pencil thin beam only .88 degrees wide, they simply cannot see what is happening at ground level. We hams, however, who work at or near ground level with our paltry 50 watts into a 5/8 wave antenna, are

in a perfect position to supply NWS forecasters with needed "ground-truth" information.

Finally, look at the ham radio severe weather process in a somewhat different way. Each severe weather episode we respond to is an opportunity to test our operational readiness and emergency communication skills. It also helps to justify our very existence on the sometimes-shrinking ham bands. Most important, our participation assists in providing community protection, all the way down to our friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

## Simple Packet BBS Commands

*[It is no secret that your SEC thinks that packet is a very important emergency communications mode. That is the main reason I spent many personal hours refurbishing computers and distributing them at no charge to hams in my ARES group when I was EC in Ozaukee County. It is also why I do the same now for you ECs around the state. If you received one or more of those machines, you should have noticed that packet software (YAPP) was pre-installed (hint, hint). Well, here is yet another subtle hint for you, modified slightly from the ARRL ARES Field Manual.]*

ABR	CMD	FUNCTION
B	BYE	Disconnect from the mailbox.
CM	Copy Msg	Make a copy of the message for another station.
D	Download	Download files (read files that are in the BBS).
E	Edit TFC	Edit the message header (To, From, etc.).
H	Help	Gives a list of BBS commands.

J	WHO	List stations recently heard or connected to the mailbox.
K	Kill	Kill (erase) a message.
L	List	List messages (several variations available; use H to see what they are).
N	Name	Enter your Name, QTH, Zip and Home MailBox.
R	Read	Read a message.
S	Send	Send a message.
U	Upload	Upload a file to the BBS.
W	What	What files are on the BBS?

## Some Definitions

**ARES** Amateur Radio Emergency Service. A Field Service function of the ARRL, which is a private, not-for-profit entity. ARES can provide emergency communications for anyone or any group.

**RACES** Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service. Administered by Wisconsin Emergency Management, an agency of state government. RACES' mission is to provide emergency communications for government, at the municipal, county or state level.

**YOU** You and your group are both ARES members and RACES registered operators. Caveats: As EC, you have the authority to call out (activate) your ARES group to work an emergency, in which case, all are working as ARES operators. Only an Emergency Manager or higher authority can call out (activate) your group as a RACES unit. Please keep this distinction in mind and communicate it to your ops.