



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 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.

This newsletter and other important documents are posted on the Wisconsin ARES/RACES web page at:

<http://www.execpc.com/~skaplan>

in PDF format, shortly after each issue is published.

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Lightning

By Richard Polivka, N6NKO
ARRL Wisconsin Section Technical Specialist

Even though this spring and early summer have been quite active on the weather front as Mother Nature tries her best to wash Wisconsin off of the map, there is one thing that many of us overlook and forget - lightning. Lightning is pretty to watch and sometimes the thunder is fun to listen to, especially when a peal just keeps rumbling on forever. There is a darker side to this...

Have you remembered to disconnect your antennas from your radios? Inverted vees are not DC grounded. My HF-9V is DC grounded but there still is an impedance between the element and ground. HF antennas mounted on towers are (hopefully) DC grounded.

Even if your antenna is DC grounded, it still can attract lightning. Even if you get an incomplete leader forming on your antenna, there still can be enough impressed voltage to damage your radio.

Do lightning arrestors work? Yes, they do. They will protect the inside of your house by shunting the charge to earth outside but if your radio is still hooked up to the cable, the front end or the finals can still take a hit.

What is the best protection? Unplug your antennas from the radios during a lightning storm. If you do take a hit, it is cheaper to replace a toasted antenna and some feedline rather than the whole station, or perhaps the whole house. Remember, safety first.

See you on the bands, and 73.

NQ9X Silent Key

Jerry Knudson (KB9PJN), Trempealeau County EC, informs us that Ed Van Sickle died 23 June at the VA Medical Center in Tomah. Jerry worked with Ed on several occasions during SKYWARN operations. Our condolences are extended to his family.

Status of the New RACES Manual

Well, it isn't called the RACES manual anymore. It is now the Volunteer Emergency Communications Support (VECS) Plan (pronounces Vee Ee See Ess Plan).

Why the name change? Because the Plan doesn't just cover RACES, or even ARES/RACES. It also covers SKYWARN, REACT and other volunteer communications organizations, and even individuals who are not members of any particular organization. It will enable state government to use anyone in emergencies who has special knowledge or skills in the operational, technical or administrative areas of communications. The new plan supercedes the RACES Communication Plan of the State of Wisconsin dated September 1998 and all previous versions. It will also serve as the first ARES Emergency Plan for the Wisconsin Section of the ARRL.

The Plan was written by your SEC/CRO, but only with the great help and input of several important persons who represent all the concerned organizations:

1. Larry Fry (K9FRY), head of REACT.
2. Skip Voros (WD9HAS), head of SKYWARN.
3. Don Michalski (W9IXG), ARRL Section Manager.

4. Sam Rowe (KG9NH), Assistant SEC and Deputy Chief Radio Officer.
5. Duane (Mack) Brophy (N9NTB), WEM Hamshack Manager.
6. Bill Stolte (N9VBJ), Emergency Manager for Ozaukee County.

Mack, Skip and Bill really went over it with a fine-tooth comb (Bill did it twice!) for which I am grateful.

Just to give you a taste, some of the topics include Qualifications and Appointment of Radio Officers, Duties of Radio Officers, Duties of ARRL Emergency Communications Officials, Activation and Control of ARES, RACES, SKYWARN and REACT, Administration (ARES and RACES Registration, ID Badges and Security), and several other important topics. There are 11 Appendices, including three maps (WEM Regions, ARRL Districts and NWS County Warning Areas). RACES Registration and Some Legal Issues is another Appendix. There is even a Sample Net Script, modeled after that used for the Sunday morning RACES net. FCC RACES Rules are included, as well. It is comprehensive.

The final copy, signed by your SEC and Al Wohlfert, Communications and Warning Officer for WEM, was at WEM ready for duplication in mid-June. It is an official government document, emanating from WEM. Therefore they had to approve it, which they did, and WEM will distribute the Plan in July.

The distribution list includes each county Emergency Manager, Radio Officer and each ARES Emergency Coordinator (as well as others), so have no fear; you will get a copy. A copy is also posted in PDF format on our ARES/RACES web page right now, so you can read or download and print it without waiting, should you desire. Need the URL? Look at the masthead of this newsletter.

When you get a copy, be sure to go over it carefully, and be sure to communicate the contents to your ARES/RACES hams. Indeed, you can encourage them to download their own copy from the website. There are important issues addressed in the document, some of which have not been addressed before in either WEM or ARRL Section papers, and it is a master document for both. The Plan also addresses some general issues with regard to training, so it is a training manual in that sense. Keep in mind also that it is a living document, and changes will occur from time to time. Provisions have been made for change, as you will see.

I and those who helped develop the Plan hope that it clarifies some issues for you, and makes your job easier. That was a major aim.

Our ARRL State Government Liaison Needs Help

Jim Lackore, AD9X, is our official ARRL Wisconsin State Government Liaison Officer. Although well informed generally concerning state government affairs, Jim has difficulty in gathering information at the regional and local levels with regard to matters of interest and concern to hams. For example, Jim needs information on two current, high priority matters. The first concerns local/regional regulations regarding antenna structures. The second is the use of cell phones while operating a motor vehicle, which is critical because it could contain restrictions on all two-way mobile communications.

So, if you have information on these two items that might be of interest to Jim, let him know ASAP! His contacts:

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We all need to feed our officials with information so that they can properly respond. Thanks.

ARES Principles of Disaster Communication

[The following excellent article, part of the ARRLWeb: Public Service Communications Manual, S1C5, was written by Rick Palm. We thank the ARRL for permission to reprint it here. © 2000, ARRL.]

It is impossible to state exact rules that will cover every situation that arises. The good amateur faced with a disaster situation may, however, benefit greatly from certain rules of thumb. These rules are, or should be, part of his/her training in his/her ARES group. They are presented here somewhat at random and should be reviewed by all amateurs, even those not active in disaster communications preparation.

1. Keep the QRM level down. In a disaster, many of the most crucial stations will be weak in signal strength. It is most essential that all other stations remain silent unless they are called upon. If you're not sure you should transmit, don't. Our amateur bands are very congested. If you want to help, study the situation by listening. Don't transmit unless you are sure you can help by doing so. Don't ever break into a disaster net just to inform the control station you are there if needed.

2. Monitor established disaster frequencies. Many localities and some geographical areas have established disaster frequencies where someone is always (or nearly always) monitoring for possible calls. When you are not otherwise engaged, it is helpful simply to sit and listen on such frequencies, some of which are used for general ragchewing as well as disaster preparedness drilling. On CW, SOS is universally recognized, but has some legal aspects that should be considered where the need is not truly crucial. On voice, one can use "MAYDAY" (universal, the phone equivalent of SOS) or, to break into a net or conversation, the word "emergency."

3. Avoid spreading rumors. During and after a disaster situation, especially on the phone bands, you may hear almost anything. Unfortunately, much misinformation is transmitted. Rumors are started by expansion, deletion, words, exaggeration or interpretation. All addressed transmissions should be officially authenticated as to their source. These transmissions should be repeated word for word, if at all, and only when specifically authorized. In a disaster emergency, with everyone's nerves on edge, it is little short of criminal to make a statement on the air without foundation in authenticated fact.

4. Authenticate all messages. Every message, which purports to be of an official nature, should be written and signed. Whenever possible, amateurs should avoid initiating disaster or emergency traffic themselves. We do the communicating; the agency officials we serve supply the content of the communications.

5. Strive for efficiency. Whatever happens in an emergency, you will find hysteria and some amateurs who are activated by the thought that they must be "sleepless heroes." Instead of operating your own station full time at the expense of your health and efficiency, it is much better to serve a shift at one of the best-located and best-equipped stations, suitable for the work at hand, manned by relief shifts of the best-qualified operators. This reduces interference and secures well-operated stations.

6. Select the mode and band to suit the need. It is a characteristic of all amateurs to believe that their favorite mode and band is superior to all others. For certain specific purposes and distances, this may be true. However, the merits of a particular band or mode in a communications emergency should be evaluated impartially with a view to the appropriate use of bands and modes. There is, of course, no alternative to using what happens to be available, but there are ways to optimize available communi-

cations. Long experience has developed the following advantages:

CW Mode

- Less QRM in most amateur bands.
- Secrecy of communications--contents of communications are much less likely to be intercepted by the general public to start rumors or undue concern.
- Simpler transmitting equipment.
- Greater accuracy in record communications.
- Longer range for a given amount of power.

Voice Mode

- More practical for portable and mobile work.
- More widespread availability of operators.
- Faster communication for tactical or "command" purposes.
- More readily appreciated and understood by the public.
- Official-to-official and phone-patch communication.

Digital Modes

Advantages (1) and (2) of CW, advantage (2) of voice mode, plus greater speed in recording communication than some of the other modes, and--in most of these modes--error detection. In addition, digital modes offer the potential for message store-and-forward capability from within the disaster site to the "outside world." Finally, packet provides the capability of "digipeating" messages from point A to point Z via numerous automatically controlled middle points.

The well-balanced disaster organization will have CW, phone, and digital mode capabilities available in order to utilize all of the advantages. Of course, one must make the best use of whatever is available, but a great deal of efficiency is lost when there is lack of coordination between the different types of operation in an emergency. Absolute impartiality and a willingness to let performance speak for itself are prime requisites if we are to realize the best possible results.

7. Use all communications channels intelligently. While the prime object of emergency communications is to save lives and property (anything else is incidental), Amateur Radio is a secondary communications means; normal channels are primary and should be used if available. Emergency channels other than amateur that are available in the absence of amateur channels should be utilized without fear of favoritism in the interest of getting the message through.

8. Don't "broadcast." Some amateur stations in an emergency have a tendency to emulate "broadcast" techniques. While it is true that the general public may be listening, our transmissions are not and should not be made for that purpose. Broadcast stations are well equipped to perform any such service. Our job is to communicate for, not with the general public.

9. Within the disaster area itself, the ARES is primarily responsible for communications support. When disaster strikes, the first priority of those NTS operators who live in or near the disaster area is to make their expertise available to their Emergency Coordinator where and when needed. For timely and effective response, this means that NTS operators need to talk to their ECs before the time of need so that they will know how to best respond.

Uniform Courtesy Tones: Follow-up

By Matt Singer, KG9NH, HamRadioWI@aol.com
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You may recall the article in last months (July) Wisconsin Emergency Coordinator Newsletter regarding uniform courtesy tones throughout the state. In this follow-up to that article, I would like to ask ARES/RACES EC/ROs to let me know if any repeaters in their county/jurisdiction currently use or are implementing the suggested courtesy tone pattern of I, S, and N during severe weather events. Please send an email or packet message to me including the repeater(s) location, frequency, call sign and the sponsoring group. This data is being collected for information purposes and will be shared with amateurs throughout the state once it's compiled. Thanks in advance for your time and help!

Get Those Forms

Did you know that the ARRL website has all sorts of forms posted which would be of use to you as EC? Go to <http://www.arrl.org/field/forms/> to pick up those you need. Forms at this site include ARRL Numbered Radiogram, Net Directory Registration, DEC/EC Application, Public Service Activity Report, Application for Station Appointment, Message Form, Handy Operating Aid, ARES Reference Information Card, EC SET Report, NM Set Report, EC Annual Report, Red Cross Amateur Radio Intake Form, Affiliated Club Form, and so on. The forms are in PDF (Adobe Acrobat), Microsoft Word, HTML, or a combination of formats, for viewing and printing online or downloading. The Internet has made it easy

to get what you need in just a few minutes. Go get 'em!

A Second Ramlow EC

Recall that Greg Ramlow (KB9SZP) became EC of Waupaca County last November. Well folks, now you can add his brother Jeffery (N9WBR) to your rosters as EC of Portage County, effective 23Jun! Jeff had experience as both AEC and EC during the famous Weyauwega train derailment. A big welcome back, Jeff, to a leadership role in ARES/RACES.

Our next EC Roster (due out soon), will show Jeff's contact data. This is the first time in Wisconsin ARES/RACES history that a pair of brothers has been ECs, and ECs of neighboring counties, at that!

Cooperation Works!

Skip Voros (WD9HAS, head of SKYWARN) recently sent your SEC an email message documenting a happening in Southeastern Wisconsin. There was no publicity associated with the event, and everything was done in a sort of matter-of-fact manner. However, it shows a laudable degree of cooperation between hams and ham groups that should be noted and encouraged.

On 2 July, SE Wisconsin had a bout of severe weather, including the touchdown of a small tornado. Right in the middle of the SKYWARN weather net, their repeater (146.91) went down. However, Skip and Milwaukee EC Jeananne Bargholz (N9VSV) had met prior to this event and worked out a cooperative agreement. Accordingly, the SKYWARN net simply switched to the ARES repeater (146.67) and continued with hardly a pause.

We have a similar agreement in Ozaukee County between the Ozaukee Radio Club repeater (146.97) and the OZARES machine (147.33). Indeed, members of either group know that if one repeater or the other is off the air, they can freely move to the working one. The only caveat is that true emergency communications take precedence no matter what machine is available. It works just beautifully, and has during many occasions when one or the other machines needed repair. It is like each group having two machines – a main repeater and a backup. Can you make similar arrangements in your area? It works!