



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.

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

<http://wi-aresraces.org>

in PDF format, shortly before or after each issue is published.

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Frustrations of an EC

[Life is not all wine and roses, and ECs have their share of frustrations. Well, Dan Lenz, KB9IME (Winnebago EC), sent the following email to Mack Brophy (N9NTB) and your SEC on 5 July. Dan's message clearly points out his frustrations, and he pulls no punches. I felt it was important to share Dan's thoughts with all of you. In response to Dan's message and to increase awareness and appreciation of hams by Emergency Managers I wrote an article for the WEM Newsletter, which has been accepted for publication. I will reprint it here next month. Thanks, Dan, for your candid appraisal! As with all such articles, this one has been edited somewhat, but for English only (none of Dan's thoughts have been modified or removed). If Dan's message strikes a sympathetic cord with your own frustrations, do not fail to read the next article by Wes Jones. Stan]

SUBJECT: HF Contact with WEM and Ham Recognition.

Hello everyone: All of this is great but the truth is that WEM and county Emergency Managers (EMs)

tend to not want to recognize ARES/RACES for several reasons. The fact is they know we are there. They know because even the WEM mobile command post has HF/VHF and soon packet in it. They also know because we are right there in most cases with the Emergency Manager. Even the most basic FEMA training mentions RACES.

Most county EM staff is made up of people from relief agencies. There are few counties in our state that have a full time Emergency Manager, and of those that do, only a few have staff of any sort at their disposal. But the problem is that EMs have a brotherhood of sorts, and most are opposed to volunteers in general except for the main ones such as the Red Cross. They are painfully aware that they need us and therefore they reluctantly invite us in,, but only to tell ARES/RACES that they will not be needed for most things. When the time comes for ARES/RACES to respond, the answer is "Well I don't think we have communications problems so please go away". Yet, In practically the same breath, the EM tells their assistant to find a way to call the Warning Officer at WEM because the phones are dead and that dam cell phone has not worked in two hours!! When we tell them that ARES/RACES can help them with that, the EM becomes indignant and reminds us who is in charge and that ARES has no right to contact WEM.

However, some of their reactions are not unwarranted. We in the ARES/RACES community have not always been the most professional. Also, there are a few past transgressions that have caused them to loose their trust and it will take enormous amounts of proving ourselves over and over again to regain their trust.

This year we have had several disasters and the outstanding response by ARES/RACES members will do a lot to help us recover lost trust, but we still have a long way to go. For example, I have been working closely with Dan Williams, Waupaca EC. They are still today feeling the effects of the train fire - how many years ago was that? Well, as we all know, someone turned off the repeater back then for whatever reason. The group lost credibility then and have yet to regain it, even though the ARES program is strong there and ready to do as EM asks. The ham that turned off the machine is gone and yet

the brotherhood won't let them in. I am sure we will be able to change that but it will take time and a lot of effort and help from the ARES/RACES community.

As ARES/RACES members and leaders, the best thing we can do is to see to it that we are trained, either on our own or (best) as a group. Most of the training stuff out there is free, so obtaining it is not a problem. ECs should be keeping track of their members training and frankly need to be pushing a little to show their EM what training is being done by their operators. I feel credibility is the key and this is one way we can help to regain ours with the "brotherhood."

Perhaps these comments will upset some people. However, I hope you will all see this for what it is - not a personal attack but rather an understanding of a problem and the possible cause, along with suggestions to bring us a step closer to the fix.

I would like to recommend that maybe a statewide debrief for the disasters be held maybe some place centrally located some time early this fall. Invite EMs and WEM to attend. I would like to help if I can with that if we decide to do it. Maybe then we can take another step closer to regaining credibility.

Tornado Report

[Now that you have read Dan's frustrations in the previous article, let me share with you this very clear, well written report. Wes Jones, N9PHS (EC for Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties and DEC for NW Wisconsin) sent it to me on 10 July. It shows very positively what ARES/RACES and SkyWarn hams can do when the chips are down. It is this kind of response that increases our credibility, highlighted by Dan in the previous article. Wes and his hams are to be commended for a job very well done.]

Subject: Burnett/Washburn County Tornado Disaster: June 18th through July 2nd 2001.

On Monday, June 18, 2001 a series of severe storms moved into NW Wisconsin. The following is a description of the multiple SkyWarn activations, net activity and the disaster recovery efforts involving NorWesCo ARES/RACES personnel and radio amateur operators from surrounding areas.

Monday, June 18, 2001, 0437 a.m.: Activated NorWesCo ARES/RACES SkyWarn at the request of the National Weather Service. NWS radar indicated severe thunderstorms moving out of Minnesota into Burnett County, Wisconsin. These storms had a history of strong winds, large hail and lightning. The weather system produced large hail and high winds in southwestern Burnett County. Eighteen SkyWarn operators were on the NorWesCo net for 3 hours, 14

minutes. Some hail damages were reported. When the SkyWarn net was secured, NWS advised that another activation could be expected that same day, as conditions were favorable for more severe weather later.

Monday, June 18, 2001, 1920 p.m.: Activated NorWesCo ARES/RACES SkyWarn at the request of the National Weather Service. NWS radar indicated a supercell thunderstorm developing south of Hinckley, Minnesota and moving towards Burnett County at a rate of 30 mph. This group of storms had a radar hook echo that would indicate tornado potential on the ground. Heeding this warning, we were able to place a SkyWarn observer at the Wisconsin boundary west of Grantsburg Village. This observer and a total of thirty-nine others were able to track an F3 tornado that cut a path approximately 1 mile wide and 41 miles long on a west to east track through Burnett and Washburn Counties. All observers were able to report some of the signatures of a tornado, including wall clouds, funnels, golf ball-size hail, as well as the tornado on the ground. Townships involved included Wood River, Daniels, the village of Siren, LaFollette, and Dewey in Burnett County, and Bashaw in Washburn County; Siren is the main population center in the area and sustained extensive damage to both residential and business infrastructure. Probably hardest hit in terms of the ferocity of the storm were the rural areas of Daniels and Dewey Townships. There were three storm-related fatalities in Dewey.

The incident PIO reported that the damage area encompassed 50,000 acres; 400 homes and 60 businesses were significantly damaged or destroyed. These figures do not include the many barns and outbuildings that were flattened or carried away in the rural areas. Nine thousand acres of private timber were turned into mazes of logs.

Our SkyWarn net, with the cooperation of a specific group of ham operators assigned to staff the radios at the Duluth NWS, were able to track this storm in detail as it made its way east, almost as if it was consulting a route map of Highway 70. We ran out of observers when it reached the Radisson/Winter area in Sawyer County, but ground activity had decreased by then. Our reports are heard directly by the severe weather meteorologists, who are able to query the net if desired. We had a total of thirty-nine observers on the net.

The SkyWarn net secured at 2345 on the record, however, long before then, observers were being placed in damage assessment mode, and that duty in turn was replaced by disaster response operations. NorWesCo RACES personnel began reporting to the Burnett County Government Center in Si-

ren, WI. Initial reports were almost beyond belief. The village of Siren "looked like it had been bombed". The net being directed from the home of DEC N9PHS finally shutdown about 0330 am, July 19. On Tuesday, an EOC was set up at the Burnett County Government Center, where it remained functional until July 2 before a smaller EOC was set up at the County Airport terminal.

Initial efforts were directed toward a search for potential serious personal injury cases, then efforts were made to clear roadways sufficiently to permit emergency vehicle access. Miraculously, there were no fires. Hordes of volunteers descended on the EOC and outlying sites. Initially, our personnel directed several groups of volunteers in searching and road clearing operations. On the second day, the Wisconsin DNR Fire Overhead Team (of which NorWesCo is also a member) stepped in to assist in the road clearing, especially in the outlying areas, and to direct teams of volunteers. NorWesCo provided major support communication for the DNR, and also coordinated communications with Emergency Management, Law Enforcement, EMT, and Highway Departments. One of our prime assignments later in the incident was to coordinate the movements of buses used to transport volunteers to the more remote areas, and to assist in arranging delivery of food and water to these work sites. Other major cooperators we assisted on scene were the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

Amateur radio participants were drawn from the NorWesCo member base, and many others from northwestern Wisconsin, eastern Minnesota, and the Duluth area. A grand "Thank you" is extended to each and every one. 65 individual call signs of hams on the SkyWarn net or the subsequent on-scene duty are an addendum to this report, and it is hoped that no participant has been omitted.

Some interesting sidelights -- three of our SkyWarn participants' homes were damaged. One lost his porch, and two were trapped in their homes by a myriad of falling trees. These latter two were uninjured, but needed much assistance to get out of their residences. Others had a large number of trees downed. Siren is the site of our Penta repeater, which remained functional. It was dropped from the linked system daily while used for Sheavy emergency traffic. A simplex channel was also used intermittently.

Waupaca Needs a Rig

New Waupaca EC Dan Williams, Sr. is looking for a cheap (free) 2 meter rig to be installed in his county EOC. If you have one lying around that can be do-

nated or put on permanent loan, please let him know. A rig that is being used is: 1. Doing a service, 2. Earning its keep, and 3. In better health than one stored on a shelf. uncledan@athenet.net Can you help him out?

Check This Out

By Dennis Rybicke, K9LGU, WI STM

[From the June STM Report. Thanks, Denny! Remember, folks, nets are the heart of Amateur Radio emergency response, and the NTS extends the network beyond a very restricted, local reach. We all need to support Denny's good work by participating.]

If you participated in Field Day, if you have prepared for ARES disaster work, or if you just need to organize your daily activities, you may have worked from a checklist. Here's a checklist to check your traffic handling.

- Have you checked a section net or two this month?
- Should you check the meaning of some QN signals or voice prosigns?
- Do you include the check on each message for practice?
- Have you originated at least one piece of traffic this month?
- Do you have your list of ARRL texts handy?
- Are you aware of which communities you can call toll-free?
- Could you assume NCS duties if needed?
- Did you QNI in to a CW net lately?
- Can your local ARES/RACES net count on your weekly check-in?
- When sending traffic with voice, do you use phonetics only when necessary?
- Do those you usually QSO on packet know that you handle traffic?
- Would you know how to handle welfare traffic?
- Did you look at the WNA website this month? (www.wna.eboard.com)
- Do you know how to pace yourself when sending traffic by voice?
- Can you tell what the handling instructions HXF mean?
- Have you practiced copying under poor conditions - just for training?
- Do you know where your pink card (ARRL Form FSD-218) is?

- Are you able to volunteer to be an occasional 9RN liaison?
- Did you send your monthly activity report to the Section Traffic Manager?
- Have you considered a program on the National Traffic System for your local club?
- Can you identify your county's Emergency Coordinator?
- Do you answer questions about traffic for those new to the hobby?

If you checked all of the above, you are a dedicated traffic operator. Check? The traffic system only works if we work it. Let's do that as much as we can.

SET Will Also Be a RACES Drill

RACES rules limit drills to one hour per week. However, with approval of the Chief Officer for Emergency Planning in a state, RACES may hold up to two additional drills each year, each of which may last no longer than 72 hours. Therefore, your SEC contacted and received approval from Alan Wohlfert, WEM Communications and Warning Officer, for our October 8 exercise to be a RACES drill as well as an ARRL Simulated Emergency Test. It would be prudent for each EC to provide your Emergency Manager with a roster of those who are to participate that day, even if they participate at home or some site other than the EOC. You might also be prepared to explain what is going on to your EM, since they may not know much about it. This is one time when you may well be better informed than they are, concerning an official state RACES activity. At this writing, your SEC is attempting to have official notice go out to each EM in the state explaining what is going on.

Hams Serve WEM and the Public

Toward fostering better relations between Emergency Managers and ARES/RACES groups (see Dan Lenz' message on page 1), your SEC wrote an article with the above title and submitted it for publication in the Wisconsin Emergency Management Newsletter. The Editor of that newsletter recently informed me that it will be published in an upcoming issue, though perhaps shortened a bit. Well, you may not be on the mailing list for their newsletter, but you can read the full article on our website. Indeed, I placed it there in .pdf format, so you can

download it and print it locally should you wish. Please take a look at it – it may have some additional value in your jurisdiction for informing others, including the public, concerning our Public Service activities. I think it is a reasonably good public relations tool (but then, of course, I wrote it!). Feel free to distribute it as you see fit.

LEC: A New Position in Wisconsin ARES/RACES

Development is underway to institute a totally new position, Liaison Emergency Coordinator, in our state beginning this September. This new position is at the same level as District Emergency Coordinator, and is also an appointment made by the SEC. Persons in this position will not have a geographical area of responsibility, as do current DEC's. Rather, each will be assigned to work at the state level with other organizations that play a role in emergency response during disasters.

Although the ARRL has current Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with a number of organizations, there are seven that are pertinent to the new positions: 1. APCO – Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, 2. FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency, 3. NCS – National Communications System, 4. NWS – National Weather Service, 5. REACT – Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams, 6. Red Cross and 7. Salvation Army. Each LEC would be identified according to their function with one of the seven, for example, LEC for NWS, LEC for Red Cross, and so on.

In short, the job of each LEC is to liaison with responders in that particular organization so as to facilitate flow of information both to and from ARES/RACES. In times of emergency, the LEC would play a pivotal role in contact and coordination between ARES/RACES and the relevant organization. During non-emergency times, this position could do much in fostering relations between ARES/RACES and these important responder organizations. Better relationships and smoother coordination in emergencies is the ultimate goal.

A document which expands the background for the position and lists a complete job description will be posted on the web site, perhaps by the time you read this.

As with other DEC-level positions, the LEC position requires membership in Wisconsin ARES/RACES and full membership in the ARRL. Check out the details on the web site.