



# 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>

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## Change in Wisconsin ARES/RACES Policy

By Stan Kaplan, SEC

None of us likes change. We all tend to become comfortable with patterns to which we have become accustomed. Yet, growth implies change. Adaptability, too, implies change. Wisconsin ARES/RACES must grow and adapt in order to fulfill its mission. That mission is public service.

Many of the ARES/RACES groups around Wisconsin are small – 36% of our regular groups have 10 or fewer members. Often, the small groups are oriented to respond mainly to weather events and little else. Some of these units do not hold regular meetings or training sessions, other than 2-meter nets. The nets themselves are simply check-in exercises, with little or no practice in message handling other

than a brief weather report. Even some of the larger counties follow this pattern. It must change.

We are living in a new era now, since the events of 11 September. Following the pattern in the New York and the other affected areas where hams were asked to provide emergency communications during a real time, horrific emergency event, we must begin to prepare ourselves in new ways so that we can be ready, should these events migrate to our area of the nation. Because of my activity as Deputy Director of an Emergency Management Department and other personal contacts (one of my sons is a Political/Military Officer in the US Department of State), I am perhaps more aware than many hams that this is not out of the realm of possibility.

ARES/RACES units that are not currently training need to start, right now. Each unit needs to hold monthly meetings, with at least a portion of each meeting centered on a training topic or activity. There are dozens of possibilities, if not hundreds, that would serve to prepare our members. NTS format for messages, emergency HF, VHF and UHF antennas, operation of fixed and portable packet stations, weather spotting and reporting, voice net operations and efficiency are just a couple of the traditional areas that we all need training in. However, we must also seek training for many non-traditional topics. To name just a few: Ham/Emergency Management relations and interactions, operation of public service radios, ten-codes, vehicular traffic management, HazMat operations, the Incident Command System, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and so on. Many, but not all, of these non-traditional topics are available in the ARRL Emergency Communications Course. Many can be taught to your group by your Emergency Manager or the Emergency Manager in a neighboring county who has qualified as an instructor in these topics. It is even possible for hams that have the time to attend WEM sponsored courses in these topics. However, many or even all can be presented in the format of a monthly ARES/RACES meeting. ECs, too, should look to extend their personal training. Enrollment in the ARRL EmCom series is highly encouraged.

Why emphasize the non-traditional training? We don't need vehicular traffic training because we are going to become traffic police, but hams in our state

that have had this training have already encountered emergency situations in which they needed what they learned, and saved lives because of it. We don't need HazMat training because we are going to act as HazMat Technicians, but we do need it because it can help keep us from becoming a casualty in a HazMat incident for which we are providing communications. We don't need ten-code training because we are going to use the codes on the ham bands, but we do need to know the codes because we may well be communicating with dispatch personnel or law enforcement officers who will use them. As communicators, we are obliged to know what they mean.

On a slightly different tack, some ARES/RACES groups have had relatively little interaction with neighboring counties in the area of mutual aid. Of course, the recent SET was designed to encourage and expand this activity, which it did. However, there were a significant number of units that did not participate in the SET. Moreover, many of those units that did not participate are just the ones that need to increase their communications with neighbors.

We must increase our county-to-county interactions in the future, across the state. In the past, it was often possible for an ARES/RACES unit to handle the minor emergencies that occurred within its borders without asking for help from outside. That is no longer true; witness the recent event in New York City where local ham resources were taxed to the max. If a mass emergency occurs in one Wisconsin county, we will definitely need to call on our neighboring hams. Accordingly, we are beginning to see cross training of several types between counties. Multi-county exercises are one example. Combined training meetings between several counties are another.

So in essence, ECs, I am asking for a change your approach if you are not currently holding meetings or interacting with your neighbors. Hold monthly meetings, with a training component at each. Don't just focus on weather, although we know that is important, too. Rather, broaden your focus to include topics that apply right now. For example, after an initial training session on the general topic of Weapons of Mass Destruction, you might ask your county health officer to talk to your group about anthrax, measles and Ebola infections. Truly, it is a shame that we need to consider such topics, but the fact is that we do. If we consider them, we are not over-reacting. Rather, we are becoming prepared and protecting ourselves. Truly, knowledge is power.

Also, please increase your interaction with neighboring counties. There ARES/RACES units around you from which your hams can learn. There are also

units around you whose hams can learn from you. Thus, I am asking you to be mentors as well as students.

I wish that it was not necessary to emphasize this change in approach, but recent events make it clear that change is required. Some ECs may not be willing to change, in which case they must be replaced with ECs who are. If you insist that weather events are your only responsibility, then join or form a Sky-Warn group and stay with it. ARES/RACES units must become synchronized with current events and must be ready to respond to many possible scenarios and to interact with many possible organizations. If we do not, we are just kidding ourselves, and we will not be prepared when called on for public service.

Do you remember that EC job description which you received when you signed up? Please add two more items to it – two expectations of all Wisconsin ECs from now on.

1. Hold at least monthly meetings, with a training component during each.
2. Communicate with neighboring ARES/RACES units in a way that will enhance your mutual aid capabilities.

## Some Suggestions

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*[John is, of course, our past SEC as well as current DEC for SE Wisconsin. He presents some ideas here that can serve as a way for us to improve our ability to respond. Thanks, John. Oh yes, and by the way, Microsoft Access would do an admirable job. I say that even though I am not a particular fan of Microsoft. Access is simply, very good, and data stored in it is quite safe. Stan]*

Many years ago, when I took on the job of EC for Milwaukee County, I was presented with a large red binder labeled "Milwaukee County Emergency Operations Manual". Inside, I naively expected to find the magical plans that had been formulated to get us out of almost any predicament. Instead, I found lists - lots of them. There were lists of people, lists of organizations, lists of things. In other words, the binder contained resources - lists of resources available to throw into the fray in order to solve a problem.

I think we would do well to develop a similar set of lists. Jon (KB9RHZ, Ozaukee EC) has made a good start for Southeastern Wisconsin by setting up a list of repeaters, useful for inter-county communications. The next step should be a list of people and equip-

ment available. The key word here is: "available". The hardest part will be nailing down availability. It doesn't matter one whit if Joe Ham owns a widget (a very important item), if Joe refuses to leave his house or make the widget available for use. The other important aspect is that since most of the equipment is privately owned, and most owners are reluctant to allow others to use their property, each item of equipment comes with the operator more-or-less attached. Not a bad thing, all things considered, since many of the toys we play with are esoteric in their operation and it is better to have someone handy who knows how to use an item than to have to fumble around while climbing the learning curve. Its gets the job done better and faster, fewer mistakes are made, and we aren't made to look dopey.

So, first, we need a database that will sort by skill, by equipment, and by geography, so we can ask who is available as shadows with car-based, cross-band repeaters in XYZ County, or who has portable ATV capability in ZXY County. The next step is to get people and their equipment signed up with FIRM commitments. No more, "call me if you need me" stuff. Each person signed up should be committed to showing up, ready to rock, at an agreed-upon time after being called (subject, of course, to the obvious: located in the affected area; out of town on business; sick in the hospital, etc.) Some of us can be ready fairly quickly, while others will need more time. The point is: give a realistic estimate of availability and be there at the appointed time.

Each county should be polled and, once the list is prepared, it should be aggressively updated. Adjacent counties should share lists and disseminate them. Master lists should be available in the event of a widespread incident requiring help from further away.

Oh, I guess I forgot. All of this is in support of the concept of mutual aid. Clearly, if an incident occurs, the people (including hams) in the affected area will be focused on dealing with their own problems and won't have much time or ability to be volunteering. It will be necessary for the hams in neighboring counties that are unaffected to pull together to help. Having an up-to-date list of who and what is available makes that task much easier.

We, in Southeastern Wisconsin will soon start trying to pull the information together. Anyone out there care to come up with a database program to use to store and manipulate the data?

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## More Message Massage

By Dennis Rybickie (K9LGU), Section Traffic Manager

[On 6 October during the SET, many Wisconsin hams struggled with casting messages in correct NTS format, so that they could send them to another county, on the way to a DEC and ultimately to WEM. Correct formatting of a message is important, for it aids in accuracy, something for which we all strive. Denny continues to instruct us on message format this month. Especially useful is his coverage of the check, which often seems to confuse us (at least, me!). Thanks, Denny!]

The address in a message is easy, but it is often not done correctly. Be sure to get complete information from the person for whom you're sending the message. If the message to addressed to someone in the military, the MARS system, into which your message may be re-filed, it requires the serviceperson's Social Security Number and full military address. Some programs also need the sender's full address, so it wouldn't hurt to include that in the signature. An accurate address is a necessity -- and makes prompt delivery a lot more likely.

The text of the message is, of course, of a non-commercial nature. It should be limited to 25 words or less, and it does not include any elements of the preamble, address, or signature. The text is set off from the rest of the message by using the word "break" (**BT** on CW, RTTY, AMTOR, or PACKET) before sending the text and just after the text before the signature. Separators in the text are X's, read as "initial X-ray" when sending the message but these are never read to the recipient of the message. Just pause a little at the end of each word group when you're delivering a message. When counting the text for the check, each word, initial group (QTH), mixed group (407TH), figure group (2332), city, state, name, etc. is ONE count. Phone numbers in the text are split into three parts -- area, prefix, and four-digit suffix -- and counted as THREE text counts. The separators (X-rays) each get a count of one, as well. Words that belong apart from another word (well-being) are separated and counted as TWO. Words that are natural compounds and are written together (makeshift) stay together and are counted as ONE.

If the text contains one or more ARL numbers from the Standard ARL Numbered Radiogram List, the check always reads "ARL #", where # is the number of words in the text (including the ARL and ARL numbers). For example, "ARL Sixty One and Love to All" would be counted as six. The check would be "ARL 6." ARL numbers are always *spelled out* in the text. It's "ARL SIXTY ONE" not ARL 61. Of course, when the message is delivered, the delivering station should always translate the ARL numbers for the recipient, even if it's a ham.

The signature should be as complete as needed for the recipient. If the message were intended for delivery to a family member or close friend, "Dad" or

"Julie" would suffice. If not, both first and last names are recommended. If the message is from an official, be sure to include the person's title. If the signature includes additional data, such as a membership number, email address or service number, take special care to get the info right. One digit makes a difference.

When you've finished sending or relaying a message, you say, "End of message; No more." Of course, if you have more to send, you'd say "End of message, three more" or however many you have left to send to this receiving station. Handling traffic isn't difficult. Operating aids such as the pink card (FSD-218) and the ARRL Net Directory will answer most of your questions about traffic and the NTS. *[If you want pink cards to train your ops, just let me know how many! Stan]* If not, look for your STM on one of the section nets.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual EC Conference

To give ECs as much lead time as possible, notice of the meeting was emailed to all during the last week of October, with snailmail copies to ECs without internet access. Here it is again, just to make sure you have it.

Saturday, 1 December, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Spiedini's Restaurant in Plover (Portage County, near Stevens Point). A map is available at <http://www.spiedinis.com/index2.html>. We sought a more central location this time, so that ECs from the northern and western part of the state have a better shot at participating. Spiedini's has been the site for other ham meetings (QCWA) and has been given good reports. There is a podium and PA system for speakers, and a large enough room. The restaurant's specialty – Chicken Parnigiano with Pasta – will be served at noon. A vegetarian plate is available. Cost for luncheon will be \$5.99 plus tax and tip; please bring reasonable change with you. Don't send Stan money – just be prepared to pay for your lunch at the site – but do let Stan know if you are planning to attend and if you need a vegetarian plate. We must have a head count well ahead of time.

The agenda is still under development, but several items are already set. Stan will discuss the new expectations for all ARES/RACES units. Don Michalski (W9IXG), our SM, will talk about the ARRL EmCom courses. Jack Morrison (N9SFG), our 2001 SET designer, will lead a critique of the event. We hope to have a discussion of the Wisconsin Packet Network. Other items will be added as the agenda develops.

As usual, the Conference is designed specifically for ECs and AECs, ROs and Deputy ROs, and other

leadership members in Wisconsin's ARES/RACES. However, it is also open to other hams and non-hams interested in the role of Amateur Radio in emergency communications, such as personnel from Wisconsin Emergency Management, CAP, MARS, SkyWarn, REACT, Red Cross, Salvation Army and so on. Spread the word. Think about bringing one of your regular members who might develop into a good AEC, or even EC! Put in a little prayer for good weather, too.

### ARRL Leadership in WI

It is important to know where to turn for help when seeking solutions to a problem. The ARRL leaders in our state represent a wide range of skills and knowledge to do just that. Got a technical problem? Call Rich Regent and he will steer you to the right person among the Technical Specialists. Is there a new club in your area that wants to affiliate? Give Roy Pederson a buzz. Got a traffic question? Denny Rybicke is your source of sources. The Big Boss is Don Michalski, who is always helpful and a wonderful guy. Pick one of his assistants if he is out of town. You can email most of these folks by just clicking the EMAIL button on our website, under Leadership Officials: <http://wi-aresraces.org>.

- Don Michalski, W9IXG: Section Manager
- Gene Santoski, K9UTQ: Assistant SM
- Rick Elsener, W9RCW: Assistant SM and Official Observer Coordinator
- Hale Blakely, W9CBE: Assistant SM
- Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR: Section Emergency Coordinator
- Sam Rowe, KG9NG: Assistant SEC
- Dale Johnson, WB9NRK: Bulletin Manager
- Roy Pederson, K9FHI: Affiliated Club Coordinator
- Richard Regent, K9GDF: Technical Coordinator
- James Lackore, AD9X: State Government Liaison
- Dennis Rybicke, K9LGU Section Traffic Manager

### C U 1 December