



The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator



VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2002

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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 after each issue is published.

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EC Conference a Success

It was a good group, 66 in all, at Spiedini's Restaurant near Plover on Saturday, 1 December. That is just about the same size group as last year. It would have been larger, but we had several last minute cancellations because of family illnesses and other sundry causes. There was a great deal of interaction between those who were present, and all learned from their neighbors as well as the speakers.

After round-robin introductions, **Stan Kaplan (WB9RQR, SEC)** read a message from **Alan Wohlferd, WEM Communications and Warning Officer (responsible for RACES in Wisconsin)**, thanking members of ARES/RACES for their efforts during the past year. Then Stan presented **Being a Ham is No Longer Enough**. He covered the reasons behind the new requirements for monthly meetings and the increased emphasis on training. He announced the creation of a new section on the

website for training aids and links, as well as the appointment of **Jack Morrison (N9SFG)** as the new **Assistant SEC for Training** for the state. Jack's new job is to provide support for ECs in their training endeavors. Jack will manage the new training section on the website by working with Ray Meyer (N9PBY), our Webmaster.

Stan reiterated the need for training, noting the fact that we can no longer be just HT users. Rather, we are being asked to be complete communicators, getting messages through using a variety of ham and non-ham communications links. Requests for help from police, fire, emergency management personnel and other governmental agencies require us now to communicate using public service radios, FAX machines, telephones and other devices that are not conventional Amateur Radio tools. Stan noted that the ARRL EmCom courses cover the need for and use of these devices to accurately and rapidly get the message through. He also stressed the important role of packet radio in emergency communications, though it has fallen from favor as a standard ham mode.

Concerns were voiced by a couple of ECs, centered on the difficulty in getting some members to attend meetings. Stan acknowledged the problem, and asked the ECs to provide interesting training sessions. Even if only a few hams attend, this will tend, over time, to attract additional members to meetings, thus building attendance. He noted the critical need to begin to increase the training level of all ARES/RACES members in the state.

Following Stan, **Don Michalski (W9IXG), Section Manager**, presented **State of the State**, covering the new ARRL EmCom program, a new WI ARES Resources Database project, and he demonstrated new equipment donated by the DNR, which may be useful in portable packet and portable repeaters for emergency use in the section. **Gary Bargholz (N9UUR), Wisconsin Association of Repeater Chairman**, also spoke briefly on his efforts to create frequency assignments for portable emergency repeaters in the state.

Sam Rowe (KG9NG), Asst SEC/Deputy RACES RO, spoke on the **State of the Hamshack** – the equipment present there and the staffing by his Dane

County ARES/RACES group during emergencies and activations.

Jack Morrison (N9SFG), new Asst SEC for Training, presented a **Critique of the 2001 SET**, and hosted discussion of issues to be considered in the statewide portion of the exercise for next year.

Lunch followed, and the conference began again with **Richard Polivka's (N6NKO)** report on the **Wisconsin ARES/RACES HF Net** (see questionnaire elsewhere in this issue). **Ray Meyer (N9PBY)**, EC for Packet Coordination, then discussed his plans and efforts for **Wisconsin's Statewide ARES Packet Network** (see article elsewhere in this issue), and he hosted discussion on the topic. **Gary Payne (N9VE)** gave a thumbnail profile of his **Walworth County ARES/RACES** unit (a different group in the state is asked to do this each year).

NW DEC Wes Jones (N9PHS) was present with **Kris Larsen (KB9KRH)**, Washburn Deputy RO. Stan presented Wes with a **Certificate of Merit**, recognizing his work and the work of his NorWesCo ARES/RACES group (Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties) during **The Siren tornado**. Kris then presented an excellent Power Point overview of the incident, including NorWesCo's response.

From the completely positive comments of those attending, it appears that the conference was a success. ECs shared their capabilities and problems, often discovering that the same issues were concerns of other ARES/RACES groups. Very good suggestions were made from the floor on ways to improve Wisconsin ARES/RACES, and all came away with new goals and aspirations for 2002. The meeting started at 10:00 a.m. and ended at 3:10 p.m.

HF Survey – Please Respond

By Richard Polivka, N6NKO, Technical Specialist

During the December EC meeting in Plover (an excellent meeting; kudos to Stan!!!), I presented a discussion on the state of the Wisconsin ARES/RACES HF Net, which currently meets at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday. During the discussion, there was a combined chorus from the attendees indicating that to increase participation, the time needs to be adjusted to minimize or eliminate conflicts with church attendance. Because of lack of time and the need for broader participation, the survey was not taken at the meeting. Please help us with a broader response by surveying your group and providing this information. Return the results to me at n6nko@arrl.net, using

the subject line: "ARES/RACES HF Net Survey". Please return your results by 28 February 2002. Thank you all for your help with this.

Questionnaire:

- A. How many members in your group have HF privileges? _____
- B. Of those who have HF, which of the following six possible time slots would be best for them to participate?
1. Saturday morning (8:00 am to 11:00 am window): _____
 2. Saturday Afternoon (1:00 pm to 4:00pm window) _____
 3. Saturday Evening (7:00 pm to 9:00pm window) _____
 4. Sunday Morning (8:00 am to 11:00 am window) _____
 5. Sunday Afternoon (1:00 pm to 4:00 pm window) _____
 6. Sunday Evening (7:00 pm to 9:00 pm window) _____
- C. How many of your members have HF PACTOR capability? _____
- D. Of those who have HF PACTOR capability, how many would be willing to participate in a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly training net using PACTOR exclusively? _____

Note that time windows are used above. This is because of possible conflicts with other nets, which may require some adjustment within the window. Also, some gaps are included in the windows to allow for lunch and dinner conflicts.

Who's da Boss? Or How to Be a Good NCS

By Dennis Rybicke, K9LGU, STM

[Denny does it again! This is as good a short NCS primer as any around. While he wrote it aimed at HF nets, it also applies to 2 m. Thanks, Denny.]

The Net Control Station controls the net -- the sequence, the protocol, the speed, the efficiency, and the friendliness. A good NCS is essential for a good net. Here are some reminders for those who serve as NCS - and some guides for those we hope will be willing volunteers to step into the NCS slot when needed.

How to Get Ready

- A. Become familiar with the other stations on the net. Knowing correct call signs, names, and locations is a good idea. Even if you never perform as an NCS, it's always good to know with whom you're

working and where they live. Check out the current QNI Index and Routing Guide at www.wna.eboard.com.

B. Make some notes. Pay close attention to the stations that go off frequency to pass traffic. What frequencies do the net use to move traffic? Up to 95? Down to 77? UP 4? DWN 5? Usually the NCS knows the open spots, where adjacent nets are, etc. You'll get a feel for the NCS action by keeping track of what's happening.

C. Try to guess what the NCS will do next. Sometimes, different types of traffic will appear on a net and the NCS will have to rank them in importance. For example, you may notice that out-of-state or "thru" traffic gets higher priority than a message bound for a city usually represented on the net. Of course, formal traffic will take precedence over "informal" exchanges.

D. Notice the order of things. Who's asked to check in first? Emergency and priority traffic holders? 9RN representative? Listen for the jargon, the pacing, and the phrases that make things flow. "Additional stations please call . . ." "NEED MKE, LAX, QNI K" Under poor conditions, hear how the NCS has the station holding the traffic and the receiving station establish contact on the net frequency before moving.

How to Serve as NCS

(1.) Keep order. The NCS must call up the net at the right time and announce the purpose and procedures, which apply. It's easy to follow a script, and net managers gladly provide the wording.

(2.) As stations check in, get their calls right and don't forget to say or send the call of each station you acknowledge. They won't know if you've heard them unless you say so.

(3.) Be friendly but efficient. As NCS, you are a facilitator, not a lecturer. Keep things moving. Handle all formal traffic first.

(4.) If you take comments (or second-goes), remember to stand by frequently for additional check-ins. List the outstanding traffic each time you take a stand-by.

(5.) If you have traffic, don't hesitate to send it on frequency, sending it properly to set an example.

(6.) When band conditions are noisy, don't hesitate to ask for relays and assistance from stations who check in. Bad conditions might also prompt handling more traffic on net frequency, too.

(7.) Remember to thank stations for checking in, for relays, and for their liaison duties.

(8.) Time the entire operation for your net report. Include the time you take to send the net report to

the NM at the end of the net, since that's net activity, too.

(9.) When the net is closed, you can send the net report to the Net Manager. Include the name of the net, the date, the number of stations who participated (include yourself), the number of pieces of traffic listed, the number cleared, the total time of the net (including traffic sent after the check-ins are excused), and which stations served as liaisons to or from other NTS nets such as 9RN or WIN.

The Wisconsin Section Nets need more stations to serve as NCS. Please volunteer when you can.

Our Preparations for Mutual Aid

By Jon Gilmore (KB9RHZ), OZARES (Ozaukee County) EC

- *The NWS has issued a tornado warning for your area. As you monitor the radar and radio reports, you realize it is cutting a swath across three different counties.*
- *The weather forecast calls for the threat of heavy snow and high winds. Twelve hours later, reports of closed roads and communications failures come in to the local Emergency Management office.*
- *Your phone rings. It is your county Director of Emergency Management. The local chemical plant has had a serious explosion and it is necessary to evacuate the surrounding area and set up overnight shelters. Several other agencies will be involved.*

In any of these scenarios, could your ARES/RACES group handle the communications for at least 24 hours, and up to 72 or more hours? Whom would you contact for more help?

Our previous OZARES EC thought it would be good to get to know the ECs and AECs of our surrounding counties in Southeastern Wisconsin, but he moved away before he could organize a meeting for that purpose. I continued his efforts, and a meeting was arranged. Those attending were able to meet each other face to face, and to discuss their group's training, capabilities, special equipment and problems. To spice things up, we even had a tabletop exercise during the latter part of the meeting!

One thing became very clear as a result of our meeting. Most of the groups would not be capable of sustaining long-term emergency communications without help from their neighbors. Furthermore, there was no plan in place in any county to obtain that help. To fill that void, I drafted an activation plan for the district, which was then modified and later accepted by all parties. The plan includes those steps necessary to obtain help from a neighboring county,

along with a list of each ARES/RACES group in the Southeastern District, and the radio frequencies they use. Each EC and AEC is listed as well, along with information on how to contact them – telephone numbers, pager numbers, and so on. The plan was tested during the Simulated Emergency Test this past October, and it proved to be both accurate and quite useful.

We hope that mutual aid is never needed. However, our plan is in place, just in case we do need it, and it took very little time and effort to arrive at this point. I strongly encourage you to get to know the ECs and AECs in your surrounding counties, and to create a similar plan. You never know when you may need their help!

Packet Matters

By Ray Meyer (N9PBY), Wisconsin ARES Packet Coordinator

It's been only two months since I took on the challenge of Packet Coordinator, and the wheels are already in motion. As stated at the EC Conference, it seems that I have awakened a large, potentially vicious mammal! Fortunately, its temperament right now is rather docile and cooperative.

The packet network needs to undergo some growth and expansion to fill in the gaps and rifts that presently exist. Fortunately, we have a number of individuals and groups across the state that have responded positively and are ready and willing to help. One of the key points mentioned during my talk is that all of this energy needs to be focused. In the past, we've had groups and individuals who have done a terrific job of establishing local packet networks in their respective areas, but the connectivity between these networks is not optimal. Therefore, one of my goals is to get these established networks connected. The second focus is to develop links where there are deficits and more importantly, where there is a definite need. This is where YOU come into the picture, as your group's Emergency Coordinator.

Enclosed with this month's newsletter is a single page "Group Packet Plan". Initially, this document will function as a survey. Its purpose is to determine the activity and health of packet in your area. In many cases, the answer to some of the questions will be "none", or "unknown", and this is perfectly acceptable. We need to know where the activity is, and what the health of the connectivity is from your area. Later, this document will become part of a database table that will show the "technical people" what the network dependencies are of each group.

Please take a moment to fill out the form, or turn it over to your local packet guru in your group to complete. All I ask is that the person who completes the form is a member of your respective ARES/RACES unit. Please return the form either via U.S. mail or you are also welcome to regenerate it electronically and return via email. If you'd like the Microsoft Word version, simply drop me an email at n9pby@wi-aresraces.org and I will be happy to send you a copy. In any case, please send me the information by 4 January 2002.

I also talked about the phases I plan to use, to move towards the goal of a functional packet network throughout Wisconsin. Currently, we are still in the evaluation phase. At the start of next year, we should have some rather defined goals of where we need development, and we will begin work in a timely fashion to fulfill those goals. Also scheduled for next year are discussions of procedures and methods for using the network for ARES communications, and to possibly develop some formalized training for ARES hams (Jack, get ready!).

As always, I welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. In order for this network to effectively serve your group, we need your input. I'll do my best to provide you with the information you're looking for, or at least try to point you in the right direction. I would also like to invite those of you who are more technically inclined, or who want to learn to join the email reflector specifically established for Wisconsin ARES packet. To subscribe, just send an email to: wi-arespacket-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

A MOST HAPPY

HOLIDAY SEASON

AND WONDERFUL

NEW YEAR TO YOU

AND YOUR FAMILY