The Wisconsin ARES/RACES

Emergency Coor-dinator

The WEC Newsletter is sent monthly to all American Radio Relay League Emergency Coordinators in the State of Wisconsin. It is 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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The Federal Message Format: A New Perspective

By Ron Henry, N9KWW (NAVMARCORP MARS call NNN0VAG)

As Amateur Radio operators, we are all more or less familiar with the ARRL message format. However, be prepared to see it replaced in the future, especially as Homeland Security and other new agencies gear up in response to 9/11. Why does it need to be replaced? Because there is a need for a flexible format that can be used by **any** agency, public or private, without modification, and one that is easily under-stood by all. In other words, we need a universal message form/format that everyone can use "right out of the box", no matter who you are communicating for or where the message is going.

The Federal Format is the answer. It is currently the **only** form used by **all** federal government agencies (hence the name, Federal Format). It was derived from military formats because the military services are accustomed to handling very large quantities of traffic every day, and their formats are tried and true after years of handling huge volumes of messages. Therefore, a derivative of the military format was a logical place to start, and the SHARES group (a consortium of volunteer agencies) developed it.

All the various military formats are very similar in construction. They all employ the same three basic elements: a. the format-line-3 (this is a <u>title</u> and a description of a specific line in the message), b. the heading and c. the text. Format-line-3 is something we hams also use, as does the Federal Format, but we hams use it in a different way. Lets look at some specifics.

The ARRL format puts a date/time group, word count, message number, station of origin, check sum and other information on what would be called in the Federal Format, format-line-3. This is the first line of information passed in the ARRL method. In the Federal Format, this line is used for routing instructions only, and then only after it is placed into a data system for transmission.   The data system will insert this. In voice communications, format-line-3 is not used. The text is the same as the NTS format. A typical message cast in the Federal Format would go like this:

021556z mar 15 *(date/time group)*

fm amcross   *(the From line)*

to Mr. John Q. Public   *(the To lines: name, address,*
1274 Anywhere St.   *zip, phone)*

Middleberg Wisconsin

53999

675 123-4567

BT   *(the BREAK is a means of separating the heading from the text portion of the message)*

the material you requested is on flight 271 departed from Washington dc and 02150Z mar 02, ETA Milwaukee 021630z mar 02.

BT   *(the last BT indicates the end of the message)*

Simple? Yes. Fast and easy? Yes? But what about reliably and how does the receiving station know if they received the entire message correctly? I'll address the former next, and the latter in the next article.

This format is very reliable and it has withstood the test under fire many times over. The stations that handle traffic using this format are very good at it, and you can quickly become good at it, too. It is a bit different then the ARRL format, and both have advantages. Why then did the SHARES group adopt this format when the ARRL format it just as good? The Federal Format has a number of advantages that the ARRL format does not. For example, one can place a message within a message in the Federal Format, but not in the ARRL version. Also, with the Federal Format, one has the ability to PRO FORMA a message. PRO FORMA means that the message is preformatted and the sending agency just needs to fill in the blanks. The ARRL format is not flexible enough to permit this, and it cannot be inserted into several different messaging systems without modification. The Federal Format form can be used by any messaging system without modification.

This short article presents just a basic introduction to the Federal Format. In the next article, we will examine differences in the way the message is sent, as well as how errors are caught.

We Need SET Ideas!

By Jack Morrison, N9SFG, Asst SEC for Training
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I can hear the comments already. "It is only April, so why is he talking about the SET exercise? That is in the fall, and we haven't had summer yet!"

As you know, we have been attempting to develop and conduct SET exercises that involved the entire state ARES/RACES system, and we and want to do the same this coming year. Therefore, we need to begin planning NOW, and we are looking for ideas.

A ham made a good suggestion for Field Day in a recent letter in QST. He suggested activating EOCs and operating from them. How does that sound for the SET? Do you have other ideas? Pass them along to me, and of course, I will share them with Stan. This is YOUR opportunity to participate in planning and development for the SET. Are you short of agenda/training items for your next local ARES/RACES meeting? How about SET planning, to throw out on the floor for a brainstorming session?

Web Site of the Month

By Jack Morrison, N9SFG, Asst SEC for Training

Are you curious about how you would do on the test to upgrade your license, or would you just like to practice before you take the test? Regardless of the reason this month's site has the answer.

You can take practice exams for any of the amateur license tests, commercial license and if you're daring, the tests for a pilots license as well. There is even provision for Morse code practice. Take a look at:

http://www.aa9pw.com/

Managers

By Cary R. Mangum, W6WWW, J.D
California State ACS Officer
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[This article is extracted from one that appeared in the 11Feb2002 ACS Newsletter, Ken Bourne (W6HK, editor. ACS stands for Auxiliary Communications Service, California's organization which bundles ARES and RACES into a state-run agency under the aegis of their Governor's Office of Emergency Services. The extract below is from a series of six articles titled Why Volunteers Quit. The article contrasts "good" versus "poor" traits of managers, and we can all do some self-examination using it to help us understand what we can do to improve our managerial skills. Stan]

Good managers seem to have an innate sense of people involvement WITHOUT being aware they are doing it. Poor managers are sure they do, but they do NOT possess that sense no matter how much they think they have it.

Good managers are willing to take risks with assignments of tasks, to allow an employee or volunteer staff member to make a mistake in doing a project or assignment, and to learn from that process.

Poor managers do not want to face up to mistakes from anyone in their department, often because of their own sense of failure as a result. However, it really isn't their failure, just a misplaced assumption involving fear.

Poor managers often won't make a decision on an issue, not realizing that not making a decision (on an issue) is a decision to status quo. They are afraid they may make a mistake.

Good managers know that in making a decision, the odds are in their favor that they will make the best decision possible under the circumstances, and they are willing to risk that decision-making ability as it is an essential part of their job.

Good managers know that making a decision creates an opportunity for something to happen. It can go either way, but, by making the decision, it's possible for a program to move, change, or do something that overcomes a problem.

In contrast, to let the problem "simmer on the back burner" for months or years is a clear-cut indicator of a manager who is afraid to make the decision for fear of possible consequences.

Making decisions is why you have a manager in the first place. It takes courage to make a decision and face the consequences, but that is what makes the process exciting, challenging, and interesting, and to see results from people that you intuitively know can go beyond their present limits. Over time, the odds are in favor of the person who makes a decision to move on, rather than one who fears making it or puts it off.

In summary, it is hoped this admittedly incomplete subject may stimulate your positive thought processes. One last item. In the many years I've worked with people I've learned that the most rewarding way to work with them is to give them a vision and then the room in which to grow it.

Why You *MUST* Use: "This Is A Drill"

[This is the text of an actual email message sent to me by the Section Manager of a western state. I have changed a few words here and there to protect the identity of the state and individuals involved, but rest assured, it is genuine. It describes two actual incidents in which the words "This is a drill" were omitted, with potentially disastrous consequences. The message you should take from this article is, train your ops to ALWAYS use "This is a drill" during exercises, both at the beginning and at the end of a transmission. Saying it twice ensures that, if someone tunes in during the middle of a message, they will still be able to tell that the message does not pertain to a real emergency. Stan]

In the 1970s the annual SET was in January. A drill was conducted in our state, with some SET messages being sent to the State Civil Defense Director. Some were minus the mandatory "Drill" or "Test" at the beginning. The SET simulated an ice storm and the messages were requesting blankets and emergency supplies.

It was Saturday, and the only person to accept the messages at the office of the State Civil Defense Director was the custodian. Being a Good Samaritan, he called the CD Director at his hotel in New Orleans, where the Director was on vacation attending the Mardi Gras. Of course, the Director caught the next plane and rushed back to his office in our state. When he called me, you really don't want to know what he said about amateur radio operators.

Another incident happened just two years ago. A ham listener to our SET activity joined in the fun by driving down a county road, giving road conditions at intersections. The messages did not have the disclaimer in the preamble. At one such junction he reported a car in the ditch, and he then added, "The driver looks like our governor." This message was relayed several times. Approximately two hours later the News Director of a local TV station called me to verify what he had heard on the newsroom scanner, which was set to monitor amateur frequencies - that the Governor of our state had been killed in an auto accident.

It seems that an amateur originating, or relaying a "Drill" message might be personally liable if a strong disclaimer is not in the preamble of each and every such message.

Supporting Your EMCOMM Group

By Dave Thorne, K6SOJ, SEC, Sacramento Valley Section (North), California

[Excerpted from "Emergency Preparedness and Laurel and Hardy," an editorial in the "5-1-2 Bulletin," No. 67, August 14, 2001) © ACS Newsletter (California), 20Aug2001. Note that this was written before 9/11.]

One of the problems we have in ARES and most other volunteer groups is attrition. I often hear comments such as, "We never get called to do anything." Of course, that is not entirely true. But it is true that, in many jurisdictions, there is less utilization of the volunteer amateur resource than there was, say, 20 years ago.

ARES and other EmComm operators come and go. Some leave because it was not what they expected. Or, they find it difficult to work in a team setting in a structured organization. Others, frankly, just find it boring.

But, the diehards among us realize...the importance of maintaining a state of readiness...boring or not. They check into their local and regional nets on a regular basis. They keep their gear organized and

ready to go. They keep up to date on their unit's plan, and they have a copy of it handy for ready reference. They support their EC, DEC, and SEC, or their radio officer or other leader, by attending (and participating in) meetings, trainings, and drills. They self-educate themselves by reading books, and utilizing the Internet (be careful...there are a lot of bogus EmComm "authorities" with Web sites).

Those who really care remain involved and prepared, day after day, month after month and year after year. They do this whether or not they are ever called to action. It doesn't take an excessive amount of time or effort to remain PREPARED for emergency incidents that usually happen when we least expect.

We are now in the 21st Century. Sadly, qualities like dedication, loyalty, perseverance, and striving for excellence have become passé' for many people. Are you doing all that you can to support your ARES/RACES, SKYWARN, or other EmComm group? Is your "Grab 'n Go" kit ready?

Our New EC for Iron/Vilas

KC9AMX has been appointed as EC for Vilas and Iron Counties, effective 1Apr2002 (no fooling!). Here is John's data:

John Armata, Sr. KC9AMX   kc9amx@hotmail.com
E13543 Stateline Road, PO Box 254
Presque Isle, WI 54557
H: 906-787-2520 W: 906-932-6211

Of course, he will appear in the next release of the EC Roster. It would be nice for you ECs to send him a welcome email, if you get a moment. We're glad to have you on board, John, and we hope you can find a few good hams between the bears and trees up there!

AB368 Signed

On April 2nd, Wisconsin's Governor Scott McCallum signed into law Assembly Bill 368, which pertains to Amateur Radio antennas and supports.

In essence, the bill states that town and city boards may not enact or continue to enforce ordinances or adopt resolutions which affect the placement, screening or height of antennas or supporting structures used in Amateur Radio communications UNLESS the ordinance has a reasonable and clearly defined aesthetic, public health or safety objective AND the minimum practical regulation is applied AND that the ordinance reasonably accommodates Amateur Radio communications.

This bill reaffirms federal regulations and makes us about the 15th state to enact such legislation. Note that the bill does not affect private covenants, so if you are buying a new home, be sure to read the fine print and make sure you know if any subdivision or homeowner's rules might affect your right to put up an antenna.

The Governor signed the bill in Oshkosh, and as shown below, several of us were present representing the ARRL and ARES/RACES.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Wirth, W9BTN

On the left is Jim Lackore (AD9X), ARRL State Government Liaison. On the right is Don Michalski (W9IXG), Section Manager, who heads all ARRL functions in our state. In the center, Governor Scott McCallum is handing SEC WB9RQR a pen used in the signing. (Actually, several pens were used, and the one being given to Stan was used to sign "allum" in the Governor's name. Both Jim and Don received pens, too.)

This is an important milestone in Amateur Radio, and specifically ARES/RACES, in our state. Jim Lackore and Don Michalski worked very hard in getting this legislation through, along with silent key Jim Romelfanger (K9ZZ, past editor of Badger State Smoke Signals). Jim Lackore and your SEC testified last year before a legislative committee considering the bill.

Governor's Conference a Success

Held in Appleton on 9-10 April, the conference was interesting and provided a great networking environment for all who attended. A number of ECs were there: Wes Jones (N9PHS, Burnett, Sawyer, Washburn and NW DEC), John Elliott (KB9SHK, Jackson EC and EM), Jeananne Bargholtz (N9VSV,

Milwaukee), Bill Niemuth (KB9ENO, Outagamie) to mention just a couple, and there were a great many other hams there as well.

There was an ARRL/ARES table, complete with banner, literature and an operating PacTOR station brought and staffed by Fred Moore (WN9I) and Bob Towns (N9IAI). These guys did a terrific job of demonstrating ham radio to Emergency Managers during the two-day meeting, and we clearly made some inroads with the Emergency Management community. We owe a debt of gratitude to these two hams for their volunteer efforts!