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Taking Control

By Dennis Rybicke, KG9LU (STM)

 Okay, it's time. We have been waiting and training and suggesting, but the results haven't been what we need. It's time for some additional net control stations. If you heard the last Wisconsin Nets Association meeting, you noticed that every net reporting listed lack of net control stations as a problem. And it's a problem quite easily solved. It just requires a little effort from those who already make the effort to check in.

One training exercise that you may observe on our section nets in the near future is QNG, passing the net control duties to another station in midstream. A regular NCS may call up the net, get things started, and then give the whole show to someone else. It

would mean stations might find it advantageous to learn who has checked in and what traffic is listed beforehand -- or just find out at the time they take over. Either way, it would simulate a very real possibility of losing a net control mid-net.   Conditions change. Equipment fails. Storms strike. It happens. Why not be ready for it on our section nets?

At the risk of redundancy, repetition, and saying the same thing twice, here are some hints for being a good NCS.

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 does 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

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

B. 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.

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

D. 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.

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

F. 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.

G. Remember to thank stations for checking in, for relays, and for their liaison duties.

H. 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.

I. 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.

There is now no excuse for you not to step in as net control when needed.

Training Ideas

By Cary R. Mangum, W6WWW, J.D., State ACS Officer, California

Ideas for training are an often-sought topic, so let's try a different approach and see how it helps.

First, let's ask: What is the purpose of the training? Is the "training" just to have something to do, to fill a net, an exercise, or a meeting? Or is it to increase readiness of a vital aspect of the unit, or individual responder, preparedness?

If it is to increase readiness for actual use in an agency, or a field response for an agency, then consider what is it that unit participants are likely to encounter when in that agency.

If it is to an EOC, consider what they may actually be tasked to do in or at that EOC. On the other hand, if the use may be responding to the field, or at a field assignment, what will they encounter? And, in what order will they encounter what?

To whom--and where--will they report? What systems will they be expected to know or use? What personnel in what positions must they be able to visually identify and understand their authority and responsibility? What policies are they likely to need to know? How much do they need to know about the geography and physical conditions and routes to possible field assignments? On arrival, what protocols must they follow before then can be utilized, and finally, how are they likely to be utilized?

At this point, if I guess correctly, you are probably asking yourself this: "Why is he asking these questions instead of just detailing training that we can do?"

The answer is simple, yet complex, because these bulletins reach hundreds of different units with scores of variations in their size, need, concepts, philosophy, and readiness, as well as a wide spectrum of served agencies.

So, the purpose here is to help the thought processes. Ask what are the systems that the trainee is expected to become proficient with, and why?

Systems? Yes. As the functional systems of agencies served by emergency communicators become more complex, there is a need to train intermittent users. Failure to do this can have adverse consequences.

Take the telephone as a prime example. Telephone instruments in use today range from the basic rotary or push-button set to ones requiring an intensive learning curve due to the many functions they can perform. Paid staff that use the instruments day-to-day eventually learn most or all of the functions. However, as we learn of their difficulties with complicated telephone systems, it becomes obvious that intermittent users can face a real problem.

New Two-Meter Repeater Pairs (1 MHz Splits)

By Gary Bargholz, N9UUR, Chairman, Wisconsin Association of Repeaters

[ECs, note carefully the table associated with this article, especially the two italicized repeater pair frequencies labeled SNP-Itinerant/Portable. These are the frequencies that should be used by portable ARES/RACES emergency repeaters in your area, should you set one or more up. Thanks to Gary for his help in focusing on this ARES/RACES need. Stan]

The available frequency spectrum (open, available repeater pairs) in the areas of SE Wisconsin (Mil-

waukee / Chicago) and NE Wisconsin (around Minneapolis) is becoming very tight on 2 meters and 440 MHz. There are many repeaters throughout the state that cover either wide areas or some local areas very well. BUT, what if we have an incident or special event in a localized area that is not sufficiently covered, especially if your operators are using hand held radios? The answer can be a temporary, easily deployed <u>portable</u> repeater.

Many ARES/RACES groups have been experimenting with building up a portable repeater for this purpose. The first systems I have heard about are designed to operate in the 2-meter band. This makes them as widely usable as is possible, given that many ARES/RACES members own single band HTs. Accordingly, the Wisconsin Association of Repeaters has devised a plan and allocated frequencies for these types of portable repeaters. Six repeater pairs have been created in the 2-meter band on a 1Mhz split. Two of the pairs may be used by anyone on a "Non Coordinated" basis. This means that you do not need to fill out any paperwork and file it with WAR when using these two frequencies. However, we would greatly appreciate it if you would let us know if you have built or are using a deployable repeater. We would like to stay informed, for bean counting and general interest purposes.

ARES/RACES use is recommended on 146.430/147.430 MHz and 146.445/147.445 MHz, statewide.

Before building your "portable", research any local use of the listed frequencies, and choose one of the two that is generally "clear". If possible, build your system so that it is capable of being switched between the two pairs. That way, a choice can be made on the day of use, or if two groups come together for a large-scale incident or exercise, both portable systems could be used.

OUTPUT	INPUT	USE
146.415	147.430	Coordinated
146.430	147.430	*SNP-Itinerant/Portable
146.445	147.445	SNP-Itinerant/Portable
146.460	147.460	SNP – Any
146.475	147.475	Coordinated
146.490	147.490	Coordinated

*SNP = Shared, Not Protected

The Itinerant/Portable repeater pairs should be used only for that purpose, and are intended for use during emergency operations or special events. The pairs designated as coordinated repeaters should be used only to give relief to operators outside of urban areas, and are not intended for the addition of new repeaters in areas already well saturated by existing repeaters.

4th Annual EC Conference - Well Attended

Over 80 people, ECs, AECs, DECs and others attended the EC Conference in Madison at Wisconsin Emergency Management on 9 November. We packed the auditorium during the presentations, and almost overflowed the EOC during lunch.

David LaWall of WEM welcomed the group and sent along thoughts and best wishes from **Al Wohlferd (KA9YTY)**, the WEM Communications and Warning Officer who has direct responsibility for RACES in our state. The main message: **we are appreciated for our volunteer efforts**, efforts which we have been quietly making since long before 9/11 and the resulting nationwide trend toward volunteerism. You have WEM's thanks.

Next, **Section Manager Don Michalski (W9IXG)** spoke about the **EmComm I, II and III courses** – new aims in their administration and high importance to our section and operators. He announced that 33 Wisconsin hams have completed one or more of the courses, and others are currently enrolled. Don also managed to find homes for several excellent commercial **packet radios** that he has converted and adapted for use in the state.

Assistant SEC for Training Jack Morrison (N9SFG) reported on the SET and declared **Price County** the winner – for the most rapid, accurate and unique SET report, transmitted with at least one HF hop to Stan. **EC Dwight Simpson (AG9G)** had the choice of a packet radio or computer for a prize (he took the radio). Congrats, Dwight! Jack also made some additional comments concerning **EmComm** (he is a mentor in the program, as is your SEC).

Next, **SEC Stan Kaplan (WB9RQR)** presented **Liaison Emergency Coordinator** badges to **Jim Westover (KB9KBK,** for the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials**)**, **Tom Kucharshi (KA9EWJ,** for the National Weather Service, statewide), and announced presentation of one to **Charles Buggs (KB9OUC**, for the Red Cross) who was not present.

Stan presented **Richard Polivka (N6NKO)** with a section **Certificate of Appointment** as the new ARES/RACES HF Net Manager (Sundays, 7:45 a.m., 3.9935 MHz).

He then gave a **Certificate of Appreciation** to **Dan Williams (KB9VLG,** Waupaca/Waushara EC) for his work during the **Ladysmith Tornado**, and showed the group a similar certificate for **Wes Jones (N9PHS**, Burnett/Sawyer/Washburn EC and NW DEC), who was not present. Wes' certificate lists him as "Mr. Tornado", owing to his work both in the Ladysmith incident this year and in the Siren tornado, almost exactly one year before.

Stan then offered rebuilt **computers**, and distributed eight that he had brought along. He reminded ECs that it is imperative that they keep their **rosters** current in the **RACES database**, thanked those who had been doing so, and chided those who have been delinquent. He then distributed two recently repaired **2-meter** radios, donated to ARES/RACES for packet use.

Finally, Stan discussed the **ID card issue**, also a recent topic discussed by US SECs in their web reflector forum. He pointed out that an ID card identifies us as members of the ARES/RACES team, but it will not (and should not) suffice to get a holder past a barricade tape. The ID can be used by a posted officer to indicate that the officer should check with the incident's Command Post to confirm that the ham should be admitted, or not. Stan pointed out that a uniform, statewide card would be useful, and he presented a design to the group. One modification was suggested from the floor and accepted, and Stan assured the group that it would be available to ECs on the website in the near future. ECs can then download the template, add their county name, authorizing title and signature, expiration date, name of the ham and signature, and print and laminate them for local distribution.

Bill Niemuth (KB9ENO, Outagamie EC and DEC for East Central Wisconsin) presented a **profile** of his ARES/RACES unit. He also shared his style of management and willingness to delegate various duties to his AECs, and noted this was absolutely necessary since his job requires him to do much traveling. But, he noted, this works, and the unit is competent and running well.

After an excellent box lunch, **Gary Bargholz (N9UUR**, Wisconsin Association of Repeaters Chairman) showed the repeater frequencies his group has designed expressly for emergency use with **portable repeaters** (see article elsewhere in this issue).

Richard Polivka (N6NKO, ARES/RACES HF Net Manager) related statistics concerning **net participation**, and he presented certificates to a number of those present for taking NC duties on Sunday mornings. He also talked about **Pactor** and other digital methods in our state.

Tom O'Brien (WB9BJQ, La Crosse EC and DEC for West Central Wisconsin) presented a report on the **Tri-state** (WI, IA, MN) **2-meter Communications Exercise** along the Mississippi River last August. Basically, the test identified the reliability of 2-meter communications through repeaters all along the test site. This information is invaluable to hams, emergency managers and first responders in the event of a HazMat incident along the river.

Sam Rowe (KG9NG, Dane EC/Assistant SEC/Deputy RACES Radio Officer) reported on the state of staffing of the state **WEM Hamshack**. His Dane ARES/RACES group covers the Hamshack on a 24-hour/7 days per week basis, responding to any emergencies that require the facility's use. **Mack Brophy (N9NTB**, State Hamshack Manager) reported on the **capabilities** in that facility, and invited interested ARES/RACES hams to tour the facility.

The meeting ended early, at approximately 2:15 p.m., owing to the absence of Andy Nemec (KB9ALN), the last scheduled speaker. Informal discussions continued to about 3:00 p.m.

It was a good meeting, with much interaction between attendees in addition to the reports. Importantly, there was no snow or other bad weather to contend with because this meeting was held almost a full month earlier than in past years.

Roster Maintenance

First off on this topic, ECs should realize that "paper-pushing" is minimal in Wisconsin ARES/RACES. Unlike many sections in the US, we do not require monthly reports to be submitted. Oh yes, if you have a major incident in your county, it is expected that a full report will eventually be submitted (after the emergency notification covered in the last newsletter). And, it is always nice to hear from an EC that a bike-a-thon was supported, or their unit took part in an Emergency Management exercise. But otherwise, it is not necessary for an EC to submit periodic reports.

On the other hand, there is one thing that is absolutely required - updates to your unit roster. ECs are expected to notify Stan immediately when a new member is added, a member leaves, or other corrections (phone number, address, license upgrade, etc.) are needed. This data goes into a database that simply must be kept current. The data is shared ONLY with officials in Wisconsin Emergency Management or ARES leadership officials. There are no exceptions to this, so you can assume the privacy of your data and that of your operators is safe. This RACES database (so called because it was started by WEM) is on Stan's computer, and a copy is periodically shipped to Mack Brophy for WEM. It can only be accurate and up-to-date if you submit these additions and changes. Please be sure you are meticulous with this task. First and last name, call, home address, city, state, zip, area code and phone number and class of license. Just that, for any new hams, and be sure it is accurate for all current members. Thanks! It is important!

   HAVE A WONDERFUL THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY. Stan