



# The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator



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SECTION EMERGENCY COORDINATOR  
CHIEF RACES RADIO OFFICER  
AND EDITOR:**

Stanley Kaplan, WB9RQR  
105 Martin Drive  
Port Washington, WI 53074-9654  
(262) 284-9346  
skaplan@mcw.edu

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.

**Deadlines:** The newsletter is mailed on or about the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the date shown on the issue. Thus, the February issue is mailed on or about the 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Articles and notices must reach the editor no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to be considered for the February issue.

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## Lessons Learned

Dan Williams, KB9VLG, Waupaca/Waushara EC, enrolled in the ARRL EmComm I course (as did his wife Martha, KC9BDT). Luck of the draw found your SEC as their mentor. One of the assignments involved listing the "Lessons Learned" from past activations of the student's EmComm group. Dan's were particularly good, and here they are:

1. Practice for emergency communications is essential, and you cannot do it enough.
2. The equipment is only as good as the operators who use it.
3. Murphy is alive and present. He can and will change the things that go wrong with each and every activation, so practice, practice, practice!

## Three Ways to Treat Water

[Extracted from an article on the website of the American Red Cross called Food and Water in a Disaster: <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/foodwtr.html>. There has been some confusion about the best way to treat water during a disaster, and this is the word. Check the website above for the rest of the article (on food), and from time to time to see if there are changed recommendations on water treatment. Your editor has added the bolding in the article.]

In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain **microorganisms** that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. You should treat all water of uncertain purity before using it for **drinking, food preparation or hygiene**.

There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods.

Two easy treatment methods are outlined below. These measures will kill most microbes but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Before treating, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of paper towel or clean cloth.

**Boiling:** Boiling is the safest method of treating water. Bring water to a **rolling** boil for 3-5 minutes, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking.

Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.

**Disinfection:** You can use **household liquid bleach** to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains **5.25 percent** sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color safe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.

Add **16 drops of bleach per gallon** of water, then stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes.

The only agent used to treat water should be household liquid bleach. Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment products sold in camping or surplus stores that do not contain 5.25 percent sodium hy-

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While the two methods described above will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes that resist these methods, and heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals.

**Distillation:** Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor will not include salt and other impurities. To distill, fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right side up when the lid is upside-down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

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## Getting Ready For Severe Weather

By Skip Voros, WD9HAS, Executive Director, Milwaukee Area SKYWARN Association

The 2003 severe weather season is rapidly approaching, and once again the National Weather Service (NWS) will request assistance from Wisconsin's ham radio operators for the SKYWARN program. SKYWARN is the name of a nationwide NWS program developed to promote the identification, evaluation, and reporting of dangerous weather. Today, SKYWARN is associated with severe weather reporting by both ham and non-ham volunteers.

Each year during early spring, meteorologists from the state's NWS offices conduct storm spotter training programs for emergency response personnel on severe weather observations and how to make reports. These spotter programs are always eagerly attended by the hams interested in severe weather or in providing public service activities for their club or community. Even if you are a veteran spotter you should attend a spring refresher-training program. Spotter training dates are listed on all NWS websites.

Amateur radio storm spotter reports are a critical and essential part of the NWS severe weather programs. This is because no amount of remote sensing gear (Doppler radar, satellite, smart weather networks) can take the place of a trained human spotter offering real-time 'ground-truth' observations: The NWS Doppler radar's parabolic antenna is 28 feet in diameter and focuses a 750,000 watt signal into a pencil thin beam of only .88 degrees. Yet for all this power and technology, they cannot see what is happening at ground level! On the other hand, we can. We are in a perfect position to supply the NWS forecasters with information. Moreover, we have in place a network of voice and digital repeater systems. We also have a lengthy and proud history of volunteerism, accompanied by established and disciplined radio-operating

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procedures. The NWS has demonstrated its confidence in our emergency communications capability by signing a "Memorandum Of Understanding" a few years back with the ARRL. Today, amateur radio stations are present at every NWS office in the United States.

April 7th to April 11th is Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness week in Wisconsin. Look for details on activities that week, to be announced as we approach the event.

Remember, severe weather is a serious business, and there is no room for egos or politics. Spotting is a team effort and we must all learn to work together. The NWS is not interested in petty politics or club squabbles. Severe storms do not observe geopolitical borders and neither should we. Lives could be at stake and seconds can make the difference. Severe weather reporting can also be dangerous. Unless you have actually experienced a first-hand weather scare or had storm spotter training, you make not recognize the dangers that face you. Think about safety first, then about accuracy and speed of reporting. NEVER make any report unless it is safe to do so!

What do you report? The meteorological reporting criteria (tornadoes, funnels, large hail, damaging winds, etc.) are very similar through out the state, but there are minor differences from region to region. Each NWS office (Milwaukee/Sullivan, La Crosse, Green Bay, Minneapolis/Duluth) determines the exact reporting criteria. The ham group working a NWS office typically determines the exact reporting procedure (how you format your report). As always, first listen to the local net control station and determine what they are requesting. And attend a spotter training session, to learn the conventions in your area!

A major general point to remember: Do not report 'hearsay' traffic from other frequencies, TV, scanners or the Internet. They are considered as second-hand sources, and the NWS wants first-hand reports only from spotters. If you did not see the actual weather event, don't report it. If however, you observed a reportable event, but could not make a timely report when it happened, call the net and deliver the report when you can and indicate it is delayed.

Each severe weather episode we respond to allows us the opportunity to test our operational readiness, our emergency communication skills, and to justify our very existence on the sometimes-shrinking ham bands. When we participate we also help to provide community protection, all the way down to our friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

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## Freebies

By Jack Morrison, N9SFG, ASEC for Training

How would you like to learn why you have been successful as an EC, or maybe learn a new trick or two, and have it all paid for? Sound interesting?

Thanks to the generosity of some corporations, the ARRL is able to offer, for a limited time, full reimbursement to those who take and successfully complete any of the EmComm courses.

Get on the bandwagon now. Current stats: 33% of the District Emergency Coordinators, 22% of the Emergency Coordinators and 40% of the Special ARES Group EC's have already completed EmComm I. Several have gone on to take and complete Level II and even Level III.

It would be nice to be able to say that all of the DEC's and EC's in Wisconsin ARES/RACES have completed the EmComm I course. There is not much doubt that this will be required at some point in the future. Get it done now! What do you have to lose?

### And More Reasons Why

By Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, SEC

*[Here is a quote from an email message sent to me by one of my EmComm III students, just as he finished the course. Dan (from Oregon) says it all very clearly:]*

The combination of the three levels in this course and the FEMA ICS course sure make things look different. An immediate benefit is that it has put me on the same page as the agencies I'm talking to. Its good to know that the training from the ARRL is consistent with the training the emergency managers, the Red Cross, and the hospitals are all getting. It also means we can reach understandings quickly. I can feel them mentally putting me on their side of the table as soon as they find I understand the system and rules we all work under.

## An EC Debriefing Tool

[We all need to know how we did in an emergency or exercise. To help assess this, give the following questionnaire to each involved operator to complete. The answers will fuel your discussions during the incident critique! From the California EmComm Officers Handbook, published in the 3Feb03 issue of the State of California OES ACS Newsletter. Edited slightly.]

### DEMOBILIZATION CRITIQUE SHEET

1. Insofar as you know, were you given the correct orders/mission?
2. Were you told how much time you would have to respond after being called out?
3. Were you told which agency you would be working for?
4. Were you informed of the incident type?

5. Were you told which location or site to respond to?
6. Were you given accurate directions your assignment?
7. Were you told the correct location of your assignment?
8. Were you told how much of your time would be required?
9. Where you told what time your shift began?
10. Were you told how long your shift length was?
11. Were you informed as to what equipment was required for your assignment?
12. Were you informed as to the type of terrain involved for your assignment? (Propagation considerations: hills, valleys, higher power, high gain and/or directional antennas etc).
13. Were you informed that your site required more than one radio or mode of operation such as HF, VHF, UHF, voice, packet and AMTOR so that you could prepare for possible interference?
14. Were you informed of the type of power (AC or DC) available?
15. Were you informed that you would have to furnish or to be prepared with some type of emergency or back-up power and for how long?
16. Were you provided with the proper message formats?
17. Were you informed of the precedence of traffic to be handled?
18. Were you informed of the type of traffic you would be handling?
19. Were you informed of the net operating procedures you would be following?
20. Were you kept informed as to the status of overall incident operations?

## A Non WX Use for NOAA Radio

*[Skip Voros (WD9HAS) passed this email message to Rusty Kapela of the NWS, who passed it along to your editor. A SKYWARN member in North Dakota, NOTKG, wrote it. Edited slightly.]*

We had a non-weather incident last January in which weather alert radios with SAME capabilities would have helped out quite a bit. At about 1:00 a.m., a train derailed about a mile west of Minot, ND. Nine tankers broke open, dispersing 250,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia. The temperature was about 0°F and the wind was calm. The resulting gas cloud drifted into town, dropping the visibility to zero.

The 911 dispatchers tried contacting the TV and radio stations, but no one was answering the phones at that hour. They then hit the siren switch, but soon discovered that this action was not a good idea. As

soon as people heard the sirens they went outside to see what was going on. They were met with nothing but a white cloud of very toxic gas. Some tried to drive in it but their cars stalled in the gas cloud, which compounded the rescue problems. We were lucky that there was only one fatality. However, there were over 1,000 injuries.

Had there been a way of warning people, they would have been told to shelter in place, to stay put in their homes and try to seal up windows and doors. **[Editor's Note: This is where duct tape and plastic sheeting would come in handy. Take it from a trained HazMat team member (your editor); the Homeland Security suggestion to have these items on hand should NOT be ignored by anyone.]**

Since that time the local civil authorities have made an arrangement with the NWS to use the WX alert radio to broadcast warnings of a non-weather nature. Now we just have to convince people to spend a few dollars and get a radio!

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## **IMPORTANT: Suspicious Activity**

*[The following are extracts from email messages that have been circulating in the Emergency Management community. The first one is of a general nature. Both have been edited slightly.]*

We have received information from APCO members (Associated Public Safety Communications Officers, Inc.) that they have received numerous calls of a suspicious nature from people describing themselves as college students performing research. The questions have included specific communications infrastructure location information requests. Additionally, there have been reports of people recording and photographing public safety communications towers.

While there has been no evidence to suggest these are not legitimate actions, APCO advises you to pay close attention to such activity and report anything suspicious according to your local Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). APCO further advises not to release information to persons of unknown origin at this or any other time. Additionally, APCO recommends that you re-evaluate your internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for procedures on handling these types of calls to ensure this issue is addressed during this time of heightened security.

*[And now for a specific example.]* This afternoon, I receive a suspicious call from a gentleman claiming to be a representative of a "study of a Western College", desiring to speak to the person who could best answer questions concerning the radio repeater system we operate in our county in Georgia.

He volunteered he had gotten my name and address from APCO and that this research was for a college paper. He sounded middle-eastern and was very

disappointed when I told him I did not give any information out concerning my radio system to anyone by phone, and he could place his request in writing. He started to stammer and ask how he would do that, and I informed him he had my name and number and he should have my address and I ended the call.

I do not expect to receive anything in the mail from this individual. Recently in Virginia during a routine traffic stop, a map of the entire state's radio system (towers etc) was found in the possession of a suspicious individual. WE DO NOT NEED TO ASSIST IN THE COMPILATION OF THIS INFORMATION. Please DO NOT give out any information to inquiries about your communications system, 911 switches, or other type of surveys that could furnish information to wrong people.

*[Extending this information to the ham community, we should follow APCO's actions. Do not reveal any information concerning your repeaters, including their location, to anyone you do not know. It might be fine to reveal the city where a repeater is located during a casual conversation with another ham, but that is all. We need to be security conscious, too. If you encounter a situation that really smacks of a security incident in your opinion, log every detail and call your local FBI office with the information. Remember, it is better to be over cautious and call them with a false positive, than to be under cautious and not report a real incident. Stan]*

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## **Charles Humboldt, SK**

I am sad to report that Chuck Humboldt, KC9BWS, EC for Columbia County, died unexpectedly on 27 Feb. His son, Jason (KC9BWT), who is AEC for Columbia County, notified us. Our deepest sympathies are extended to Jason and others in Chuck's family. We have all lost a good man.

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## **Computers**

There were 34 distributed in 2002, and 16 have gone out already this year, including 3 laptops. I am starting to get in desktop Pentiums in the 350 to 500 MHz class, more than adequate for packet or PSK 31 work. Almost all of the machines I am getting now have sound and CD-ROM drives; and those that don't will get one put in if I have drives or boards in stock from a recycled machine.

Yet, I have only one request on the list at present. An email will put you on the list, and two great guys (Keith Lodahl, KB9NUM and Dave Parker, WB9WHG) will deliver the boxes when ready. These guys travel the state for their jobs, and will work out between them who will deliver where and when. What a great system. Thanks guys!

So, the message is, if you or one of your people can use one, let me know. So long as it is for emergency communications in your ARES/RACES group, even in a home, it is a valid request. Stan