The Wisconsin ARES/RACES

Emergency Coordinator

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 15th of the month preceding the date shown on the issue. Thus, the February issue is mailed on or about the 15th of January. Articles and notices must reach the editor no later than the 1st of January to be considered for the February issue.

NOTES ON THE EC POSITION AND THE ARES/RACES UNIT

By Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, SEC

There has been some confusion, and perhaps misinformation, concerning the EC position and the role of the EC in Wisconsin ARES/RACES. It is suggested that all ECs read this carefully, and communicate this information to all operators in their units. If you have a local newsletter, feel free to reprint it, or read it at a meeting.

Long ago, the ARRL recognized that emergency response by ARES is best handled at the local (in our case, county) level, and we have followed this plan.

Leadership positions at the District (DEC) and state (SEC) levels are there to help and support the response, but the response is still centered at the county level, headed up by the EC. The county ARES/RACES unit is where the action is.

We operate in almost perfect parallel to the Incident Command System (ICS), a tried and true management system for emergency response. In the ICS, there is a single Incident Commander who is in charge, and there is a single Emergency Coordinator in charge in Wisconsin ARES/RACES. This is explicitly spelled out in the official ARRL EC Job Description, which states "The EC will assume authority and responsibility for emergency response and performance by ARES personnel under his jurisdiction".

On the other hand, both the ICS and ARES response can be modified somewhat for large incidents. In ICS, when a very large incident occurs, several individuals from different agencies may cooperate in a Unified Command arrangement to handle the emergency. Similarly, in our ARES/RACES organization, an incident spanning several counties would be handled by the several involved ECs, working together to coordinate the response. As always, the DEC and SEC would provide support, perhaps by mustering help from units not directly involved in the disaster area, or by rounding up equipment needed to respond to the emergency.

That defines the EC position pretty well, and it should be clear now that the EC is in charge. The EC is completely responsible for the response in an emergency, and for training the unit to be able to respond to an emergency. The county ARES/RACES unit is where the action is, and the EC is in charge of that action.

Now, let us stand back for a moment and look at the ARES/RACES unit itself. Is it a club? In the sense that a club is a group of individuals joined toward a single end, you might be tempted to define it so. But our most common related example, an ARRL radio club, has a membership that votes on issues, and the resolution of those issues is usually based on a majority vote. That will not work in ARES/RACES units. ARES/RACES units do not proceed based on voting. For example, membership in an ARES/RACES unit is up to the EC, and is not based on a vote of the membership. Therefore, ARES/RACES units are not clubs. Rather, they are emergency response teams.

Why don't ARES/RACES units use a democratic vote to decide issues? Have you ever heard of a fire chief at a fire asking for a vote of his firefighters concerning the best way to enter the burning building? Of course not! That fire chief is in charge as the Incident Commander, and he must decide those issues for his firefighters. Of course, he may consult with his deputy or anyone else that has a particular expertise that is unique to the situation, but ultimately the decisions are his. The parallel is perfect; the ARES/RACES EC is in charge. While the EC may (and should) consult with members of the unit who have particular expertise in the issues at hand, the decision ultimately rests with the EC. That vested power is so strong that, if an EC leaves the position, there is no longer an ARES/RACES unit in that county until a new EC is appointed! Take a look at the map on our ARES/RACES website. There are a few blue colored counties that have no EC. There are also no ARES members in those counties. Moreover, there are also no RACES members in those counties! Neither ARES nor RACES members exist, until an EC is appointed and accepts their applications for membership.

Well then, how does someone get to be EC? Can it be done by popular vote of the ARES/RACES unit membership? The simple and complete answer to this question is: NO. ECs are ARRL Field Level appointees, and in this state, the SEC does the appointing. Surely, the SEC consults with the Section Manager, involved DECs and perhaps even ECs in counties neighboring the one in which an appointment is to be made. However, the ultimate responsibility for making that appointment rests with the SEC, not with any existing members of the unit.

Here is a summary. The EC is completely in charge of all activities of the unit, which includes emergency responses, and between emergencies, all training activities. The ARES/RACES unit is not a club. Rather, it is an emergency response team. The members do not vote on who will be EC. The SEC appoints ECs. Indeed, the ARES/RACES unit does not exist unless there is an EC. Individual hams do not hold ARES/RACES membership unless they are members of an active unit, headed by an EC. Membership in an ARES/RACES unit is conferred by the EC of that unit.

WX URLs

By Skip Voros, WD9HAS

- Statewide spotter schedules:
  www.mke-skywarn.org/schedule.htm

- Desktop Radars w/auto-reload:
  www.mke-skywarn.org/radarmkx.htm

- Our April 26th program:
  www.mke-skywarn.org/seminar.htm

- On-Line training links:
  www.mke-skywarn.org/storm_spotters.html

- SE WI City Centers (For NWS Sullivan hams)

www.mke-skywarn.org/cities.htm

An EC Debriefing Tool

[We all need to know how we did after any 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.]

PERSONNEL 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?
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 you 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?

Wisconsin Association of Repeaters ARES/RACES Designation

By Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO

Life is amazing sometimes! Express your opinion and you might be asked to champion a project! It is well worth it though. Until recently I served as Vice Chairman for the Wisconsin Association of Repeaters (WAR); I elected not to run this year because of other interests. In that capacity I was privy to most of the state's repeater news.

One of the recent items included a discussion about who should be authorized to make ARES/RACES designations for a repeater. The WAR board discussed this and then consulted Stan Kaplan. It was agreed the designation should be the exclusive responsibility of county EC and/or the SEC. At the WAR annual meeting on March 8, the following motion was passed:

The designation of an ARES/RACES affiliated repeater must have the approval of the local County ARES/RACES EC and/or State SEC.

As a result, repeater trustees can no longer authorize this designation. Present designations will be removed from the WAR database and the fields repopulated as the designations come in.

Having this designation on a repeater is important because the repeater information is provided to the ARRL for incorporation into its annual Repeater Directory. It is especially helpful to travelers or relocated hams that want to contact the local ARES/RACES group.

If you are an EC, this is what you need to do. Please send me the frequency, city and call sign of the repeater(s) in your county that you wish to designate as ARES/RACES repeaters.   Send the information to bniemuth@new.rr.com, or snail mail at Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, W8088 Hillcrest Court, Hortonville, WI 54944. Prior to doing this, as best practice, you should get permission from the repeater(s) owner. If you use a repeater not owned by the ARES/RACES group, it is always best to get the use agreement in writing prior to an emergency or disaster.

Once I receive this information, it will be provided to the WAR frequency coordinator for incorporation in the WAR repeater database.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you for taking on this administrative task.

How to Get Into an ARRL EmComm Course

By Don Michalski, W9IXG, Section Manager

I know many are having difficulty getting into the classes, limited to 200 for EC-001. I wish to advise anyone who is having difficulty enrolling via the web to

try enrolling via snail mail. Make the check or money order out to ARRL, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111. Please mark the envelope "ATTN: C-CE." In the comment section of the check or money order, write "C-CE EC-00X Registration", where X is the number of the course you want (1, 2 or 3). You will be enrolled in the next available class.

Now is the time! Presently, while you must pay for the course up front, the entire fee is refunded upon successful completion. It behooves every EC, and every ARES/RACES member, to get at least EmComm I (EC-001) under your belt now. It is interesting, and fun.

New Wisconsin ARES/RACES Policy: EmComm Requirements for Leadership Positions

By Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, SEC

During talks I have given around the state in the past, I have frequently hinted that the EmComm courses would be required one day. Well, that time has come. During recent talks among top ARES/RACES leadership officials concerning the extremely important role that EmComm I, II and III play in training our units, a consensus was reached. Accordingly, the group set the following policy, which will be effective immediately for Wisconsin ARES/RACES.

By 30 Jun 2004, all ARES/RACES leadership personnel (ECs, DECs, LECs and others) must complete EmComm I.   That is approximately 1¼ years from now.

By 30 Jun 2005, these leadership officials must complete all three courses in the series.

There will be no grandfathering. In special cases of hardship (financial or for other humanitarian reasons), a leadership official may ask the Assistant SEC for Training (currently Jack Morrison, N9SFG) for an extension in time to meet the requirement. But, the requirement must be eventually met in a timely fashion. This is clearly a training issue, so we will invest our ASEC for Training with full authority to extend the deadline or not, based on their considered judgment, applied in the office they hold.

After the deadlines noted above, new candidates for leadership positions may be appointed, but will hold the title "Interim EC", "Interim DEC" or the like, and must thereafter enroll in and pass the required course(s) as soon as is possible. Once the requirements have been met, the qualifier "Interim" will be removed from their title.

Many have already met the requirements. A number of ECs, DECs and other leadership officials have taken one, two or all three courses already, and several are on-line mentors (instructors).   One EC-Instructor

(N9VE, Gary Payne, Walworth County) has held "hybrid" courses – a mixture of in-person and on-line work.

We are seeing the marked difference this training makes, both here in Wisconsin and across the United States. It is a Good Thing, and will help you be a much better emergency communicator and a much better leader of communications teams. There is just no question that the courses will help you serve the public better than you do now. If nothing else, the courses will help you to understand and speak the language spoken by the first responders and other emergency workers you will be working with.

Now is the time! At present, ARRL members can take the course free, as outlined by Don Michalski in the previous article, and all leadership position holders are members. You enroll and pay the course fee, but when you have successfully completed the course, the ARRL refunds the fee. Moreover, the fee reimbursement program applies to all three courses! What could be better? Free ham radio training to make you better at serving the public, and, it is interesting, to boot. I can assure you (from experience), no matter how much prior training you have in emergency communications; everyone comes away having learned new things, even in the first course.   There are progressively more new things to learn in EmComm II and III. Are the courses difficult? The answer is an emphatic NO. Just ask anyone who has taken one. You learn at your own pace, and with the help of your mentor.

You should know that the group also discussed a possible date when all ARES/RACES hams will need to pass EmComm I. We even had a draft document prepared. However, an obstacle surfaced.   Many of our ARES/RACES hams are not ARRL members, which would mean a cost of $75 to take the course (there is no reimbursement program for non-ARRL members, owing to the specifications of the grant that makes the reimbursement program possible). But, the requirement is coming, perhaps in 5 years, perhaps sooner - as soon as the financial problem has been resolved. But for YOU, there is no financial impediment, since it is free. The message: go sign up. You will be glad that you did.

Leadership Changes

Jason Humboldt, KC9BWT, has been appointed as EC for **Columbia County**. Jason was AEC in the unit when his father, Chuck Humboldt, was EC. Chuck died suddenly in February, as noted in the last newsletter. We thank Jason for picking up the reins. Again, our sympathies go out to Jason and Chuck's family.

As usual, Jason's contact information is already posted on the website in the new **EC Roster**, found in the secure **FOR ECs** section. If you don't have a password to gain access to this section of the website, or have forgotten it, just email Ray Meyer (N9PBY), our Webmaster, at n9pby@wi-aresraces.org, or just click his

address on the main page. All ECs, DECs, LECs and other section officials are eligible for a password.

Green Lake County is without an EC owing to the resignation of **Jeff Warnke, KB9UI**. Jeff resigned in early March owing to a new travel schedule that will take him away from home except for one to two days per month. As is always the case, no EC means no ARES/RACES members exist in the county. Do you know of a capable ham that would like to apply for the job? Are you a neighboring EC that is willing to take Green Lake County under your wing? It is best for us all if a replacement is found quickly, so let your SEC know if you have an idea for a replacement.

As of this writing, there are eight county EC vacancies in the state: Rusk, Florence, Langlade, Menomonee, Pepin, Buffalo, Monroe and Green Lake. That means there are 64 counties with ECs. Currently there are 1,320 ARES/RACES hams in the state, over 12% of all persons with a ham ticket in Wisconsin (10,726). Just yesterday (4Apr) your SEC sent out letters to 31 new hams in the state, telling them about ARES/RACES, and inviting them to contact the EC in their county to join. If yours was one of the counties with a new ham, your name, call and phone number was listed in the letter for the new ham to contact. This is just one way we try to help with your recruiting efforts.

Please don't forget this.   As soon as a new op joins your group, send their name, call, home address, city, state, zip, home phone number and class of license to your SEC. Email works fine. Who decides when or if an op becomes a member of your unit? You do, the EC. But, you must inform your SEC of this ASAP. Don't forget!