

# Madison County Emergency Management Agency

## Communications Division

Tom Ecker, Executive Director

Steve Riley, Director of Communications

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April, 2020

Our regular Comm. Div. meeting will be held as usual on Tuesday, April 7, at 1900. **HOWEVER, IT'LL BE HELD ON THE 146.820 REPEATER.** Don't come to the EOC as we're continuing our social distancing and cancelling of all but essential responses. For our meeting Jeff will take check-ins, much like we do on Sunday evening. Please check in with your usual information. Rather than checking in on your base station we would encourage you to set up a temporary station, perhaps your Go-Box, in your driveway/yard/porch or wherever you can depending upon the weather. Be prepared at some point during the meeting to report:

Your radio & power

Your Antenna & how high & supported by

Your feed line

Your Power Source

Your supplies available such as message pad, light source, etc.

If you don't have time to set up a complete station, if practical check in using your handheld from outside your house (assuming you can get into the repeater).

Jeff will plan to cover most of our usual topics in the course of the net. Upon completion on .82, we'll plan to move to the backup repeater, 145.390. After that we'll go to 146.580 simplex. This will give us all a chance to see how we do on the W9VCF repeater, and then on simplex around the County.

The EOC activities including our regular Division and Clubs meetings plus VE Testing has been cancelled for the duration of the virus situation. Tom and Jeff will let us know when it is appropriate to start utilizing the facility again. The ECC is still available for our StormNets and necessary communications events.

We've had several StormNet Alerts last weekend. Dale, Tom and the Warning Division guys kept a good eye on the situation and the ECC was activated for several hours. Several of you were dispatched to our Observation Points to the Southwest to observe for potential severe weather, but fortunately there was nothing exceptionally severe. Thanks to everyone who checked in and those who were willing to venture out. You may also have noticed that Tony, N9SVM, is our interface to the NWS Net on 146.970. He does a good job of keeping them informed as to our observations up here.

Interest in Amateur Radio has been spurred by the virus outbreak and the need to stay at home. Preppers have already prepared by getting licensed, but some other folks are now seeing the light and are looking into what is necessary to get a license. Additionally, the easy availability of cheap handhelds from China has resulted in unlicensed individuals with

2 and 440 capability. We have prepared a handout that describes the basics of getting licensed. It's on the Anderson Repeater Club web site under the LICENSE EMAMS pulldown. It's called "How To Obtain An Amateur Radio License". If you know of anyone who might be interested in becoming licensed download this 2-pager and forward it as appropriate.

Also on the ARC Web Site under the MEMBERSHIP pulldown there are a couple of spreadsheets that might be of interest. Both are continually being updated, but you are welcome to download both as Excel spreadsheets and rework them to fit your needs. One is a listing of repeaters within a 30 mile radius of us, and the other is a listing of Net Schedules that you might want to check in or at least monitor.

Remember too that past Comm. Divison Newsletters are also posted on the ARC Web Site on the NEWSLETTER pulldown.

Since our StormNet Training session in March was cancelled we plan later in the year to provide some updated information and refreshers at our regular meetings. We miss the opportunity to train new non-hams, but we can refresh our regular members.

The Sunday evening Check-in net has been well attended in recent weeks. Please make an effort to check in each Sunday to keep up-to-date on what is happening and is planned for the future.

I don't know if you have any interest in Apocalypse or disaster reading, but I stumbled upon an author who is also a ham and has written a couple of novels emphasizing how ham radio can be used by individuals in a disaster. It also has a number of really good ideas, explained in footnotes, related not only to communications, but personal preparedness. "The Road Home" and "The Day After" by Andrew Baze, AB8L, is about an earthquake that hits Washington State, and how his family got back together after it happened (communicating on 2 meters FM and APRS from time-to-time). It doesn't have any of the blood-and-guts stuff found in most books of this type, reading more like a "Hardy Boys" adventure. You'll find info on RACES, ARES, CERT and other relevant topics. I have a Kindle with "Kindle Unlimited" so I can read thousands of books free for a one-time cost per year. Actually both my wife and I have Kindles and one subscription covers both, so she can read her stuff and I can read mine at the same time. If you read a lot you might consider the Kindle. I don't think I'd spend money buying the hard copies, but if you can read them on-line at low cost it'll be an interesting learning experience and will improve your emergency preparedness.

Another bit of trivia: Per Gary as of 4/2/20 and according to QRZ.com there are 457 hams listed in Madison County (by ZIP Code). Figuring that some are SK and others have moved out without changing addresses, there are probably closer to 425 actually here. Sure would be nice to recruit a few more into our organization (and the Clubs).

Be glad to hear you on Tuesday evening.

73,  
Steve

**Notes from Communications Division Meeting  
February 4, 2020**

1. The meeting was called to order at 1900 by Jeff, K9DYR.
2. Jeff led us in the Pledge to the Flag.
3. Jeff welcomed back Brian, N9EOT, and Scott, KC9RAX, who have been unable to attend meetings for a while.
4. Several members brought their "Vest" that they use for events such as the Runs. Items of interest:
  - Steve, WA9CWE – Has vest with pockets, reflective strips. Carries pen/pencil, flashlight, ID Badge, rain coat, stop watches, wind speed indicator, radio, earphone, extra battery, long antenna, hat, clip board with sheet protector & grease pencil. Also a "count up" timer to display race time (note: kitchen timers are usually count-down, so they aren't as useful).
  - Eric, W9CGA – Has vest from ARRL, name badge, orange hat, 2 handhelds (one for race, one for repeater monitoring), long antenna.
  - Dennis, N9OWN – Has more of a "load bearing" vest type with lots of pockets, ID on back, water bottle, snacks, paper pad, pencil, cell phone charger battery, extra batteries in a plastic box, other items in small plastic boxes, first aid kit, flashlight, mono earphone.
  - Scott, KC9RAX – Brought a "go-box" that he's still developing. Built in a plastic case from a circular saw. 2 Gel-cell batteries, switch for antennas, voltmeter, a mount for his phone so it's visible while operating, speaker, light, radio. Going to go to a "pack-out-tool box" that has wheels since his box is relatively heavy to carry very far.
  - Jeff, K9DYR – Has 2 Go-boxes for EMA, vest, raincoat, first-aid kit, a radio bag including manuals.
5. The new ECC room is in the process of construction and moving. It's well along. Has the same amount of counter space resulting in the same basic layout of radio positions. The antennas are also at the back of the building resulting in reduced feed line lengths for the HF antennas. The front tower antennas have been checked out and they work OK. The Weather Station will need to be further tested. The Warning (sirens) controls stay in the front of the building. The counter installation will be completed tomorrow, and painting probably on Friday. Thanks to Dale, Ferrin, Gary, Paul for the help, it's really appreciated. Moving the ground cables took a lot of help.
6. The EOC Conference Room gets used a lot. Our meeting is the 4<sup>th</sup> one of the day.
7. StormNet Training is scheduled for March 17 at AU. Same as last year. Going to offer info on Amateur Radio again with help sessions scheduled prior to the April VE Test Session. Everyone needs to attend the training if they can.
8. Tom, KA9SYP – The State EMA-HLS holds a regional exercise each year. Last year it was the North Region, in 2020 it's the Central Region (Districts 5, 6, 7) and it will be held at OUR EOC. This is a big exercise held the entire first week in September and will take a lot of planning. The concept is a long term power outage and will include: FEMA, U.S. Army, 27 Counties, State DHS, INDOT, DOC, Indiana National Guard, and ISP. We were chosen because only 2 Counties actually have a plan (us and Vigo County) and only we could handle such a large scale event. It runs Sunday thru Thursday and our EOC will be used every day. Other District members will come in to support our EOC Team. He expects 150 people every day. Amateur radio will play a big role and we'll operate from our EOC to several locations in our county every day. We'll need our hams and will be inviting adjacent counties to assist. Tom has a training schedule for our members so that by the exercise we will be radio ready and comfortable. Tom's life between now and then will be consumed by the planning for this event. Our members will actually use their "go-bags" and will physically set up and handle traffic at each of the outlying sites in the county. MCU-1, MCU-2 and the Command Trailer will be utilized every day. The U.S. Army (from Pennsylvania) has a program to provide generators capable of handling large building that are flown in and set up at key buildings. They'll come in ahead of time to do the evaluations of requirements and they provide personnel, fuel, etc. to man the power sources. We'll probably have 8 hour operational periods at the EOC, daytime only, but will probably take 10 hours needed for the handoff. We'll be exercising OUR COUNTY PLAN, and the other teams will be using it as they participate. There'll be many meetings and planning sessions prior to this event.
9. Steve, WA9CWE, provided an update on the Tone Alert plans - Haven't found a suitable decoder for DTMF short of redesigning our own. Do believe that we can get cost effective 2-tone sequential decoders. Can probably record and store in the repeater controller the necessary tone sequence. Further testing will be conducted.
10. Gary, W9GNR, provided ARES update – Our Comm Division provides the functions locally that ARES thru the ARRL envisions, so we'll focus primarily on Comm Div. The material provided is good and we're incorporating it into our Task Book.
11. Jeff, K9DYR, on Task Book – The other functions of EMA already has a form of Task Book (FST, MCU drivers, Project Lifesaver), so we're developing one for the Comm Division. We have a draft, but it hasn't been approved yet, so it'll be distributed later. Very similar to the ARRL ARES document, same content, but we've added a few things for us. Basically there are 3 levels of communicators, #1 which is the entry level and required mostly that you are licensed and are a member of the Division. Level #2 requires the basic ICS training courses, StormNet, some level of participation in meetings, exercises, message handling and basic radio programming skills. Level #3 requires the ICS PDS series, advances SKYWARN training, EC-016, running a net, presenting training and a General Class license. The Task Book you can carry with you to document your training and experience. The requirements of this Task Book will be utilized in training this year. Overall we are not

taking away requirements from the ARES program, just adding some of our own.

12. Tom, W9EEL, on the Weather – We had ½ inch of rain today. A cold front came in this AM. There is the possibility of freezing rain on Wednesday PM.
13. Gary, W9GNR – Commented on Indiana House Bill 1070, having to do with mobile communications devices. Looks like amateur mobile operation will be exempted from the restrictions in the bill.
14. Tom, KA9SYP, on other counties – Several counties want to copy our Comm Division activities. He and Jeff are working with Hamilton County. Jeff has been to their meetings. Their Director is very complimentary of our Division. Hamilton County seems to focus more on the latest digital technology and repeaters, where we focus upon our traditional technology and keeping our repeaters operational.
15. The meeting was closed at 2030 with 16 present.