

Madison County Emergency Management Agency

Communications Division

Tom Ecker, Executive Director

Steve Riley, Director of Communications

October, 2019

Our regular Communications Division meeting is Tuesday, October 1, 7:00PM at the EOC. Please plan to attend. The training will be related to Net Operation. Jeff plans on demonstrations and operations on simplex. We'll also be reviewing and discussing Net Operations for the Run-The-Mounds event.

The Run-The-Mounds Communications Exercise is Sunday, November 3 at Mounds Park. The races that we track start at 2:00PM, so try to show up 12:30-1:00. We'll have our Safety Talk at 1:15 and then send everyone out to the various observation points. We should be done by 3:30. We can use as many communicators as possible as there are many useful observation points but we usually man about 12. This is a good opportunity to try out Go-Boxes and temporary antennas. Only a Handheld is needed, as the longest path (assuming we don't use the repeater) is 1.6 miles between observation points. The longest distance to the Net Control is 1.1 miles. I'll be sending out additional information prior to the exercise and ask that you let me know that you plan to help, but get it on your calendar now. Helpful items to bring include: Radio/battery/antenna; Vest and/or other ID; Stop Watch; Clip Board. Other items depending upon the weather. Fortunately we've had very good weather in the past, so it'll be a great event.

There have been a number of potential severe weather events that have caused the Warning Division to man the ECC along with the Communications Division members who activated StormNet on 146.82. A few of our faithful observers went out to some of the Observation Points as the weather approached. Fortunately nothing developed for our county. Thanks to each of you for going out, checking in or just monitoring.

You probably have noticed a change in the Sunday Evening Net protocol from years past. Jeff and Gary have been working hard to get us all accustomed to an improved Directed Net procedure. It's working well and I hope that you are becoming more familiar with the structure that we'd need in the event of a major communications event here in our County. Thanks to Jeff and Gary who go to the ECC every Sunday to operate the Net and to check into other Counties nets.

The weekend of August 17-18 was a busy one for the organization. The annual Elwood Glass Festival gave us an opportunity to inform the public about EMA, Amateur Radio, Project Lifesaver, and the functions of the 911 Team. Jeff, K9DYR, reported: The Elwood Glass Festival was one of the most successful outreach activities we have had in a long time. EMA, Amateur Radio, and Project Lifesaver were well represented and information was shared with many fair-goers. The 911 Dispatch Center shared our space as well.

Lew - K9LBB took the lead on Project Lifesaver, demonstrating to many how the equipment works and what it is for. Several amateurs, including Tim-KC9GBL, Paul-KD9NHQ, Dale-KV9W, Mike-KC9DJU, Gary-W9GNR, Gerald-KD9NAV, Tom-KA9SYP, Mark-KD9NAU, Rick-W9CGA, and Paul-KD9NHQ participated by operating the HF station or handing out literature.

Dale-KV9W made the first HF contact and it was with Slovenia. As a group we also made contact with TX, FL, CA, CO, LA, ME, GA, MD, and MI. A fun experience. Also, EMA Warning provided a much appreciated service as the weather became a concern. The event organizers were very appreciative of the timely and accurate information we fed them so attendees would be safe and dry.



The Frankton Heritage Days festival was September 20-22. Jeff reports: Members of the EMA Communications Division continued to support EMA outreach at the Frankton Heritage Days event. The booth brought to the fairgoers information for their personal safety in emergencies, information and demonstrations of Project Lifesaver, and a portable dual band unit for UHF/VHF communications. Sunday the wind picked up and we provided constant monitoring of measured wind speeds for the fair coordinators and first responders as well as the pilot giving helicopter rides. A total of 74 volunteer hours were logged - GREAT PARTICIPATION!

See you Tuesday,
73, Steve

**Notes from Communications Division Meeting
August 6, 2019**

1. The meeting was called to order at 1900 by Jeff, K9DYR. Jeff led us in the Pledge to the Flag.
2. Review of Activities:
 1. For July the group had 189 man-hours of activity. This included 4 nets and the 4-H Fair activity.
3. Upcoming Activities:
 2. The Elwood Glass Festival is Aug 16-18. The EMA Outreach Trailer will be there and the plan is to have an Amateur Special Event Station set up to operate too. Project Lifesaver information will be there too.
 3. Frankton Heritage Days is Sept 20-22. Will be there with the Outreach Trailer.
4. Jeff reminded everyone that we must maintain a "Professional Image" at these events. Everyone has done very well so far, but we're reminded that we represent EMA, the County and Amateur Radio. We want everyone to recognize we're unpaid professionals.
5. Jeff passed out order forms for anyone who wants to order EMA logo shirts/hats/apparel. Comm. Div. shirt color is WHITE. Cost comes out of your pocket. Can write check and leave order form off at EOC.
6. A reminder to resist putting things out on social media during EMA responses. Once it's out there it's there forever, and we don't want to have a lot of what we see available to everyone. The EMA PIO will put out the official information for EMA.
7. Jeff led a discussion on net operations:
 - There are different types of nets:
 - Wednesday night net is formal per the preamble, but not structured as far as content.
 - The Sunday evening net is to improve our skills for a tactical type net.
 - We also have "liaison Station Nets" where an operator participates in 2 nets simultaneously. We do that from the ECC on Sunday evening.
 - Specialty nets might be hospital nets for example. In that case we don't make decisions, we just communicate exactly what the client requests. Each hospital in the City has their own station on-site. The purpose is to link back to the EOC. St. Vincent and Community have them written into their Emergency Plan. They have Kenwood dual band radios. Charlie, K9TZJ, tests the St. Vincent radio setup every month.
 - We could have communications nets set up at shelters to support the Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.
8. Jeff passed out information on Basic Message Handling and Documentation.
 - In the case of StormNet the message is informal; Information as to what is, not what is not. Messages are not formal in writing, although the Net Control Station documents reports.
 - Formal Messages are handled on forms; ICS-213 is the ICS form. We have our own version with one additional section used for our tracking/circulation within the EOC.
 - Message Number – Generated where the message originates.
 - Name of the Incident – What the incident actually is. Might be several going on at one time.
 - Who it is to – Try not to use a name, but a functional title (Mayor) in the event that the message doesn't arrive while the specific person is on duty.
 - Who it's from – Be specific so that the reply will go to the right person/function.
 - Subject – Again be specific as to what the message is for.
 - Date/Time – Use local "military/24 hour" time.
 - Message Body – Take time and think it thru. You are passing along what the request is, but need to make certain that it includes all the detail...What exactly is needed, when it's needed (date/time). Try to draw out the information from whom you are talking to.
 - Need Contact Person information.
 - The Approval is the operator who generates the message usually.
 - If a reply is needed this is where the reply is written down.
 - The second page is a log of the messages handled. Would be one at each location.
 - The ARRL Message Form is basically the same concept. Has a word count for error correction.
 - We usually don't have to write down informal messages, but if it is to be passed it needs to be documented and accurate.
 - Our role is to make sure it's accurately passed on. We don't have control of the accuracy of the facts in the message.
 - For served agencies – remember that amateur radio is Open. Anyone can hear it. Don't talk about personal details, fatalities, etc. Don't pass along names, diagnosis, where transported, bed counts, etc. Have to follow HIPPA regulations. Also don't talk about financial matters.
 - It's a good idea to keep a copy of your license in your possession, go-bag or perhaps your go-box. You would need to prove that you were a licensed amateur in many cases. The go-box is also a good place to keep other

- potentially needed items, information.
 - Tom reminded everyone to make sure there is a callback number or way to get back to whoever is making the request in case other information is needed.
 - Always send back a reply so alternate plans can be made if the request cannot be handled.
 - Everything is in 2400 hour time.
9. Tom reported that our generators are wired up with plugs for all of our county tower sites. Hamilton County is also wired the same so we can assist each other. (ATT FirstNet towers are battery backup only).
 10. Tom, KA9SYP, reported that an upgrade to the MCU has been completed. Based upon some lessons learned the IT folks have improved the internal networking with new switch, cradle point, etc. Have AT&T and Verizon capability. Can plug in a County computer and have access to the County network. Also have wi-fi that is independent of the County system and other computers can access.
 11. The tornado response is still going on. Folks are spending several hours a day on it. One of the biggest issues remaining are the "root balls" from trees. A plan is being implemented. Homeowners insurance doesn't cover that cost. The SBA declaration resulted in \$250K in loans, and there are \$150K in grants also. This is being coordinated by the Long Term Recovery Team. There are other State and charity organizations offering assistance too. There are issues with how to pay for work done to make certain that the specified work is actually done and paid for (the intended purpose).
 12. We're not going to do an exercise this month due to the activity in Pendleton.
 13. Have done several Hot Washes and are about ready to do the final report on the Pendleton incident.
 14. Use of the EOC Training Room has been high over the last three months. Lots of meetings, dispatcher training and other events.
 15. The EMA budget for next year is fine. We'll have no problems. Actually the budget has been FLAT for the last 4 years. Have a pickup truck for FST that has been equipped and striped. Just got the Title so it can be submitted to the State to be certified as an Emergency Vehicle.
 16. A number of grant requests have been submitted with hope of getting some of them soon.
 17. We've expanded our Outreach this year. The 4-H Fair for example. Us, 911, the Hams...Everyone looked sharp and presented themselves well. Got reports that everyone was very professional and nice. As a result we've been offered a prime spot at the Elwood Glass Festival.
 18. Remember there is only one opportunity to make a good first impression!
 19. Jeff reminded everyone that all need to complete the ICS Courses 100, 200 & 700. 800 is suggested too. It's important that everyone take these courses so that they understand the operating procedures we utilize. The courses are being added to and updated regularly, but you don't have to re-take ones that you have taken in the past. The FEMA web site is constantly being updated and revamped. It's pretty good. Our group averages just over 11 per active member. Some have many more and some have none.
 20. Use this as an opportunity for improvement. Some agencies don't understand the command structure of the Incident Command System, so it's important that we do understand our role, who we report to, etc. We also need to understand the terminology.
 21. At the Tornado in Pendleton no staging area was established, which wasn't a good idea. They did use Divisions and Task Forces.
 22. Richard, WB9AZY, discussed a tri-band Motorola APX8000 handheld that he's been issued in his job responsibilities with the State Communications.
 23. The meeting was closed at 2020.
 24. There were 27 members present.