EMERGENCY MEASURES RADIO GROUP

TRAINED VOLUNTEER RADIO OPERATORS PREPARED TO PROVIDE COMMUNICATIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

GENERAL MEETING

All members and anyone interested in joining EMRG

DATE: Saturday June 6, 1998

TIME: 9:00AM to 12:00PM
(It will start at 9:00 & end at 12:00)

LOCATION: 111 Lisgar St.; Ottawa
RMOC Building;
Honeywell Room

COFFEE: Starting at 8:45

AGENDA ITEMS:
- Ice Storm Review
- Management Team
- Weekly Nets -Should they be continued?
- What's Next?

NETS

Wednesday Nights   8:00
Repeater: 147.150+   (VE3MPC)

Sunday Mornings   11:00
Simplex: 147.525

INTRODUCTION

The activities of EMRG have been slow in the past year, mostly due to my work commitments and buying a house.

By now most people have recovered to some degree from the ice storm. This storm certainly affected a lot of people. This newsletter provides some information about the ice storm and why EMRG was not involved officially.
(For more information, there is a report that I submitted to the RMOC, located on the EMRG web site)

As most people may have noticed, the weekly net on Wednesday nights has disappeared. Without willing net controllers, there are no nets.

The management team has a few openings, so think about it for the meeting. We need increased membership participation if EMRG is to survive.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Peter Gamble (VE3BQP)
Team Leader -EMRG
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EMRG WEB PAGE
www.igs.net/~gamble/index.htm

ICE STORM REVIEW

There are amateurs in the area, who were upset that the Emergency Measures Radio Group (EMRG) was not called in by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC) Emergency Measures Unit (EMU) to assist in the emergency.

WHY EMRG WAS NOT CALLED

While the ice storm created a lot of activity and did stress communications systems within the Region, at no time was the RMOC without communications or without a solution to restore them.

Based on the RMOC-EMRG agreement and the communications requirements of the RMOC during the emergency, the RMOC did not have a communications task for EMRG. Therefore EMRG was not called.

It is important to understand that this does not mean that amateur involvement was not happening or that more could not have been used.

It means that the RMOC had no internal need for additional communications and no outside groups such as local municipalities or the Red Cross had requested assistance with communications.

The next item shows the key sections of the RMOC - EMRG agreement regarding EMRG's role.

RMOC-EMRG AGREEMENT
(Key sections)
The RMOC and EMRG have a signed agreement which outlines the reasons for the RMOC to call on EMRG and the capabilities that EMRG is expected to supply. The two key sections relating to the RMOC use of EMRG are:

SERVICES
1. In the event of an emergency within the meaning of the Emergency Plans Act, R.S.O 1990, c.E.9 (hereinafter referred to as "emergency"), as declared by the RMOC, the EMRG may be called upon to provide, to the best of its ability, radio operators for the duration of the emergency for the purpose of providing back-up communications services.

RMOC RESPONSIBILITIES
12. Notification of an emergency shall be issued by the RMOC Environment and Transportation Commissioner or his authorized representative to any one or more of the EMRG's members identified on the contact list.

13. The RMOC is not obliged to utilize the back-up communication services of EMRG or its members.

Do you have an emergency kit ready so you can react quickly?

REASONS FOR EMRG TO BE ACTIVATED

Summarizing the sections from the RMOC-EMRG agreement and adding a bit of explanation, there are really three reasons for the RMOC to call on the services of EMRG:

1. If during an emergency, existing communications within all or a portion of the Region fail or become overloaded such as:
- Failure or overload of any or all of the mobile radio systems used by police, fire, regional works etc.
- Failure of phone communications both wired or wireless

1. If during an emergency, communications systems do not exist for a specified purpose. This could be a way to provide:
- A common radio system for agencies that do not have radios or have their own private radio systems on different frequencies
- Communications to an area or building that is not equipped with communications capabilities suitable for the task at hand

1. If a municipality within the RMOC or an agency assisting the RMOC, requests assistance with communications AND the RMOC is unable to meet that request with its existing resources.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

The ice storm is over, but are you any more prepared than you were before?

RMOC PERSPECTIVE ON THE EMERGENCY

The ice storm created a lot of communications activity and did stress communications systems, however at no time was the RMOC without communications or without a solution to restore them.

CELLULAR PHONES
- During the emergency, the RMOC used cellular phones to fill in areas not covered by mobile radio or wired phones
- At one point the cellular system was beginning to overload causing the RMOC to discuss the need for EMRG
- The cellular system did not fail and communications continued uninterrupted

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE
One municipal fire department experienced a failure in their mobile communications, causing the RMOC to discuss the need for EMRG once more
- The problem was resolved through the Regional fire dispatch and some portable radios

The Mayor of Cumberland put forward a question to the RMOC, asking why the Red Cross was requesting continued support from the Cumberland Emergency Radio Group (CERG).
- CERG was running a network control station full time, so the Red Cross had been using the radio operators provided by CERG to relay information to other areas within the Region and bordering communities

AMATEUR RADIO
- The RMOC met daily with the EMRG team leader (Peter Gamble) to discuss the status of the emergency and the status of EMRG with respect to the emergency
- The RMOC was aware that the Cumberland Emergency Radio Group (CERG) was in operation in Cumberland
- The RMOC Emergency Operations Centre amateur radios were tested and 2 were made operational
- The station VE3OCE was active on an occasional basis, checking in with Cumberland net control

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Establish A Presence
In the event of an emergency, where the RMOC is involved and there may be a need for extra communications, EMRG should be part of the early response.

The initial EMRG involvement would be to establish a presence within the amateur radio community through a net control station operating from the EOC.

2) One Point Of Contact
Knowing the state of chaos that existed in many small municipalities, the actual use of amateur radio during the emergency and the last minute attempts to use amateur radio, it appears that these small municipalities were not aware of amateur radio as a resource so therefore did not make a request for assistance.

The RMOC should be the central point of contact for amateur radio communications assistance in the Region. This needs to be discussed with the RMOC and if acceptable, communicated to the local municipal units along with some information on what amateur radio can provide.

3) Working Together
There are several groups in and around the Region who provide voluntary emergency communications. One item that came from the debriefing session held by the Cumberland Emergency Radio Group, was a need to get together and coordinate resources and activities to ensure the best possible assistance can be made available in the area regardless of the borders which define each group.

4) More Space Required
With the limited space in the communications room it would be beneficial to have some space for EMRG outside of the EOC. This could be an office which EMRG could use for limited radio communications and coordination, allowing only the required radio operators in the communications room.

GET READY NOW!
Think about what you were missing during the storm and make a list.

Ham flea markets and the summer garage sales are on the way. This is a good time to pick up some items for your emergency kit.