EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK: 1-7 MAY, 2005

Prepare now! Here's how…

GET A plan
- Identify the risks
- Prepare your plan
- At school, at work…
- Practice as a family

ASSEMBLE A kit
- Basic equipment
- Food and water
- Survival
- Vehicle

LEARN more
- About risk
- FAQ
- Close to you

www.emergencypreparednessweek.ca

GENERAL MEETING

Date: Saturday May 7, 2005
Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Location: Ottawa Fire Training Centre
           898 Industrial Avenue
           (Behind the fire station)

Agenda:

- Project Status - What is being done and why + Upcoming projects

- Training Session - EMRG Notification, Activation and Organization in an Emergency (Roles & Responsiblities, procedures, forms)

- Table Top Exercise - Building on the lessons learned from the table top in January, plus the training session

Everyone Welcome – Please pass the message on to other amateurs!

TEAM LEADER'S MESSAGE

It is a great feeling to be able to plan projects, knowing we have money to order the parts. The project activity also provides an opportunity to get everyone involved, plus provide an opportunity for people to learn new skills.

As we get some of these projects complete, we can demonstrate our capabilities with our partners, then use their feedback to improve, so we have solutions that work for these partners.

This newsletter attempts to provide all the updates and current happenings for EMRG, so the general meeting can focus on learning and practice, rather than me talking.

Peter -VE3BQP
Team Leader - EMRG

NEXT STEPS

The last two years focused on organizing the management of EMRG. Slow but steady progress to build a solid foundation. The management team now meets monthly to tackle group issues as well as distributing responsibilities, so EMRG is less dependant on the Team Leader.

The next step for EMRG is to engage the membership in an ongoing , consistent way. This is important for three reasons;

- Doing things keeps people interested
- Distribute the work load
- Strengthen the organization

The objective is to get everyone doing something, not to get a couple people to do everything. Sometimes there will be other things that take priority over EMRG, like Family and work. All that is expected is that each EMRG member make a serious effort to participate when they can.

EMRG activities include meetings, training, exercises, and now projects. Some activities are very technical, some require organizational skills and some are low skill such as clean up.

CHECK SPAM FILTERS

EMRG uses a list server to send emails to everyone who has registered an email address. Some SPAM filters interpret the multiple email addresses as SPAM, so check to make sure your EMRG emails are getting to you.

"EMRG - Listserver" <arec@igs.net>

If you provided your email address, but you did not get any EMRG email, this may be why!

Some people don't have email, and work is being done to make sure messages get to everyone, with and without email.

WEB SITE

The EMRG web site continues to grow. The purpose of the web site is to collect information that is useful to EMRG and it's members, in an easy to access format.

Gord Phillips has volunteered to help with the care and feeding of the web site, which takes some of the load off Peter Gamble, the Team Leader. Thanks Gord!

The Official Document section is well underway and changes regularly as documents are added and updated.

Take a look at **www.emrg.ca**

FINANCIAL REPORT

The first EMRG cheque has been written, paying $2500 for the first round of project supplies. These orders built up the supply of connectors, cables, fuses and some specific project parts. This leaves $2500 remaining this year

Team Leader, Peter Gamble is currently acting as treasurer. The rules for EMRG financial management are posted in the Official Document section of the web site.

REPEATER COVERAGE

As you go South on Bank Street, past Leitrim Road, you notice an uphill drive. This levels off after a couple kilometres and starts to drop just before Greely. This section of land is not very wide. If you draw a line from the EMRG repeater, through the centre of this hill, the line will follow Bank Street going South.

This hill is enough to block the EMRG repeater to the South, creating a triangle shaped area from the repeater, along both sides of the hill, blocking out Metcalf on one side and Greely on the other.

This is an example of something for which EMRG must develop a solution!

SKILLS & EQUIPMENT

There are many Amateurs who do not have technical skills or who do not own much radio equipment. Sometimes these people have questioned whether they can really add any value in EMRG.

The answer is YES YOU ADD VALUE!

Building an effective volunteer emergency communications group takes more than just technical skills, so there are lots of other ways to help the group.

There are Amateurs with thousands of dollars worth of radio equipment, but because their radio equipment is permanently installed in their home or car, these people are no more helpful in setting up a radio at a shelter than a person who only owns a hand held radio.

EMRG is building up a supply of radio equipment, some locations have permanent radio installations and there are Amateurs who will lend their equipment if required in an emergency. Getting radios is not the challenge in an emergency. The challenge is getting enough trained radio operators.

What is important is an interest to participate and learn. Over time there will be opportunities to improve technical skills. Everyone adds value!

HOSPITALS HELP OUT!

EMRG hosted the first Ottawa District ARES meeting on Feb 26 at the Ottawa Fire Training Centre. It was a great meeting with ARES leaders from all across Eastern Ontario.

The Hospital Disaster Planning Committee, an EMRG partner, volunteered to pay for lunch. This saved significant time at noon and provided a great opportunity to talk and share information.

WHY EMRG REPEATERS?

Several years ago, Team leader Peter Gamble stated that EMRG did not need to own any voice repeaters. EMRG would rely on the repeater infrastructure provided by local Amateur radio clubs.

Over the last couple years this view has changed, for several reasons;

- Many local repeaters have had performance issues, the owners are ageing, and site access is getting difficult
- EMRG has access to surplus repeater equipment and radio sites across the City
- EMRG better understands the requirements to provide emergency communications, the challenges in Ottawa and limitations of existing repeaters.

Like everything in life, the preferred option is to use the best tool for the job. Using a wide area repeater for local community communications is not an effective use of resources. Community repeaters provide a solution for local communications and Regional repeaters provide a link between communities. Wide Area repeaters link the entire City and provide access to neighbouring Municipalities and radio groups.

In an emergency, there are many reasons why having more than one repeater is important;

- some repeaters may not be working
- the affected area may not be covered by some repeaters
- more than one communications network may be required

Emergency communications is about providing communications where it is required, which may not be where it is convenient or easy for Amateurs using the local radio network.

PROJECTS –What & Why

The EMRG management team has defined 3 key objectives for this year;

1. **Maintain Existing Infrastructure**
   - Ensure existing infrastructure is complete, robust, documented and people are properly trained
   - Existing infrastructure includes the voice repeater VE3OCE, the EMRG communications room at Fire Dispatch, the radios in the EOC at City Hall and the radios at the Ottawa Red Cross

2. **Voice Communications City Wide**
   - Expand voice communications infrastructure (repeaters) to support communications between any locations, urban or rural, within the City of Ottawa
   - Build an inventory of basic radio equipment (radios, power supplies, antennas & coax) to ensure sufficient equipment is available to provide consistent reliable radio communications from deployed locations

3. **Data Communications In Urban core**
   - Establish a basic data communications network, to provide coverage within the urban core.
   - Build a single digital repeater (digipeater) and establish data communications capability at the EMRG communications room, the EOC and Ottawa Red Cross
   - Build 3 portable data communications systems, each with a laptop, data modem and radio, for communications from deployed locations

Under each of the 3 key objectives are a series of categories. The categories define areas that need work for that objective.

Current categories listed by objective are;

Maintain Existing Infrastructure
   - Repeater
   - Communications Room
   - EOC (Emergency Operations Centre)
   - Red Cross

Voice Communications City Wide
   - Community Repeaters
   - Shelter Kits
   - Cross band Repeaters
   - Supplies
   - Community Services Operations Centre

Data Communications In Urban core
   - Prepare Plan
   - Digital Repeater
   - Randall Communications Centre

For each category there are a series of tasks, called projects. Projects define activities that can be passed on to an individual to complete, or that can be completed as a group with one or two sessions.

The following list shows the projects for the category *Repeater*, under the objective *Maintain Existing Infrastructure*.

Maintain Existing Infrastructure
  Repeater
   - Space & Equipment Mounting
   - Commercial Duty Repeater
   - Battery Backup (24 hrs)
   - Standard Interface on Radio & Controller
   - Wired Remote Operator Interface
   - Coverage Verification
   - Documentation

Document EMRG-303 *Year 1 Project Plan* contains the full list of projects. This document will be modified throughout the year as plans take shape and are better defined.

- PREPARE NOW! -

HOW CAN I HELP?

EMRG has work to do and now has the money to pay for the material to make it happen. Planning is underway to define the details on what needs to be done and to prioritize the projects so the most important things are done first.

If everyone participates in at least a few projects, the work will get done and everyone learns something new.

The first 4 projects have been defined and emails were sent out looking for volunteers. The four projects were;

1. Coax cable session – making cables for EMRG shelter kits
2. Power Supply   session – wire with powerpole connectors & test
3. Randall clean up – organize & sort parts and equipment into cabinets
4. Headphone control – Build 2 units from parts supplied by EMRG

There are enough projects for several years, so there will be plenty more opportunities to get involved.

The May 7 meeting will introduce more projects with dates, so bring your calendar to sign up.

This is a new experience for everyone, so it will take a few sessions to understand the best ways to make sure everyone knows projects are coming up, figure which days are the best (evenings Vs weekends) and how to best organize the sessions. Your feedback is important to understand what is working and what is not!

What are you doing to make yourself and your family better prepared for an emergency?

Emergency Preparedness Week is a reminder to do something. This year, make a change.
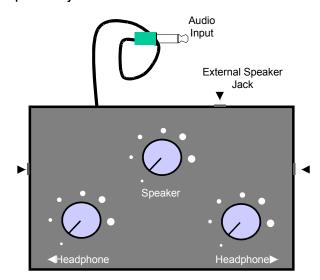
Prepare Now!

HEADPHONE CONTROL

Those who were at the last EMRG meeting saw the headphone control unit prototype. The full design and build instructions are posted on the EMRG web site (EMRG-212 Headphone Control).

This is such an important, but neglected item in Amateur radio emergency communications. Everyone talks about the need for an operator and logger at a radio location such as a shelter and the need to use headphones. However, few Amateurs are equipped to connect two sets of headphones to a radio and almost none provide individual volume control.

The Headphone Control provides jacks for two sets of stereo or mono headphones (one on each side) as well as an external speaker jack with it's own volume control.

The most expensive component is the volume controls (2 watt x 100 ohm), which are not the same as used in radios and other electronic equipment. If there is interest, this could be a good group project, which would help bring the cost down.

Take a look at the document on the web site! (EMRG-212 Headphone Control)

WHERE IS EVERYONE?

Ever wonder why in a City the size of Ottawa with about 1500 licensed Amateurs, there are not more Amateurs participating in EMRG. We have all heard that providing service to the community and Emergency communications are part of every Amateur's sense of duty.

In fact, Amateurs are just normal people and most people become Amateurs because they like one or more aspects of the hobby. It might be social aspects of talking to others, model air planes, car rallies or experimentation. For these people Amateur radio is a great hobby, but that is all, and there is nothing wrong with that. More people helps keep the hobby strong and diverse.

There is a small group of people who are both Amateurs and who feel a desire to assist in their community in an emergency. You are part of this group.

It is important to understand that of the 1500 Amateurs in Ottawa, about 10% have some level of interest or desire to provide Emergency Communications and less than 5% will participate in any preparation activities and only 1% are well prepared.

In an emergency, Amateurs with no understanding of the organization structure, or roles and responsibilities, are just volunteers with a radio. In many recent large emergencies in the US, untrained Amateurs have been sent home. When looking for unskilled volunteers, pairing up an Amateur, with a non Amateur experienced in dispatch communications, can provide better results than taking a volunteer just because they are an Amateur.

For those Amateurs who do volunteer, everyone has lots of challenges in life, and not everyone has the same opportunities. There are many different roles and levels of participation in

Emergency Communications. All that is expected is an Amateur license and a willingness to try your best.

So why is this message important?

Four important reasons to understand where EMRG volunteers come from are;

1. You are part of small group, providing an important role in the community

2. Presentations to groups of Amateurs keeps them informed, which is good, but it does not necessarily make contact with Amateurs who will get involved in EMRG.
    *   We need to find ways to find Amateurs who will get involved!

3. In an emergency, there is a limited pool of skilled operators, so solutions should not be dependant on large numbers of radio operators.

4. Mutual Aid, to get help or help others, is important, to ensure sufficient skilled Amateur resources in a large or prolonged emergency.

CALL SIGNS

The call sign for the VHF repeater (146.880MHz) has changed from VA3EMV to VE3OCE. Now all equipment, voice and packet, at the Fire Dispatch centre will use the VE3OCE call sign.

Two new call signs have been added, VE3EMU & VA3OFS. VE3EMU will be used for packet at the EOC and VA3OFS will be used for another voice repeater location. The other EMRG call sign, VA3EMV will be used for portable packet stations and the portable voice repeater.

EMRG call signs are used to uniquely identify equipment, not operator functions or locations. During radio operations, tactical call signs will be used to address operator locations and individual Amateur call signs can be used to meet Industry Canada regulations.