

EMRG Newsletter for January 2008

ARES & EMRG: Two names, One group, One Purpose



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Announcements:

January 19,

AGM and training session. Check the EMERG website for details.

Quick Notes:

Check your POT

In an emergency, many people now rely on their POT (Plain Old Telephone) at home and many of these telephones require AC power to operate.

In the power outage, many people found that their telephone did not work and they did not have or think to

Feature Article

Being Useful in an Emergency

By Peter Gamble, VE3BQP

Many Amateurs believe they are not useful for emergency communications based on numerous stories and articles they have read that suggest the typical Amateur providing emergency communications must meet the following criteria

- own multiple radios, batteries and other equipment
- be able to build complex communications solutions on the fly
- be able to take over and run critical communications systems like a pro

In reality, the most important requirement for the success of EMRG is licensed Amateurs who are willing to give of themselves, when they can, to help prepare EMRG and to assist when EMRG is deployed. You don’t need to own a radio, you can be newly licensed and you don’t need to be very technical.

While building a supply of equipment is a desirable goal, there are always lots of radios available, either at sites with permanent installations, at sites where there are 2 operators, from EMRG supplies, or from people who have more than one radio and are willing to share.

With proper planning, preparation and training, there should be minimal need to for high technical skills in an emergency, and there will always be some technical people to do the technical work. It takes many different skills to effectively organize and deploy a group. People are required to plan, train, organize, deliver and operate. These are skills most people already have or can develop.

Everyone brings different resources to the table and everyone adds value. The strength of the group is the diversity of the membership.

Two questions: 1) what skills do you have to offer, and 2) will you bring them to the table in an emergency?

use the plain old telephone that is powered from the telephone line.

It is important to make sure you understand which phones will work when the power goes off and that you have one that works. If you're not sure, unplug the AC adapter from the phone and see if it still works. If it doesn't, you might want to dig up and old POT to have around in an emergency.

About EMRG:

The **Emergency Measures Radio Group** (EMRG), which is located in the City of Ottawa, is made up of trained, federally-licensed, radio operators, who have made a commitment to volunteer their time and equipment in the event of an emergency.

EMRG is a local volunteer radio organization, also known as **Ottawa ARES** (or Amateur Radio Emergency Service). Two names, one group, one purpose.

The main role for EMRG is to provide emergency radio communications for humanitarian response organizations that do not have a radio system, lack capacity on their system, or normally rely on regular phones and cell phones.

For more information and resources, visit our web site at: <http://www.emrg.ca/>.

ICE Your Cell Phone

By Mike Kelly, VE3FFK

No, we're not talking about cooling off your cell phone with a couple of ice cubes. We're referring to a different type of ice. ICE stands for **In Case of Emergency**.

It is a good idea to put contact information in your cell phone directory. This information allows ambulance or emergency room personnel to get or provide information to relatives in the event that you are unable to do so. The idea is similar to the "in case of emergency" cards that used to be placed in new wallets.

"ICE" is the internationally recognized acronym for these cell phone contact entries. Putting this information under "ICE" rather than "Mom" or "Sweetie Pie" makes it easier for emergency responders to know exactly who is supposed to be contacted.

Also recognized are "ICE2, ICES" etc. for secondary contacts in the event that your first choice cannot be reached. It is also a good place to put an out of town contact, or the info for someone less likely than Sweetie Pie to be involved in the same accident that you are in.

So take a minute now, before you forget, and add ICE to your phone. It's cool. It just might save a few minutes when those minutes are important some day.

Get Out of the House!

By Peter Gamble, VE3BQP

There are many misconceptions in the general Amateur population regarding what is required for emergency communications. One example is the use of home stations.

As much as we hate to say it, the truth of the matter is that home stations are really of limited value for emergency communications. In an emergency there may be a requirement for net control or HF relay stations from a home, but beyond that, Amateurs are required to leave home to operate in one of the many sites that need communications. Even mobiles have limited value, except in situations where a mobile is required.

It is important to think about portability, so radios need to be removable from home and mobiles, to be deployed in sites that need communications.

To be effective, Amateurs need to co-locate with the people being supported. And that means we have to get out of our houses and into the places where the action is and where our assistance is truly needed.

Team Leaders Message

A New Year Ahead

With the start of a New Year it is time to plan for the future and reflect on the past. For me personally the year ended much better than it started and I am now healthy and active again. For EMRG, the year ended with many accomplishments and many things falling into place.

The weekly work sessions at Fire Dispatch completed a lot of projects, putting EMRG on track to have a working robust radio infrastructure on which to operate. The City and EMRG signed a one year renewal for the joint agreement, as required in the last agreement which was signed for 2005 to 2007. Having agreements that expire means both sides need to stay in touch and the agreement stays active, rather than collecting dust in the bottom of a cabinet.

This fall I had the opportunity to participate in the City of Ottawa Basic Emergency Management course. This is a Provincial course to which the City adds Ottawa specific content. The course was informative and provided a great opportunity to meet people. The Red Cross and Salvation Army disaster services managers were also on the course, providing a great opportunity to discuss EMRG plans and their requirements for EMRG.

I stay in touch with folks at the City Community Services department, so they are aware of our project activity and look forward to EMRG being able to work closer with them. We have clients who want us, which is a good thing to have.

If you are reading about what is happening in EMRG and are not involved but want to be, I would like to know what is keeping you from getting involved. For EMRG to be a healthy organization we need a strong management team, which we have, AND we need strong involvement of the membership. We need your input about what is missing for you. Is it the way we send notices, is it the time of day, day of the week or the type of activity. We want to know.

Remember that each of us needs to be prepared to support our families for 72 hours, so we won't be a burden on emergency resources. See you at the meeting on Jan 19.

Peter –VE3BQP, Team Leader