Auxcomm

Auxcomm WG 1Q17

An update on the activities of the Auxcomm Working Group

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Abstract

The Auxcomm Working Group has continued to work at identifying the means to articulate our capabilities, and to communicate to stakeholders the process for activating the various services and the conditions under which they may be used.

1. Introduction

The Auxiliary Communications Working Group has continued to meet monthly by telephone/web conference. Members of the group also communicate regularly via telephone, email and radio.

The past few months have been relatively uneventful, largely trying to develop measurements of technical and wetware capabilities, and bring the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan closer to reality. This document details some of that work.

2. Membership

The membership of the working group consists of a representative from each of the services, as well as a representative from each District. The NWS offices, which are "Districts" within ARES® but not within MSP are currently unrepresented.

The Working Group requested from EMHSD that an MSP District Coordinator participate in the group. F/Lt. Covey assigned two DCs. This happened late in the quarter and at this point they have not had a chance to participate, however the WG feels that diverse input, for example from OEC and MPSCS, has been helpful and expects their input will be valuable.

Service Representatives
- **ARES**® - Larry Camp - Michigan Section Manager
- **Civil Air Patrol** - Maj. Shawn Wyant - Director, Communications
- **EMHSD** - Don Bouffard - Engineering Specialist - MSP/EMHSD
- **Emergency Management** - Marc Breckenridge - co-chair
- **Law Enforcement** - Lt. Michael deCastro - District Coordinator District 7
- **Law Enforcement** - Lt. Richard Martin - District Coordinator District 1
- **MARS** - Cortland Richmond - State Communications Director
- **RACES** - John McDonough - State Auxcomm Emergency Management Coordinator - co-chair
- **SATERN** - Ann-Marie Ruder

District Representatives
- **1** - Bruce Pollock - District Emergency Coordinator [1]
- **2** - Shanon Herron - District Emergency Coordinator
- **3** - David Wallick - District Emergency Coordinator
- **5** - Carl Flickinger - District Emergency Coordinator
- **6** - James Duram - District Emergency Coordinator, Emergency Management Coordinator Oceana [2]
- **7** - Thomas Duggan - District Emergency Coordinator
- **8** - Pete Costa - District Emergency Coordinator

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[1] The Amateur Radio Emergency Services or ARES® has positions known as Emergency Coordinator or EC and District Emergency Coordinator or DEC. This can cause some confusion with the titles of county Emergency Management Coordinators sometimes referred to as EMs and MSP District Coordinators or DCs.

[2] Mister Duram has a new job and will leave the working group when a replacement can be recruited.

3. Objectives

Our first objective following membership development was to prioritize the work group's activities. Three key objectives were identified as overarching priorities, followed by several additional objectives that would support Auxcomm over the long-term.

1. Conduct an Auxcomm Capability Assessment (**Priority**)
2. Development of Auxcomm Activation Protocols (**Priority**)
3. Operationalize Auxcomm technology in the new SEOC (**Priority**)
4. Support Michigan legislation which codifies the Federal Communications Commission PRB-1 ruling (**Ongoing**)
5. Promote Volunteer COM-L development (**Ongoing**)
6. Update SEOC documentation to reflect Auxcomm capabilities and changes for the new SEOC
7. Update the Michigan Emergency Management Plan to include Auxcomm

4. Progress to date

The Working Group has continued to meet monthly. Individual District committees have also continued to meet regularly.

4.1. Capability Assessment

Both the repeater form and the personnel assessment form have been accepted. The back end for the personel assessment form has been completed and will be rolled out to the individual county emergency coordinators in April.

4.2. Activation Protocols

No change from last quarter.

4.3. New SEOC

Other than the two digital stations, much of the work on the SEOC station has been around new requirements.

a. Configuration of the packet and Pactor stations is still not complete.
b. Construction of a SHARES station is underway. Currently waiting for contractors to drill holes for feedlines.
c. A new HF station for the Civil Air Patrol is in place.
d. Owing to changes in MARS stance with respect to civil authorities, the MARS radio has been moved to a locked cabinet. The feedline and antenna are still in place so if needed it can be activated quickly.

4.4. Support Legislation

No additional needs arose during the period.

4.5. COM-L

No change from previous quarter.

4.6. SEOC Documentation

No change from previous quarter.

4.7. MEMP

An addendum to the MEMP, the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan has been identified as requiring revision. The current section on ARES®/RACES does not reflect CAP, MARS or SATERN. The ARES®/RACES section is quite good, but badly out of date.

The working group has been progressing with updating this document which is fairly detailed. Much of the existing document is no longer relevant.

The MSP/EMHSD Planner, Henrik Hollaender, has been assisting with this work.

4.8. Michigan ARPSC Guidelines

Work on the ARPSC guidelines is still waiting for MECP work to complete.

5. Future Plans

Capability Assessment

Work with CASM is continuing.

The resource assessment form will be completed in the coming quarter and rolled out to the counties.

The Working Group will be asked to approve the power resilience survey, and barring major issues, will be rolled out as well.

Activation Protocols

The group continues to collect details of the various contact points for activating individual organizations. It is hoped to complete this work by the end of the first quarter.

New SEOC

The following work remains to be complete in the new SEOC station:

a. Configure and test the Pactor station. Pactor will not only give the SEOC the capability of connecting directly to NTS-Digital, but also allow radio email. The SEOC will be able to send ordinary Internet email in the face of a total Internet outage at the SEOC. Of course this requires either Internet or Pactor capability at the receiving location.
b. Configure and test the packet station.
c. Test the NBEMS capability. Some NBEMS operation has already been carried out, but broader testing would be worthwhile. NBEMS allows sending text over HF, especially forms. Thus, common ICS forms can easily be sent around the state even in the absence of legacy communications such as telephone or Internet.
d. Relocate the CAP VHF antenna and validate the CAP VHF capability.
e. Install a SHARES station. SHARES is a system for communicating with the Federal government. The radio is in place, but an antenna is yet to be installed.
f. Install a CAP HF station.

g. Provide Pactor and packet documentation. These are relatively infrequently used capabilities so operators will require fairly detailed instructions.
h. Explore and document the coverage of the new VHF/UHF antennas.
i. Some time ago, a power amplifier was donated to the SEOC. Before this can be made operational, 220 volt service is required in the station and an antenna tuner capable of additional power is required. This has been a lower priority, now being addressed as the major items are complete.
j. The crew of volunteers to operate the station has been expanding. Between the additional personnel and the additional capabilities, it is expected that significant new documentation will be required. The WG will be watching to see what the needs are as they evolve.

MEMP

During the first quarter, complete work on the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan for the various Auxcomm services.

6. Individual Agency Activities

6.1. ARES®/RACES

The American Radio Relay League, the national association for amateur radio, issued its annual ARES® report in which Michigan reported more volunteer hours than any other Section. Inspector Bush sent ARES® leadership a congratulatory note.

ARES® is a large organization which reports monthly, however, as a volunteer organization, reporting tends to be spotty. The following represent reported activities; undoubtedly many other activities are not included.

• 6 counties reported training events during the quarter.

• 8 exercises, tests or emergency activations were reported.

• 5 search and rescue activations.

• 14 public service events (runs, fairs, expos) were supported.

• 10 SKYWARN activations were reported

6.2. Civil Air Patrol

• CAP participated in a cyber exercise with multiple military and fderal agencies. CAP launched over 100 aircraft for this exercise.

6.3. SATERN

• SATERN continued holding a weekly HF net.