
Auxcomm

Auxcomm WG 2Q17

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.

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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. Additional documentation needs have also been recognized. 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. A representative from the National Weather Service White Lake office is leading the severe weather section of the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan and has thus been added to the Working Group.

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**¹ - 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 Coordinator²
- **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
- **7** - Michael Dell - District Emergency Coordinator
- **8** - Pete Costa - District Emergency Coordinator
- **NWS-DTX** - Randy Love - District Emergency Coordinator³

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 Changes in the MARS program make it unclear whether MARS will continue to participate.

² 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.

³ Michigan's four NWS offices are treated as "Districts" within ARES®.

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

The Capability assessment has been sent to the individual ARES® Emergency Coordinators and response has been favorable. Fifty counties have reported. Although that is not all the counties, or even all the counties known to have ARES® programs, it is probably close to as many as we are going to get. One fairly surprising result is that over 85% of ARES® members are reported to be RACES qualified.

For the last revision of the FEMA Region V Michigan Annex, a database of volunteer communications capabilities in public facilities was created. During the D. C. Cook exercise some deficiencies in this database were recognized. Counties were asked to provide updates and have done so.

The repeater power resilience survey is now online. However, the Working Group decided to pause a couple of months before asking the ECs to provide the information. They have been asked to do a lot in the past few months and the WG felt that a respite was in order.

4.2. Activation Protocols

Contact information in the SEOC Position Manual has been updated. Contact information has been significantly extended in the ARES® Section Callout Plan. Both of these documents are available in MI-CIMS.

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 station is complete but the Pactor station is still not complete.
- b. The SHARES station is now operational but using the MARS antenna. A dedicated SHARES antenna is planned for the summer.
- c. A new HF station for the Civil Air Patrol is in place. An HF antenna is planned to be installed along with the SHARES antenna.

4.4. Support Legislation

No additional needs arose during the period.

4.5. COM-L

The WG has begun advising the local committees to start considering COM-L and COM-T candidates. However, even without pressure from the committees, there appear to be no lack of amateur radio students in the first class.

4.6. SEOC Documentation

The Position Manual and Section Callout Plan have both been updated. The Cook exercise pointed out an improvement opportunity for the Position Manual (which has since proven to be helpful) and a more complete contact directory, shared with the Position Manual, has been added to the Callout Plan.

Some needed improvements to the Digital Voice Guide have been identified but not yet implemented.

4.7. MEMP

Much of the work on the MEMP has been completed. A subsection on severe weather is still being worked on. This section is somewhat more complex in that the four NWS offices within Michigan have quite different challenges, so coming up with a concise yet effective plan is challenging.

4.8. Michigan ARPSC Guidelines

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

5. Future Plans

Capability Assessment

Over the coming quarter, the working group will be evaluating the capability assessment and planning how to best transmit this information to the partner agencies.

New SEOC

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

- a. Configure and test the Pactor station.
- b. Relocate the CAP VHF antenna and validate the CAP VHF capability.
- c. Explore and document the coverage of the new VHF/UHF antennas. work has begun but needs considerable effort to complete.
- d. Begin developing a "library" of ICS-205 Communication Plans. With the broad VHF footprint of the new SEOC station, hundreds of repeaters and dozens of county simplex frequencies are available. Rather than construct an ICS-217A with hundreds of frequencies, making it essentially useless, the station has decided to develop starter 205's for each county.
- e. Provide Pactor and packet documentation. These are relatively infrequently used capabilities so operators will require fairly detailed instructions.
- f. Expand the digital voice documentation.
- g. 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.
- h. Some time ago, a power amplifier was donated to the SEOC. Before this can be made operational, Additional AC 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.

MECP

Complete the severe weather subsection of the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan.

6. Individual Agency Activities

6.1. ARES®/RACES

For the quarter ended May 31, 33,221 volunteer hours were reported by ARES and NTS.

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

- 21 training
- 19 exercises
- 4 search and rescue
- 30 public service events
- 11 SKYWARN activations
- 5 incidents

Among the exercises shown above was the D.C. Cook series of REP exercises. Communications specific After Action Reports ⁴ for these exercises identified a number of potential improvements to the operation of the SEOC station. Most of these are mentioned in [Section 5, "Future Plans"](#), although some have already been implemented.

6.2. Civil Air Patrol

- The Civil Air Patrol has requested all stations install at least Level 2 EMP protection per DHS guidance.

6.3. SATERN

- SATERN terminated its weekly net and instead joined the nightly Great Lakes Emergency and Traffic Net.

⁴ These After Action Reports are available, however DHS guidance suggests that AARs should not be publicly available. Contact the Auxcomm EMC for access to these reports.

