
Auxcomm

Working Group 1Q18

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 | 2 |
| 2. Membership | 2 |
| 3. Objectives | 3 |
| 4. Progress to date | 3 |
| 4.1. Capability Assessment | 3 |
| 4.2. New SEOC | 3 |
| 4.3. Support Legislation | 3 |
| 4.4. COM-L | 3 |
| 4.5. MEMP | 4 |
| 4.6. Forms | 4 |
| 4.7. Callout | 4 |
| 4.8. Auxcomm Classes | 4 |
| 5. Future Plans | 4 |
| 6. Individual Agency Activities | 5 |
| 6.1. ARES®/RACES | 5 |
| 6.2. Civil Air Patrol | 6 |
| 6.3. SATERN | 6 |

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.

Much effort during the quarter has focused on considering potential input for the SCIP and working with the EMHSD planner on the Michigan Emergency Management Plan.

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®** - James Kvochick - Michigan Section Manager
- **Civil Air Patrol** - Maj. Shawn Wyant - Director, Communications
- **EMHSD** - Jaclyn Barcroft - MSP/EMHSD
- **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** - Tim Crane - District Emergency Coordinator²
- **2** - Shanon Herron - District Emergency Coordinator
- **3** - Chris Barbb Emergency Coordinator Ogemaw County³
- **5** - Carl Flickinger - District Emergency Coordinator
- **6** - James Duram - District Emergency Coordinator, Emergency Management Coordinator Oceana⁴
- **7** - Michael Dell - District Emergency Coordinator
- **8** - Pete Costa - District Emergency Coordinator
- **NWS-DTX** - Randy Love - District Emergency Coordinator⁵

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 The District Emergency Coordinator position for District 3 is currently vacant. Chris has agreed to represent District 3 in the interim.

⁴ Mr. Duram has asked to be relieved of his District responsibilities. A replacement is expected in the second quarter.

⁵ Michigan's four NWS offices are treated as "Districts" within ARES®.

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/Completed**)
3. Operationalize Auxcomm technology in the new SEOC (**Priority/Completed/Ongoing**)
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 (**2018 update cycle starting**)

Since the initial formation of the working group, a few additional objectives have been added:

8. Update the Michigan Emergency Communications Plan
9. Update the Michigan ARPSC Guidelines
10. Provide input for the SCIP
11. Investigate Everbridge for activation

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

Work on the personnel side of the capability assessment is complete. EMHSD has provided some additional boards that will simplify the repeater power resilience survey, but some work on those boards is needed before they can be rolled out to the ECs.

Since the "Communications Capabilities in Public Facilities" (CCPF) database was prepared to respond to FEMA needs during the previous revision of FEMA's "Michigan Annex", and since that annex is due for revision next year, ECs will again be asked to again provide updates.

4.2. New SEOC

The new SEOC is operational. After action reports from recent exercises have resulted in minor changes.

4.3. Support Legislation

No additional needs arose during the period.

4.4. COM-L

No new COM-L candidates have been identified.

4.5. MEMP

The working group has been interacting with the EMHSD planner responsible for the MEMP to provide appropriate input. The planner joined our in-person meeting at the Interop conference and has also participated in phone conferences.

4.6. Forms

During the annual fall exercise (SET) it was recognized that paper forms matching MI-CIMS forms would be useful for voice transmission when digital transmission is unavailable. Those forms have been developed and are available on the ARES® web site and MI-CIMS. The forms will be tested in an exercise next quarter.

4.7. Callout

The MSP reps indicated that it might make sense to use the state's Everbridge system for callout. To that end, Shanon Herron, who runs such a system for Wayne County, briefed the working group on the administrative requirements of maintaining the contacts.

4.8. Auxcomm Classes

An Auxcomm class was held in Troy in January. 30 students attended the class bringing the total number of Michigan amateurs who have completed the OIC course to 69.

5. Future Plans

Capability Assessment

During the coming quarter, the working group will work with EMHSD to complete the power resilience boards so they can be rolled out to the ECs.

Requests to the ECs to actually provide data will probably be delayed until later in the year as the ECs will be learning [ARES® Connect](#) in the third quarter.

New SEOC

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

- a. Configure and test the Pactor station.
- b. Explore and document the coverage of the new VHF/UHF antennas. work has begun but needs considerable effort to complete.
- c. 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.
- d. Provide Pactor and packet documentation. These are relatively infrequently used capabilities so operators will require fairly detailed instructions.
- e. Expand the digital voice documentation.
- f. 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.

- g. 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.
- h. During the September exercise it was very difficult for operators, especially VHF operators, to copy traffic due to nearby operators also taking traffic. It is expected that an intercom system being installed will alleviate that issue. Also, the potential for spreading out the VHF stations is being discussed.

SCIP

The Michigan Public Safety Communications Interoperability Board has asked the Working Group to provide input for the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). The working group is considering three topics:

1. Provide for reliable communications between the SEOC and the EOCs using a method that is not unduly influenced by solar weather.
2. Develop an auxcomm operators training plan.
3. Identify targets for the number of Auxcomm trainees.

MEMP

The planner responsible for the MEMP has indicated that she will set up working committees for specific sections of the MEMP. Auxcomm expects to participate in that effort.

Exercises

In addition to participating in State exercises, an exercise will be held in April to test voice messaging. Some improvements recommended in the After Action report from the September "Simulated Emergency Test" will be exercised.

6. Individual Agency Activities

6.1. ARES®/RACES

Reporting

For the quarter ended March 31, 31,098 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.

- 8 training
- 7 exercises
- 4 search and rescue
- 15 public service events
- 1 SKYWARN activation
- 8 incidents

While traveling home from the 2018 Michigan Statewide Interoperable Communications Training Conference, a number of ARES members assisted in setting up Red Cross shelters for travelers stranded due to the Mackinac bridge closing.

A number of counties participated in damage assessment following the February flooding events.

Exercises

Among the exercises, the SEOC station was activated for the Palisades Drill #1.

ARES® Connect

ARES® is rolling out a new volunteer management system, probably in late May or Early June. This should significantly assist the ECs, but will take some training and effort. It will also significantly impact reporting. Four Michigan counties are scheduled to beta test the new system in April; the SEC has already begun testing.

6.2. Civil Air Patrol

- CAP participated in a nationwide DoD exercise
- CAP is beginning it's Spring/Summer training missions

6.3. SATERN

- Additional SATERN representatives have joined working group discussions.
- SATERN has begun sending a representative to the statewide traffic nets.