

# Wisconsin East Central ARES/RACES District Bulletin

## February 2019

### FEMA Regions (See Figure 1)

Federal Emergency Management Agency Communications Exercises (COMEX) run in various regions of the country, USUALLY based on (FEMA)Regions.

Wisconsin is in Region 5 along with our neighboring states. Website is <https://www.fema.gov/region-v-il-in-mi-mn-oh-wi>

When COMEX exercises are activated, they are USUALLY on 60 meters and held in conjunction with MARS stations. The nets do not run as a usual ARES/RACES nets, but more toward the MARS style nets.

The net will usually ask for information of the infrastructure. A quick report if electricity, water, sewer and communications are operating normally or are experiencing problems. As this is an exercise primarily to check communications, just give a truthful report of what is currently happening. They also ask for weather at the nearest airport. You can use the internet-based weather or if within 10 miles or so you can tune into the Automatic Terminal Information System (ATIS) and give that report. You can find the ATIS frequencies on line for the associated airport. The report is also updated and current on line.

They may ask for the the Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) codes for the county you reside in. Go to <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/codes/cou.html> to find your county code. I recommend you also put it in your County ARES Communication Plan for quick reference.

### Skywarn 2019

We have not heard of any major changes to the National Weather Skywarn Program for this year. For now let us assume the plans and reporting procedures for 2018 are still good.

I would recommend all counties be aware that other spotting groups are out there and don't work a "zone defense" by county as we do. Some teams are good some not too good and some are real loose cannons.

What separates ARES from other groups is discipline and maintaining standards of conduct.

It is up to the discretion of Net Control as to take reports from these other teams but expect poor information that does not match our and the NWS report format. Sometimes these people can argue on their "right" to give any old report. Please use discretion, but if they are disruptive or performing in an unsafe manner, feel free to refuse their reports and ask them to leave the net. Feel free to pass on their call sign to me to forward further.

Please do have a tabletop or two of your Skywarn plan with your team every year. Have a member act as a "bad boy" and give reports so Net Control can learn how to deal with these types.

And Safety First! Make sure all members understand their personal safety take priority over the reports! It makes no sense putting yourself in danger, it won't stop the storm!



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### Calendar for 2019

I will be putting together a calendar for 2019 on all activities in the District and for WI ARES/RACES state sponsored activities.

This will be tool for all ARES member that would like to participate in neighboring counties. This will also allow all County EC's to advertise for activities they will need additional manpower.

We can also use ARES CONNECT for all activities. This will aid all users to learn the ARES CONNECT system.

The calendar will be updated by the first of the month unless a special event is added with short notice.

### Take Five!

(Not just the best song ever written!)

Recently we had a couple of hams talking about APRS on a repeater in the area. They had some often-repeated misconceptions of APRS so I thought I would let them know my experiences. However as fast as one guy let go of the mic button the other one was talking! I drove about 20 miles and could not get into the conversation! A wide coverage repeater was tied up for about 23 minutes straight with no chance of another person entering the conversation. They paused just long enough for the repeater to not time out.

This happens often on nets and informal conversations on repeaters. In most cases it is not a hazard but this type of quick on the trigger responses is also heard during planned events and Skywarn nets. This causes doubling on the repeater and need to repeat information over and over.

Easy solution - Take Five! When a person ceases talking, count to 5 and if no one breaks in, resume the conversation!

This method is especially helpful during scheduled events when using the ICS 309 to

record that a conversation is taking place. And it allows Emergency or priority traffic to break in or allow others to join in the conversation.

### Message Handling

Practice Practice Practice!

For all ARES/RACES does our basic foundation is handling traffic to aid served agencies. This can be Emergency Management, hospitals, Fire or Police Departments, health departments etc.

it is imperative we practice on both the ICS 213 form and the ARRL Radiograms. Some quick tips to aid us.

To control your speed when sending messages, write it on scratch paper while sending it. This will keep you at the same speed as those on the receiving side!

Record the net and traffic! Kirby KC9QFH from Winnebago Co uses his smart phone to record the net during the traffic portion. This allows a chance to double check the traffic without tying up a net. At a recent meeting he demonstrated this with a message recorded back in November.

Practice fun messages: Send a birthday greeting to a ham friend.

Check into traffic nets: Badger Emergency Net at 1200 every day 3.985.0 MHZ. Or the Wisconsin Sideband Net 1700 daily same frequency (unless band conditions are poor when they move to 160 meters at 1.956).

### Mini SET

I am looking at putting together a Mini-Simulated Emergency Test in April in conjunction with the NWS Severe Weather Week. Let me know if your county will participate on the Thursday after the evening statewide tornado drill.

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Figure 1  
FEMA REGION MAP