

Transitioning from RACES/ARES to an Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS)

Presentation to the
Montgomery Amateur Radio Club
Montgomery County, Maryland
January 15, 2014

Current ACS Steering Committee

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Topics

- A brief history of RACES/ARES in Montgomery County — what it was and why it went away
- Why Amateur Radio remains important to the community as an emergency resource
- Why this is the right time for a new beginning
- Our vision for what is needed and how we propose to get there

In the Past ...

Montgomery County RACES/ARES (**MCRA**) enjoyed a beneficial relationship with Montgomery County Government ...

... a relationship based on **mutual trust** and a **defined mission** for Amateur Radio in the County's **Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)**.

MCRA — a proud history ...

- Continuously served from the early days of the Cold War through the 1990s
- In the 1980s, we had 140 members on the roster, 40 or so who were active and fully qualified to serve in a number of roles
- We partnered with EM professionals as the old Civil Defense model of cold-war preparedness evolved into the modern EM focus on all-hazards preparedness

A proud history ...

- Our organization was held up by ARRL as a national model of excellence
- We played a significant support role
 - in many emergency operations
 - in the development of the National Disaster Medical System as well as Amateur Radio digital communications modes

So what went wrong?

- Unfortunately, MCRA was the victim of classic organizational pitfalls
 - Our role was severely limited by loss of mutual trust
 - Our members fell away as opportunities to serve dwindled (erosion of mission)
 - County emergency management became inwardly focused as the government underwent repeated restructuring

Time for the phoenix to rise?

- Leadership changes in the county's newly established **Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS)**
- A tenet of emergency management doctrine that there is a fundamental need for volunteer communicators
- But what is the need for volunteer communicators?

Examples of defined missions for Amateur Radio

- Weather intelligence (input to OEMHS and SKYWARN)
- Distributed situational awareness and damage assessments in large-scale events
- Shelter communications
- Health and Welfare traffic

Examples of defined missions for Amateur Radio (cont'd)

- Patient tracking and inter-hospital coordination in mass casualty incidents
- Backup communications in the event of major telephone outages or overload
- Behind-the-scenes communications during disaster exercises

Examples of defined missions for Amateur Radio (cont'd)

- Communications support for SAR operations
- Surge capacity for communications support in disaster operations — voice, video, data between field and EOC, or between EOC and other organizations involved in disaster response
 - Often with a need for independence from commercial or government infrastructure

Are we prepared?

Myth



Reality

- Surge capability
- Technical resources
- All-Modes Communications systems, not just radios

Are we prepared?

Myth:

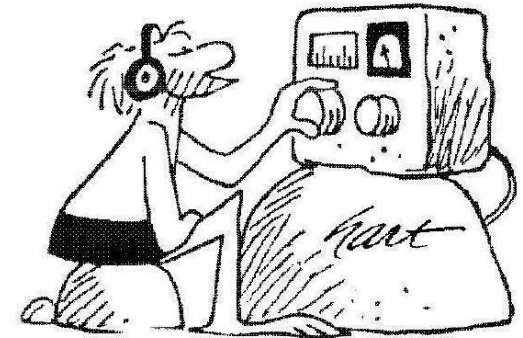


Ready reserve of
trained operators

Reality:

- Often not as skilled or well equipped as we think we are
- Skills may not be aligned with needs

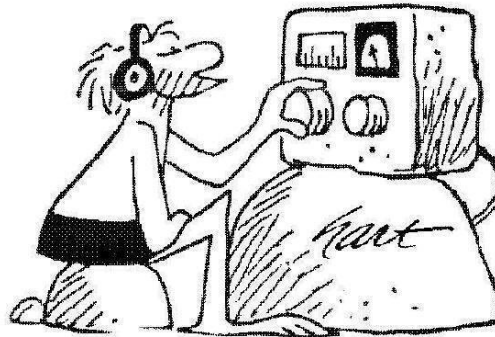
Whom do you trust?



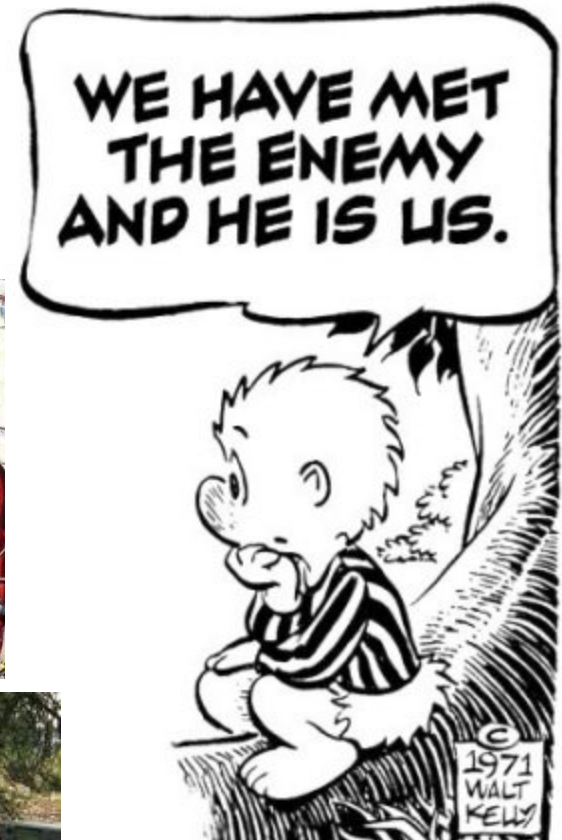
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Whom do you trust?



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Trust — a two-way street

- How do we establish trust?
 - Our served agencies must trust that we have the integrity and capability to carry out defined roles
 - We must trust that our served agencies will provide key support, fulfill commitments, and allow us to innovate



Look Who's Communicating!



Look Who's Communicating!



What is **RACES**?


- **Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service**
- Founded in 1952 as by U.S. government
- Defined in FCC rules 97.3(a)(38) as:
A radio service using amateur stations for civil defense communications during periods of local, regional or national civil emergencies
- Provides emergency communications to local or state civil-preparedness agencies



The typical Amateur Radio license grants the bearer both operator and station privileges, but FCC makes a distinction between the two.

Call Sign / Number	Grant Date	Expiration Date	File Number	Print Date	Effective Date
KN3LL	01-18-2012	03-10-2022	0005031725	01-18-2012	01-18-2012
Operator Privileges Amateur Extra		Station Privileges PRIMARY	THIS LICENSE IS NOT TRANSFERABLE Special Conditions / Endorsements: NONE		
TAYLOR JR, ALFORD R 910 GRANDIN AVE ROCKVILLE, MD 20851					
AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE FCC Registration Number (FRN): 0003991981					
FCC 660 - May 2007			(Licensee's Signature) FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION		

Fold - Here



Communications in RACES are permitted only when three conditions are met:

- The station is licensed in the Amateur Radio Service and certified by a civil defense organization as being registered with that organization;
- The station is operated by a licensed Amateur Radio operator who is certified by a civil defense organization as enrolled in that organization; and
- The communications transmitted by the station have been authorized by the civil defense organization.

Now let's turn to **ARES** ...

Amateur **R**adio **E**mergency **S**ervice

- Founded by ARRL in 1935
- Consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in public interest when disaster strikes
- Membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization is not required to join ARES or participate in ARES activities
- ARRL membership is required for leadership appointments

ARES has:

- no constitution
- no bylaws
- an incompletely defined structure
- few operational procedures
- a mission that is defined only in the broadest of terms

But ARES does provide:

- a framework for hams at the local level to come together and organize to prepare for emergencies, and
- a useful means for coordination of these efforts at the regional and national level

ARES Organization

- Three levels of ARES organization—*section, district and local*.
 - At section level, **Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC)** is appointed by **Section Manager (SM)** and works under his or her supervision.
 - SM is elected by ARRL section members.
 - **Md/DC SM is Jim Cross, WI3N.**
 - In most sections, SM delegates to SEC administration of section emergency plan and authority to appoint **District Emergency Coordinators (DECs)** and local **Emergency Coordinators (ECs)** to help run section ARES programs.
 - **Md/DC SEC is Jim Montgomery, WB3KAS**
 - **MC EC is Fred Bader, K3CSX**

and RACES ~~versus~~ ARES

- There is only one pool of Amateur Radio operators. We represent a valuable potential resource to serve our community.
- The RACES and ARES concepts provide useful and complementary means to realize that potential.
- If Amateur Radio is a valuable coin, RACES and ARES are two sides of that coin.

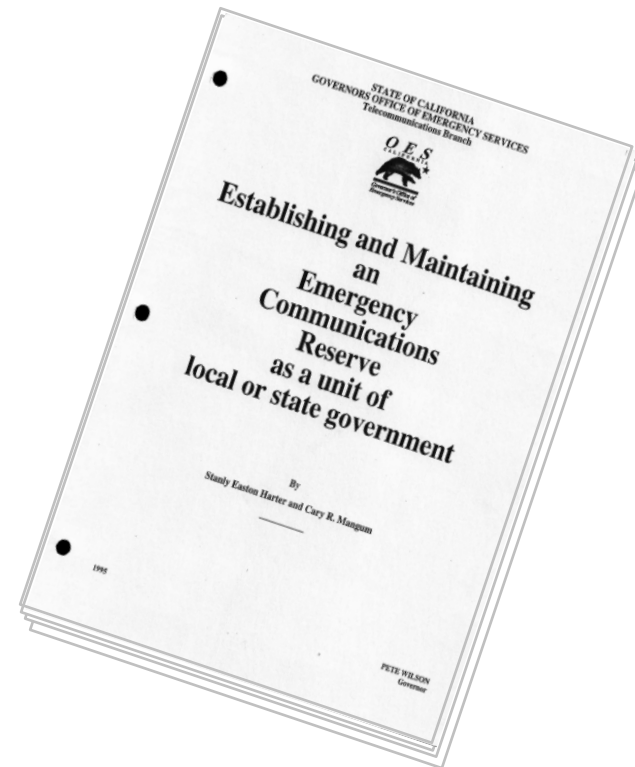
Ok, great.

Now we see how **RACES** and **ARES** fit together.

So what is **ACS** all about?

Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) Concept

- Originated in California in the 1980s
- Envisioned a voluntary reserve unit able to provide a range of telecom capabilities to state and local governments
- Not limited to radio-based communications!
- Focused on **technical** as well as **operational** resources



Examples of ACS operational roles that don't involve Amateur Radio

- Supporting telephone reception and logistics at the EOC
- Staffing of call center or hot line
- Wrangling data or video to meet the needs of served agencies

Examples of ACS technical roles that don't involve Amateur Radio

- Developing cache of equipment to support operations mentioned above
- Furnishing critical facilities, such as hospitals, with equipment such as permanently installed antennas to permit operations on Amateur Radio frequencies

Examples of ACS technical roles that don't involve Amateur Radio (cont'd)

- Developing high-speed wireless data networks that are independent of existing infrastructure to backup critical data communications.
- Providing communications, infrastructure, and logistical support for operations in the field (e.g., setting up shelters, power distribution, telephone, computer, and radio facilities)

Examples of ACS technical roles that don't involve Amateur Radio (cont'd)

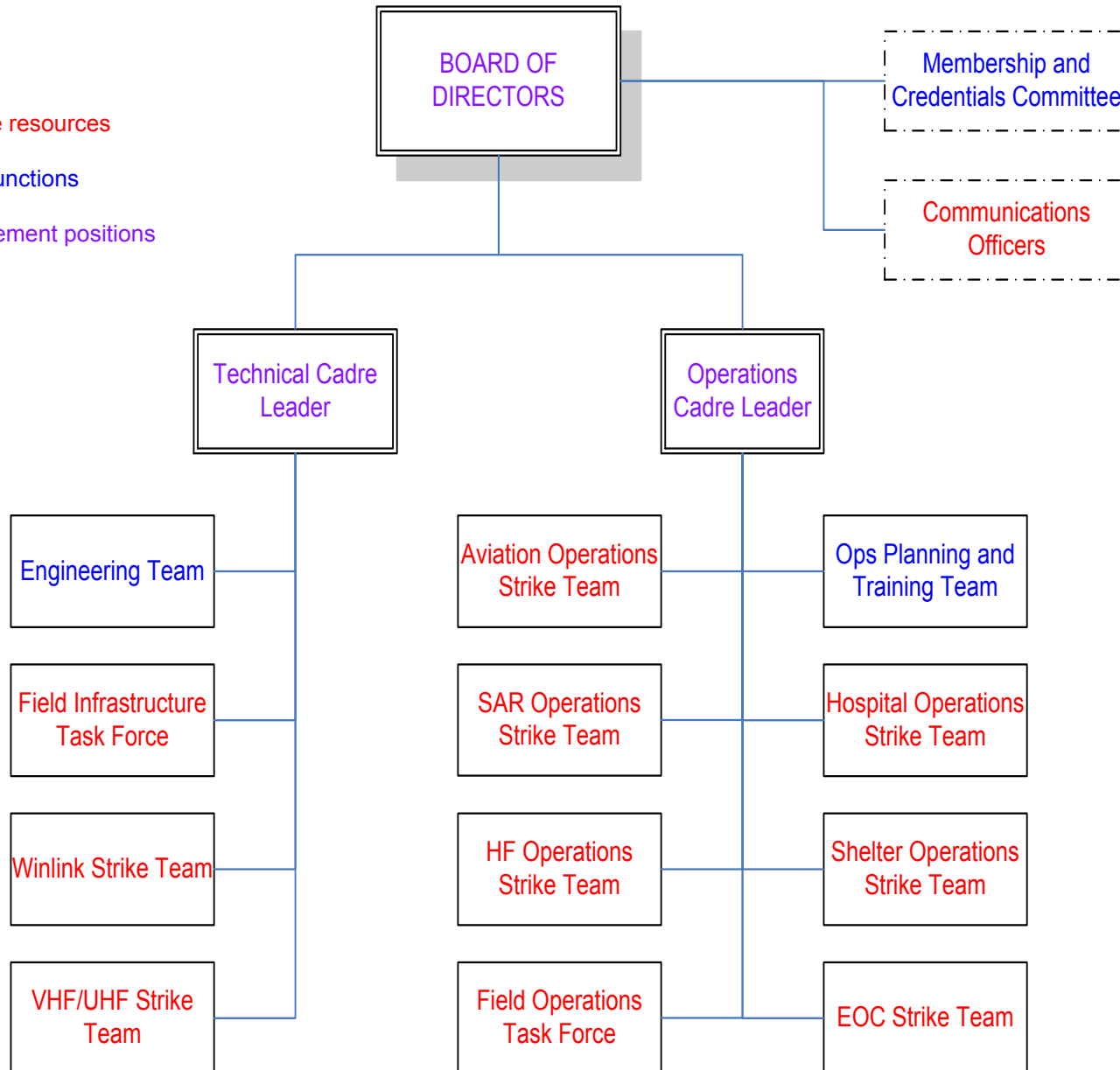
- Improve utilization of **NOAA Weather Radio (NWR)**
 - Developing capability to provide civil emergency announcements via NWR
 - Developing programs to deploy NWR alert systems in Government and private buildings throughout Montgomery County
 - Instituting public awareness campaign to encourage County residents to acquire NWRs for their homes.

ACS Proposed Organizational Structure

RED signifies deployable resources

BLUE signifies support functions

VIOLET signifies management positions



MC ACS Membership

- Any person over the age of [TBD] who lives or works in Montgomery County and has an interest in supporting the ACS mission may be an ACS member
- Membership may also be granted to individuals who serve as liaisons between MC ACS and allied organizations in neighboring jurisdictions
- Organizations may also be members

MC ACS Individual Membership

Individual memberships in MC ACS may be characterized by two kinds of credentials:

- *Interest Group Affiliations* are a list of your memberships in special interest groups within MC ACS and/or allied organizations
- *Capability Endorsements* identify you as being qualified to perform in a particular role.

Examples of Interest Group Affiliations

MC ACS Affiliations	Affiliations with Allied Organizations
Engineering Team (non-deployable) Communications Officer EOC Strike Team Field Operations Task Force	CERT Red Cross Salvation Army Baptist Disaster Relief NWS Skywarn program

Examples of Capability Endorsements

Authorized driver of fleet vehicles
Winlink operator
Net control operator
Licensed electrician

Who Else Uses ACS Model?

- Baltimore County, MD
- Arlington County, VA
- Coweta County, GA
- Sarasota County, FL
- Pinellas County, FL
- Seattle, WA
- Shoreline, WA
- Carter County, TN
- Marion County, IN
- Delta Township, MI
- State of Pennsylvania
- Etc., etc....

So how do we get there?

- Developing support among stakeholders for ACS concept
- Fleshing out organizational structure and foundational documents
- Advertising widely for participation by telecom businesses and other identified organizations having appropriate resources

ACS can independently begin the transitioning process by

- Developing robust training programs
- Encouraging more participation in weekly nets
- Improving dialogue with OEMHS staff by
 - Participating in County training classes and exercises
 - Becoming familiar with **National Incident Management System (NIMS)** and **Incident Command System (ICS)**
- Taking control of membership roster independent of OEMHS (at least temporarily)
- Building capacity to execute self-defined missions

Questions and Discussion

[If you have questions, comments or suggestions, please contact one of the ACS Steering Committee members]