
CQ BARS

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President's Corner

I want to start this month by thanking Toni Hamilton WX9WRN for taking the time to put together some Skywarn training for our meeting last month. I like the idea of having a short program on something related to what we do at each meeting, and Toni's subject was certainly timely. My psychic skills are not what they used to be, so if you have an idea for a program, don't wait for me to call you, please contact me.

The Skywarn season has again caused some discussion concerning the short staffing situation at Fire Station #5 during severe weather events. B.A.R.S. needs to increase the number of ham radio operators who are eligible to respond to fire station #5 during severe weather events. Currently, there are only two people with access to the radio room, and occasionally one or both of them are unavailable to respond. I believe we need to increase the number to six or eight so that we can continue to provide back-up coverage to the net control operator, and liaison services to the National Weather Service and the Village of Bolingbrook EMA.

Since the last meeting, two members, Jason Stoddard, KB9JHV and Elden P Laffoon, Sr., WA9IQL have agreed to help fill some of the vacancies. Thanks for volunteering to help your club and your community.

Four spots still remain. Should your name be attached to one of them?

On a different subject, I know we are called "Amateur" radio operators because we do not get paid for our services. However, I believe that each of us tries to be as "Professional" in his/her radio skills as possible given the other demands placed upon us in our everyday life. With that thought in mind, I would like to close this month's message with an excerpt from the summary section of an article I read recently entitled "5 Characteristics of a Professional."

"The future belongs to the competent. We need to be multifaceted in our competence and become charismatic communicators with technical competence and excellent people skills, especially in negotiating. This means developing the habit of learning everywhere, every day."

Are you ready for the future? Think about it.

See you on the Radio

Dale, KB9LMK

Secretary's Column

I'm omitting my column this month to allow room for 2 items submitted by our membership. Thank you both for your submission!!

73's for this month

Don - N9VJV

Last Months Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened at 19:00 hours by KB9LMK (Dale). Introductions followed. Officers present were: KB9JHV (Jason), and N9VJV (Don). Also present at the meeting were:

KB9LMK	KC9GHB	KA9J
KB9JLB	WA9IL	KA9SFW
KC9ERT	N9LJY	WB9PDD
KA9CRU	KC9GSL	K9GHZ
KC9GMD	KB9JHV	N9ZMM
WD9IWC	KC9GRH	K9GHX
KA9BHD	KC9IDF	WB9PWQ

KC9IDG	AA8X	KC9EWY
WA9IQL	KC9CCH	N9VJV

A motion to accept the minutes as published in CQ Bars was made by N9ZMM (Archie), seconded by KB9JLB (Barb) and carried.

The Treasurer's Report was presented by KB9JHV (Jason). A motion to accept as presented was made by WA9IL (John), seconded by KA9SFW (Jim), and carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

2 meter: KB9LMK reported that the machine was up and running.

220/440 WA9IL (John) reported that the 220 machine was coming up but had no audio. The 440 machine is a bit noisy. John will be able to get into the repeater site with the help of Bob Mierop. He found that the hotels were not suitable for relocating the repeaters because of height. At this time the water towers is the best option.

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Net Control: N9ZMM (Archie) and WD9IWC (John) reported that checkins have steadily been improving. John distributed the prizes.

Hamfest: N9LJY (Tom) reported that there was nothing new. He needs volunteers to help create a layout for the new location. WA9IL (John), KA9SFW (Jim), and KB9JLB (Barb) volunteered. If anyone needs flyers see Tom. The tickets will be ready soon. Tables and chairs have been ordered. The VE room is reserved. The kitchen facilities will not be used.

Education: No Report.

VE: KB9LMK (Dale) reported that the last test session had no candidates

Field Day: N9LJY (Tom) reported it will be in Veteran's. Needs people for setup, band chairpersons, Operators, Equipment. KA9SFW will bring forms for signup. He needs to know how many people to expect for meals. N9NPP (Matt) will need to find another place to store the towers after field day. He's been storing them in his yard for the last several years.

Public Relations: WA9IQL (Elden) reported that the web site has been updated with everything up to date. The next VE session has been added. The link to the NIU web page has been corrected. WA9IL's web page is there and the link works. N9LJY's banner has been added. Skywarn Appreciation Day info has been added. The NWS Spotter classes have been added. Echolink information has been added. The N2CQ Contest Calendar has been updated. A 'Past Presidents Honor Roll' has been added but he needs info to fill in the missing years. Please see him or E-Mail the webperson if you can help fill in the blanks. A total of 1274 hits have been recorded since 10/10/2005. It was requested and agreed that the music will be removed from the home page but left in place on the rest of the pages.

Skywarn WX9WRN (Toni) brought a Skywarn training video and it was viewed after the close of the meeting. She will try to get permission to make copies.

Misc.: None.

OLD BUSINESS:

A moment of silence was held in remembrance of K9MZ (Ex N9OCL) Mark O'Donnel who passed away last month. JN9LJY (Tom) and KA9J (Frank) each spoke briefly on his life and club relationship. Mark was a former BARS President and an especially talented CW operator. N9LJY (Tom) and WA9IL (John) will be assisting his widow in the sale of his equipment. A list with rices and photos will be available on WA9IL.COM. A motion to close old business was made by KB9JLB (Barb), seconded by WA9IL (John) and carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

WA9IL reported that he has photos from several Field Day and Hamfest activities on his web page WA9IL.com. A motion to close new business was made by KA9SFW (Jim), seconded by KB9JLB (Barb) and seconded.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by N9LJY (Tom), seconded by KB9JLB (Barb) and seconded.

Respectfully submitted,
Don, N9VJV
Secretary

CQ BARS

From the CQ Newsroom... (Courtesy of Elden WA9IQL)

The White House today released its review of the federal response to Hurricane Katrina, which, according to a statement, "identifies the systemic problems in Federal emergency preparedness and response revealed by Hurricane Katrina - and the best solutions to address them." The report included 17 lessons the Executive Branch learned after reviewing and analyzing the response to Katrina; made 125 specific recommendations to the President, and identified 11 critical actions to be completed before the first day of the 2006 hurricane season.

The report also included a section titled, "What Went Right" in the Katrina response, which singled out Amateur Radio Operators for particular praise:

"Other organizations worked tirelessly to assist emergency responders that, due to the storm, did not have the equipment and means to effectively carry out their duties. Amateur Radio Operators from both the Amateur Radio Emergency Service and the American Radio Relay League monitored distress calls and rerouted emergency requests for assistance throughout the U.S. until messages were received by emergency response personnel. A distress call made from a cell phone on a rooftop in New Orleans to Baton Rouge was relayed, via Ham Radio, from Louisiana to Oregon, then Utah, and finally back to emergency personnel in Louisiana, who rescued the 15 stranded victims. Ham Radio Operators voluntarily manned the Amateur Radio stations at sites such as the National Hurricane Center, Hurricane Watch Net, Waterway Net, Skywarn and the Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network."

Finally, the report identified three immediate priorities:

- 1) Implementing a comprehensive National Preparedness System "to make certain that we have a fully national system that ensures unity of effort in preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters;"
- 2) 2) Creating a "Culture of Preparedness" that "emphasizes that the entire Nation - at all levels of government, the private sector, communities, and individual citizens - shares common goals and responsibilities for homeland security;" and
- 3) 3) Implement corrective actions "to ensure we do not repeat the problems encountered during Hurricane Katrina."

A White House fact sheet summarizing the report is available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060223.html>.

From KA9ZJJ (Marti)

It was the fourth night after Hurricane Katrina, and something like a thousand patients, doctors and staff were trapped at Medical Center Louisiana in downtown New Orleans, surrounded by floodwaters. Outside, reports were grim. People were drowning in their attics. Inside the hospital, there was no running water, no power, no phones and no Internet. Cell phones didn't work. Each day the authorities said evacuations were about to begin, but nothing happened.

The staff thought they'd seen everything the disaster could bring. Then, in the middle of the night, a pregnant woman dragged herself out of the foul, dark water surrounding the center's Charity Hospital, having managed to swim several blocks from her home, where she had been trapped. She was in labor and the pain was intensifying. By flashlight, doctors quickly determined that she needed a Caesarean section. But with no running water, no electricity, and no way to clean her up or to sterilize instruments, surgery was out of the question. The doctors conferred, and then sent Tim Butcher, at that time Charity's emergency operations director, upstairs to a conference room where a 5-foot-3-inch,

middle-aged jazz musician, known for his cigarette-rasped voice and salty language, was sleeping on an air mattress. "Richard, wake up," Butcher said. "We need you."

Richard Webb, who happens to be legally blind, is one of the nation's more than 660,000 licensed amateur radio operators. (They're nicknamed "hams" for reasons that are unclear.) As an amateur radio operator and a member of the Mobile Maritime Network, Webb regularly relays messages from small boats, occasionally participates in small-vessel rescue operations and helps with tracking hurricanes.

Pitching in and helping is a long tradition among hams, particularly in times of emergency. In fact, the Federal Communications Commission's regulatory charge to amateur radio operators urges them to enhance communication, "particularly with respect to providing emergency communications." Whether it's an earthquake or a forest fire, a blizzard or a hurricane, when usual communication systems go down, ham radio operators are up, ready to connect the scene of disaster with the outside world. As the series of recent emergencies and other natural disasters so amply illustrates, hams are often the sole means of communication from disaster sites. Within minutes of the first impact in the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001—which put the radio and phone towers atop the building out of commission—ham radio operators set up an emergency network that authorities used to coordinate rescue operations.

When the phone lines are down and "wireless" takes on a whole new meaning, when cell phone and PDA networks fail and batteries go dead, when the lights go out, authorities fall back on this seemingly antiquated but always reliable form of communication. Amateur radio becomes quite literally a lifeline. "Most communications systems are all going through some common chokepoint," says Allen Pitts, media and public relations manager of the American Radio Relay League. Whether it's a telephone switchboard, an Internet relay or a radio tower, "knock out that chokepoint, and the whole system fails," he says. Rather than relying on a network, each ham operator has a complete, self-contained transmitting and receiving station. "There is no chokepoint," says Pitts. "They are like ants at a picnic. You can knock out some, many or even most of them, and they still get to the food. Each one is a mobile, independent unit working in cooperation for a common goal."

Understandably, many government agencies and hospitals have enlisted amateur radio operators to be on call for emergencies. When the two hospitals making up New Orleans' Medical Center—University and Charity hospitals—decided to set up their station two years ago, they looked around for volunteers to run it. Richard Webb and his wife, Kathleen Anderson, who is also a ham, raised their hands. They set up the station and tested it every week or so.

The night before Katrina hit, Webb pushed Anderson—she uses a wheelchair—to their van and she drove them to the hospital from their small home in suburban Slidell, Louisiana. Pretty much every other vehicle they encountered during that 30-mile trip was heading out of, not into, downtown New Orleans. At the hospital, this unlikely A-Team—a blind man and a woman in a wheelchair—set up their antennas and gasoline-fired generators, got on the air, tracked the approaching storm and rode it out. Like much of New Orleans, the hospital suffered relatively little damage from Katrina directly. Then the levees broke. Soon the hospital was isolated, an island surrounded by water 10 feet deep in places. (And, yes, when the power went out, a hospital staffer did offer Webb a flashlight. "Thanks," he said, "but I don't need it.")

Webb and Anderson kept communications going 20 hours a day, relaying messages to and from the state command center in Baton Rouge. They passed along the hospital staff's requests for food, drinkable water, medicine, bedding, cleaning supplies and more. Authorities repeatedly told Webb that rescuers were coming to evacuate the hospital—later that day, in a few hours,

the next day—but day after day, nobody showed up. Coast Guard boats delivered supplies, and took out a handful of patients who needed critical care, including babies in incubators.

Webb and Anderson listened in on the emergency networks and heard how other hams, including many who drove in from all over the country, were a vital part of numerous rescues. In hundreds of cases, people trapped by floodwaters in homes or on rooftops tried calling 911 on their cell phones. The calls wouldn't go through. So they called relatives in other parts of the country, sometimes a thousand miles away, and the relatives in turn dialed 911. Their local emergency dispatchers then would pass along messages to ham radio operators who contacted rescuers in New Orleans: There are three people trapped in an attic at this address . . . five on the roof of this building . . . 15 on an overpass at this intersection.

A word about all this relaying. While most of today's sophisticated communications equipment uses horizon-to-horizon, line-of-sight radio frequencies, ham radio must rely on lower frequencies for long-distance transmission. "Low-frequency waves do an interesting thing," says Pitts. "They ricochet. These waves bounce off the ionosphere, 60 miles over your head." Depending on atmospheric conditions, some days you can communicate more clearly with another ham operator in Kenya than with your buddy across town. "By using different frequencies, directions and means, ham operators learn the art form of getting them to bounce where they want them to go," Pitts says.

Webb took one call from a teenager who had a brand-new license with no kind of emergency training. He was in a school building with a number of other people, and nobody knew they were there. Two babies needed formula, and an elderly man needed a respirator. Webb relayed the call, and the group was rescued. As the week wore on—the storm hit on a Monday night—more and more people began stopping by Webb's radio room, the only link to the outside world. When he could, he sent out word from hospital staffers and patients to their families: I'm at the hospital, I'm OK, I hope to be evacuated soon, I'll call you when I can. Hams who received the messages in other parts of the country telephoned or e-mailed the families.

A number of people tried to pay Webb for sending out their messages. "Sorry, can't take it," he'd growl. "Not allowed. I'm strictly a volunteer."

Sometimes during lulls between radio transmissions he pulled out his guitar. Small crowds gathered, welcoming the diversion. Webb became a rare source of light and calm in the darkness and confusion of a disaster scene.

The night the woman in labor swam to the hospital, Tim Butcher shook Richard Webb awake and told him that she needed a helicopter. "We have a two-hour window to get her out of here," Butcher said. Otherwise the mother would probably die, and the baby might, too. Webb ran to his radio, broke in on the network, and tried to relay a message to anyone.

On this evening, the first ham that Webb could reach was a fellow member of the Mobile Maritime Network in Texas. The Texas ham contacted a Network member in Cleveland—who was also an auxiliary Coast Guard officer. The Cleveland ham contacted his superior officers, and within a short time the patient was being airlifted to another hospital, where she had a C-section. At last report both mother and baby were doing well.

Webb saved one life that night, Butcher says, maybe two. And no one knows how many other people at the hospital might have died if Webb and his radio had not been there. Butcher's sure of one thing: "Richard is a real hero."

Some articles courtesy of the ARRL.