

Minutes of the EMCOMM Meeting January 24, 2015
The Jolly Ox, Lexington VA
Steve Presti and Glen Sage, Presenters

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The following people were present:

W4SVP, Steve, K4LXG, Ellsworth, W4GHS, Glen, KA4YNO, Hal, WA4RTS, Geep, KE4YRX Jim, KK4YCG, Richard, KJ4KWD, Mike, WW4GW, Gordon KM4DZD, John, KJ4KWB, Allen, AD4TJ, David, KN4FM, Gerald, K4RMY, Brian, K4DOD, Rodney, AJ4HJ, Phillip and AI4RC, Danny. Apologies in advance for anyone I missed or fat-fingered callsigns.

Steve opened the meeting at 11:45. This idea was started at Vinton hamfest, and there has been one additional meeting at the Red Cross building in Roanoke.

Manpower is an issue that needs to be addressed, as well as cooperation between jurisdictions, which would be critical in widespread disaster. At the second meeting, the group decided that a database of active EMCOMM workers was needed both to organize the ARRL ARES group as well as obtain information on other communications groups, such as SATERN, LDS, etc.

Glen began working with a Josh Greer, KM4AZW who was web knowledgeable and got something done! The new EMCOMM site is now active and ready to accept sign ins from those interested in emergency and disaster communications.

Chris Hanslits was working on such a project but got little support from current leadership and after a job change became necessary, was not able to continue with the project. The current section webmaster was also, apparently, less than interested in the project.

Glen stated there is a system already in use in several states that was open source and available, so it became the model for the system that is in place. It still needs some revision to meet our needs but is completely adequate to begin recruiting communicators to register and share their information. It works well in North Carolina, South Carolina and Colorado so far. It can be customized as needed by Josh, KM4AZW.

This database doesn't require a lot of active management to make it work. The site address is www.vaemcomm.org, and is a secure site. Glen set the site up and has paid for 2 years of service out his own pocket. Thank you Glen for taking the initiative to get this going and absorbing the cost.

Those who register are asked to enter as much data as possible to make the

database useful. Just entering name and callsign with an email address is really not sufficient.

While the site asks for a great deal of information, be assured that the information is secure and will not be shared outside of the EMCOMM management group. Those communicators who are administrators for their service, i.e. DEC or SEC in the ARES service, or supervisor types in other services, can enter their title and will be vetted to manage the site. Glen handles the vetting so please send him an email at w4ghs@arrl.org with your job title and any supporting information about your position when you register, to get management status.

Once you have received that status, you can search the database on a number of different fields, send emails to individuals or groups, and I believe it can send text messages to those who are text capable. The data can be sorted in a number of ways, and you can download the entire database in a spreadsheet or comma separated format so it will be available to you for management purposes when off line, or when the Internet takes a vacation.

The objective is to provide a framework for ARES and other communications groups in Virginia to do their jobs a little better and to help organize communications cooperation between groups for the greater good.

Steve suggested that groups conduct multiple SETs throughout the year rather than waiting until October for the "official" SET.

(As an observation, the District 12 group does many race events, most of them full day or two day events and considers them to be SETS, the Rockingham folks do the same, and we do one together, the Grindstone 100 mile foot race)

Lots of young people are getting licensed who need training, and this database could be away to identify and organize them. Many new hams have absolutely no training and no impetus to get involved in public service, so getting them interested in registering and being involved has to be a good thing.

Training -- how to set up a home or mobile station and operate it efficiently in an emergency, how to participate in a communications net, how to interact with local officials to give a good impression of Amateur Radio, all of these are extremely important and need to be taught to our new members. Many newer folks don't learn anything but enough to pass the test.

Please encourage all of the communicators you interact with to register and become available to help. They should understand that the public service events we all do serve as training exercises for "the big one" and that every time people go into the field to help with an event, there is something to be learned.

Steve and Glen gave a demonstration of the website and showed the group how to register and complete the requested information.

When you log onto the site, select "Registration," which will take you to the log in page. UNDER the login is the new registration button, which, when clicked, will take you to a page that allows you to enter your username, which should be your Amateur Radio callsign (and NOT your email address) if you have one. You select your own password and confirm it, then enter your email address at the bottom, and you have registered.

Now continue on using the "update information" button to enter your data. Again, as complete as possible is what is asked. And, to clear up a question on the equipment page, a Kestrel is a model of hand held weather station, for you weather folks.

There is currently no statewide emergency ID card, so that field is generally answered "no."

AUXCOMM is a federally vetted program available to all states and is accepted by FEMA. The state SWIC has to request that the course be available, and it is free to those who take it to get certified. Glen has requested numerous times to various people that Virginia take advantage of the training, but to no avail. It was suggested that the legislators should be asked to pressure the powers that be to get this training available. Geep mentioned John Edwards, who was instrumental in getting the statewide ID in place. Bob Ham, former ASEC in the Roanoke area before the Amato folks, was close to Senator Edwards and might be able to work with us on this.

It is a 20 hour course and will be available at Dayton but to take it, candidates need to arrive three days early, must have to have FEMA certifications for the 100, 200, 700 and 800 classes, a general class license and can wear no affiliation logo when you take the class. The class is free.

Such a class provides consistent training nationwide and the information is available on the web (no website address mentioned). There is probably enough information on the site to teach the class. Again, we need some additional leverage to get the SWIC and VDEM off their behinds to offer this training. Steve noted that FEMA classes don't expire but they recommend taking again to refresh with new information from time to time.

ARRL EC 105 and others require Section Manager approval, but good luck with getting that. Our current SM does not respond to requests.

Glen encouraged everyone to send in training/emergency planning net information to him to be included on the nets section of the EMCOMM site. Make sure to include information on things like IRLP or ECHOLINK on repeaters, etc.

Glen noted that there is a training net on IRLP channel 9419, known as the Raleigh Reflector or the East Coast Reflector on Monday night at 8 pm, all welcome if you can get in via IRLP. The 442.650 repeater on Apple Orchard Mountain does have IRLP but no one knew how to access it, Geep will check to see if it is open for uses like this one.

Please send Glen news and information to be put on the EMCOMM website in the news section.

Ellsworth suggested an advisory board made up of reps from the various groups to guide things. Steve said that the objective was to eliminate a special interest group, rather, everyone wanted to use the system to train people and have them come together more easily in an emergency to share resources. He did not think an advisory board was needed. Bryan looks at this resource as a clearinghouse for the state. Anyone in EMCOMM can use it as a resource, once properly registered and vetted. The common thread is an Amateur Radio license and a desire to serve. The database will be useful to put together an emergency response anywhere in the state

The need for a change in SM leadership was discussed. Steve reported that a petition from a number of Amateurs was submitted to Carl requesting that he step down, to which there was no response. The next step was to notify the ARRL of the desire within the section for a recall, and Dave Sumner K1ZZ received a certified letter stating that a petition for recall was being prepared. Steve is working to get 150 signatures on the petition, which is more than the required number. Many of us signed the document at the meeting. You must be an ARRL member to participate in the request. Steve will be soliciting signatures at the Richmond Frostfest, provided Carl, once receiving notice from the League that a petition is being circulated, does not step down prior to that.

Glenn suggested Steve be the "convener" for additional meetings. Today's meeting place is fairly central to those who have participated so far, but in order to get the rest of the state involved, we'll probably have to find something more central. Please send announcements to Glen as well as ARES or emergency training nets in your area.

Bryan noted that there would be a regional meeting in Harrisonburg at the Rockingham County Fire/Rescue Training Room 20, East Gay Street, Harrisonburg at 6 pm on Friday, February 27th. Bryan will introduce the website and concept that has been put forth to ARES and other groups in the area.

The meeting was adjourned around 2 pm.

Submitted as respectfully and accurately as I can!

Geep Howell WA4RTS DEC 12 [Return to HOME](#)