

ARES/RACES Notes for 02/25/2009

News and Announcements

1) Upcoming Events:

2/28 – Exercise Cochise Smile
3/7 - Old Pueblo Foot Race Support
4/25-26 – La Vuelta de Bisbee
5/21 - Ft Huachuca Safety day

2) Cochise Smile – The County Health Department will be conducting an exercise on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 February. One of the goals of this event is to practice protocols that would be used in the event a portion of the Strategic National Medical Stockpile were to be deployed to Cochise County during a medical emergency. RACES will have a couple of roles to play in this exercise so I am looking for volunteers for Saturday morning from 8-12. If you can not do the full 4 hours, we can break it up into 2 hour shifts. We will deploy the MCU to a Command Post at the Health Department and I also need at least two more volunteers for that location as well as at least two for the Point of Distribution (POD) at Buena High School. The Buena location will served by the Sierra Vista Police Command Post. Most of you know that we have an amateur radio installed in there as well. We will probably operate using the 146.52 simplex channel. One of our objectives will be to also send and receive some traffic using the satellite email system.

3) Old Pueblo Foot Race Support – Dale recently sent out an updated manning roster for this event. Could use a couple more to fill backup positions.

Training Note: Yesterday (2/24/09) I attended a working session in Phoenix of the Public Safety Communications Advisory Commission (PSCAC) & Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). It was hosted by the AZ Government Information Technology Agency (GITA). You are probably wondering about now, what does this have to do with amateur radio and our group in particular. It won't impact any of our amateur radio operations but it is nice to know information about the public safety communications road ahead and some of the planning that is going on in the background that we are usually not privy to. So I want to hit just a few highlights and introduce you to some new acronyms that you will be hearing in the future.

One of the first things I was introduced to is something called SAFECOM. SAFECOM is a communications program of the Department of Homeland Security. SAFECOM provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on interoperable communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and Federal emergency response agencies. The [Office of Emergency Communications](#) (OEC) supports SAFECOM's development of

guidance, tools and templates. The Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) supports SAFECOM-related research, development, testing, evaluation and standards. OEC is managed by the Directorate for National Protection and Programs. OIC is managed by the Science and Technology Directorate.

As an emergency responder-driven program, SAFECOM is working with existing Federal communications initiatives and key emergency response stakeholders to address the need to develop better technologies and processes for the multi-jurisdictional and cross-disciplinary coordination of existing systems and future networks. SAFECOM harnesses diverse Federal resources in service of the emergency response community. At the national level there is something called the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP), some of you may have heard of this before.

Under this program, each state is being required to put together a Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). Local entities such as cities, counties are also being tasked to put together a Tactical Interoperability Communications Plans (TICP). In short, since federal grant money is also tied to these plans, we are being required to sit down and figure out how we can ensure the communications debacles that occurred during events like Hurricane Katrina don't happen again. Agencies must include in their response plans detailed instructions on how to ensure that fire units from anywhere in our likely response area. Many of you are aware of the ACU 1000 in the Mobile Communications Unit (MCU). This is just one of the tools that are being identified in local plans to ensure we have this level of interoperability. I will cover more on this organization and their plans in future nets but I will also provide you a website to check out some of their initiatives. <http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/>

One final item for this evening, a word about the Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS), an upgrade to the prior Inter-Agency Radio System (IARS). AIRS is the primary solution for near-term statewide interoperability as a result of the Statewide Interoperability Project Study –2005. The Statewide Interoperability Project Study was initiated in support of the Governor's 2003 Homeland Security Plan 'Securing Arizona', in which the Arizona Division of Emergency Management and the Department of Public Safety were tasked to establish both a short and long-term strategy to address the issue of radio system interoperability. AIRS was designed to use the statewide and nationwide 'mutual aid channels' throughout the State to help improve communications between all agencies. The intent was to improve coverage in all counties, by upgrading and providing an inter-connect of VHF, UHF and 800 MHz repeaters via the AIRS suites at forty-five (45) sites throughout Arizona and in all counties. A radio to use part of this system is operational at the Bisbee Sheriff's Office. Some of you are aware of the DEMARadio Network or DRN. You may have heard me refer to the callsign "Horned Toad" which represents our MCU on the statewide DRN system. DEMA is the acronym for Division of Emergency and Military Affairs.

That is about all we have time for tonight so I will go down the net for comments. I hope I have not thrown too many new acronyms at you this evening and that you found some of this background information concerning the planning process and some initiatives going on to ensure we can communicate effectively in the future during disasters.

Bob

Robert L Hollister

Thought for the day:

"When we love anyone with our whole hearts, life begins when we are with that person; it is only in their company that we are really and truly alive."

William Barclay