

RACES Notes for 06/10/2009

News and Announcements

1) Upcoming Events:

6/27-28 Field Day
7/4 Bisbee Coaster Race
7/17-18 Williams Hamfest
9/5-7 Paradise Trip

2) Pager Problem – The folks at Arizona Paging have not been able to resolve the issue with Qwest so I have decided to turn those pagers in. Please return your pager to me at the next convenient opportunity. I will continue to build a cell-phone based text message alert system until we can come up with a different system. The Search and Rescue unit is doing the same thing. If you did not get a Cell-Text alert this evening, my apologies. Please send me a reminder to add you to the list. I have been very busy and may have overlooked it if you sent it after the last net. I may have your cell number but possibly don't have your carrier name. I have fixed one typographic error already as well.

In the mean time, please leave your 2-meter radios on and monitor the 147.02 (RACES) channel more consistently until we can come up with another solution.

3) DICE AAR/MCU – I sent out the DICE AAR but got the dates wrong. Sorry about that. "Copy and paste" strikes again. We have replaced the short power pigtail. The county also purchased a heavier sledge hammer for ease of putting up the Inverted V antenna and driving ground stakes. Pablo has also updated some software on the laptop, including the virus protection.

4) Bisbee Coaster Race – Just a little over 3 weeks away from the annual Bisbee Coaster Race scheduled for the 4th of July. We need approximately 15 folks to assist in this annual event. I believe we have eight names on the list at the moment. Please contact RB Rice (K7HVV) if you can assist. Please contact him if you assist. If you have never supported this event before, come on down. You only need a Handheld VHF radio. You should have one of the RACES T-Shirts or Vests to help identify you to the public and law enforcement personnel. We are usually set up about 7:30 and finished by about 10:30. Plenty of time to go over to the Warren District and watch the oldest, continuing 4th of July Parade in Arizona.

5) EMS Council/Fire Chief's Meeting – Some of you are aware that I try to attend the monthly meetings of the Emergency Medical Service and Fire Chief's Association. I represent RACES and the LEPC at those meetings in an attempt to stay current with procedures and protocols that we as RACES members should be aware of. Two items recently discussed include the adoption of a county-wide standardized numbering system for fire and EMS units and clarification of which frequency/channel to be used for talking to air medical units. Next month I will try to get the spreadsheet with the revised numbering system identifying each agency's identifier to share with you. For Example, Fry Fire units will all be prefixed with the 2-digit identifier 14. How this works is that an Engine One from Fry station 1 will now be identified as Engine 141. This will help eliminate the confusion that occurs when there are multiple agencies responding to an incident where you might have several "Engine One(s)" reporting. The second item was clarification that the county Inter-Agency channel will be used for coordination with air medical assets. It might be abbreviated with the abbreviation "IA" or "CCIA" on various radios. The MCU uses the CCIA abbreviation on its radios.

6) Skywarn – Class tomorrow night presented by the National Weather Service. Starts at 18:30 at the Oscar Yrun Community Center. If you have not been for a year or two, I recommend taking it as a refresher.

TRAINING – On our last net I discussed the Arizona Interoperability Radio System (AIRS) and briefly mentioned the DEMA Radio Network (DRN) and the VTAC channels. I would like to continue providing background on these systems as we explore various communications options in the MCU that we need to be familiar with.

The state has been building out the AIRS radio network, based on its predecessor Interagency Arizona Radio System (IARS). Originally planned and built in the early 1980s, IARS served the law enforcement community by providing VHF and UHF base stations at key locations. These stations could be linked together to allow VHF users to communicate with UHF users. As the system developed, some sites were also equipped with 800 MHz repeaters. The IARS concept was modernized and expanded using Dept of Homeland Security funds in 2006 and 2007, becoming AIRS. Where IARS had only VHF and UHF stations at each site AIRS uses base station “suites” composed of one wideband VHF, one narrowband VHF, one UHF, and one 800 MHz base stations/ repeaters. Like IARS, each radio connects to a supporting dispatch center via a microwave system. The original IARS implementation had each radio controlled separately by the dispatch center. AIRS was implemented before the state microwave system upgrade was complete, and there was not enough microwave channel capacity to control each of the four radios in all the suites individually. Therefore, most of the sites are wired to connect the wideband VHF, the UHF, and the 800 MHz radios together, so what is received by one station is retransmitted by the other stations. This “cross-band repeater” configuration requires only one control channel per suite (or per site) to control it from dispatch. There were approximately 40 sites selected for AIRS implementation. Of those 40 sites, 30 are installed and operational and the remaining sites will be installed and made operational with existing funding. In order to maximize the use of the AIRS equipment, the AIRS system requires upgrades to the state microwave systems upgrading receiver voting systems, antenna combining, and console control equipment to make it fully operational as designed. Cochise County is still lacking two of the original four suites that were planned. According to a RF coverage map I saw, we are still lacking coverage along significant parts of highway in the San Pedro Valley and northeast of Douglas to the AZ/NM state line near Rodeo NM. One shortcoming of the current system is that it still relies on wide band FM technology and must be converted to the new Federally mandated narrow-band technology by 2013.

That's it for tonight's training, now let's go down the net for questions and/or comments.

Bob

Robert L Hollister

Thought for the day:

“Apply yourself both now and in the next life. Without effort, you cannot be prosperous. Though the land be good, You cannot have an abundant crop without cultivation.”

Plato