

November 2009



Newsletter of the County of Orange Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service

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Captain's Corner

by RACES Capt. Ken Bourne, W6HK, Chief Radio Officer

FCC on Government Drills

On October 20, 2009, the Federal Communications Commission issued a Public Notice (DA 09-2259) on "Amateur Service Communications During Government Disaster Drills." See page 3 of this newsletter for the complete text of that public notice.

Basically, the Public Notice says that FCC Rules prohibit amateur stations from transmitting communications "in which the station licensee or control operator has a pecuniary interest, including communications on behalf of an employer." The Notice listed those employers (who conduct emergency preparedness or disaster drills) as state and local government public-safety agencies, plus some entities such as hospitals, emergency operations centers, and police, fire, and emergency medical service stations. If an agency wants its employees (such as a RACES program coordinator) to operate during a drill, that agency must request a waiver. In a response to an inquiry from David Coursey, N5FDL, San Joaquin County ARES Emergency Coordinator, the FCC stated, "Activities such as the 'regular monthly drills' and 'two weekly nets' involving hospitals and county agencies you describe are afoul of 97.113(a)(5)... 'Communications, on a regular basis, which could reasonably be furnished alternatively through other

radio services.' Why don't you put these communications on Part 90 channels instead of trying to twist and skirt the Part 97 rules?" Coursey concluded, then, that the FCC would not grant waivers for agency employees to participate in regular monthly drills or weekly nets.

It appears, in my opinion, that the FCC is misinterpreting its own Rules, and is hindering effective emergency communications by preventing agency employees from participating in drills. The Public Notice says that, in an actual emergency, rule waiver is not necessary. The FCC is virtually saying that hams who are agency employees may operate during an actual emergency, but can't train with the volunteers to prepare for an emergency!

The FCC says in its Public Notice that the amateur service is not an emergency radio service, and therefore agency employees may not drill with their volunteers on the air. Sure, the amateur radio service is not *exclusively* an emergency radio service. Nevertheless, §97.1(a) of the Rules says a fundamental purpose of the amateur service is in "providing emergency communications." §97.407 defines specifically the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service. Does it make sense, then, to prevent government employees from drilling with their volunteers or discussing RACES meetings or other

Continued on page 2

**The Next
OCRACES
Meeting is**

**November 2, 2009
1930 Hours
840 N. Eckhoff St.,
Suite 104, Orange**

Featured Speaker:
**Ray Grimes, N8RG
County Communications**



Orange County Sheriff's Department
Communications & Technology Division

Captain's Corner *Continued from page 1*

activities on the air? For example, what if a RACES volunteer is talking with the RACES program coordinator about DX-chasing (or some other non-agency subject) on the local RACES repeater, and suddenly asks the coordinator when the next RACES meeting is? Should the coordinator say, "Sorry, it's illegal for me to answer that. Call me on my cell phone."?

David Coursey, N5FDL, along with Tom Blackwell, N5GAR, and Gordon West, WB6NOA, have filed a petition with the FCC, to add the following paragraph to §97.111 Authorized Transmissions of the Rules: *Transmissions necessary for disaster relief*

or emergency response, including training exercises, planning, drills or tests, without regard to whether the amateur operator has related employment, where the transmissions are for the exclusive use of amateur radio operators for noncommercial purposes.

I hope the FCC will consider their petition, or perhaps a different petition that would seek amendment of §97.113 Prohibited Transmissions of the Rules, to provide a "pecuniary interest" exception for government employees communicating with agency volunteers, similar to the exception in that section for school teachers using ham radio for instruction.

Employee Amateur Radio Operating Policies

Orange County Sheriff's Department Communications & Technology Division

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued Public Notice DA 09-2259, titled "Amateur Service Communications During Government Disaster Drills," on October 20, 2009. The Orange County Sheriff's Department, Communications & Technology Division, which serves as the Orange County Operational Area RACES Coordinator, is providing the following recommendations to all City and County RACES/ACS units within the Operational Area in response to this Public Notice.

The FCC Rules specifically prohibit amateur stations from transmitting communications "in which the station licensee or control operator has a pecuniary interest, including communications on behalf of an employer." This statement is certainly open for interpretation. We are not aware of any Orange County RACES/ACS organization that uses amateur radio frequencies to conduct day-to-day business of the city or county agency. Day-to-day activities are conducted on the 800 MHz Countywide Coordinated Communications System, landline and cellular phones, and other city or county public safety radio systems. However, based on the Public Notice, we are recommending the following changes:

- ◆ Paid employees (with an amateur radio license) of an agency should not participate on the air in emergency preparedness or disaster drills, exercises, and scheduled nets of that agency's RACES, ACS, or other communications unit on amateur radio frequencies. Such employees are allowed to be members, officers, or coordinators of their RACES/ACS units, but should only participate on the air during an actual emergency or disaster, when the immediate safety of human life and the immediate protection of property is in jeopardy, and normal communication systems are not available.
- ◆ An agency conducting an emergency preparedness or disaster drill and wants paid employee on-the-air involvement should request the FCC to grant a waiver of its "pecuniary interest" Rules, in accordance with the procedures in the Public Notice. This request for waiver may pertain only to an occasional (such as annual) drill, and not to regularly scheduled (such as weekly) nets, and must be filed well ahead of the drill to allow enough time for the FCC to grant the waiver.
- ◆ The Public Notice says that, in an actual emergency, rule waiver is not necessary. It is our opinion (and concern!) that the FCC is virtually saying that hams who are agency employees may operate during an actual emergency, but can't train with the volunteers to prepare for an emergency.
- ◆ Employees may communicate with each other or with members of their RACES/ACS units on any amateur frequency, including their RACES repeater or simplex frequency, during non-drill times, but may not transmit amateur communications on their employer's behalf. For example, employees may not transmit communications pertaining to their agency's upcoming RACES meetings or activities or equipment installation and maintenance.
- ◆ We support and encourage a modification of the FCC Rules to allow agency employees to communicate with agency volunteers on amateur radio frequencies at any time, including disaster drills. However, until that should occur, we recommend the restrictions stated above are implemented immediately.
- ◆ Please contact our Orange County RACES Operational Area Coordinator, Marten Miller, with any questions or concerns. Marten can be reached at Marten.Miller@comm.ocgov.com or (714) 704-7917.

FCC Issues Public Notice on Government Drills

The Federal Communications Commission released Public Notice DA 09-2259 on October 20, 2009, on “Amateur Service Communications During Government Disaster Drills.” That notice follows:

Transmissions by amateur stations participating in government disaster drills must comply with all applicable amateur service rules. While the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communications service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications, is one of the underlying principles of the amateur service,¹ the amateur service is not an emergency radio service. Rather, it is a voluntary, non-commercial communication service authorized for the purpose of self-training, intercommunication and technical investigations carried out by licensed persons interested in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest.²

State and local government public safety agencies occasionally conduct emergency preparedness or disaster drills that include amateur operations. Some entities, such as hospitals, emergency operations centers, and police, fire, and emergency medical service stations, have expressed interest in having their employees who are amateur station operators participate in these drills by transmitting messages on the entity’s behalf. The Commission’s Rules, however, specifically prohibit amateur stations from transmitting communications “in which the station licensee or control operator has a pecuniary interest, *including communications on behalf of an employer.*”³

Given the public interest in facilitating government-sponsored emergency preparedness and disaster drills, we take this opportunity to provide a clear process for requesting a waiver, and the information that we require in order to consider granting such a request.⁴ Waiver requests should be submitted to the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau by the government entity conducting the drill, and must provide the following information: (1) when and where the drill will take place; (2) identification of the amateur licensees expected to transmit amateur communications on behalf of their employers; (3) identification of the employers on whose behalf they will be transmitting; and (4) a brief description of the drill. We emphasize that the filing of a waiver request does not excuse compliance with the rules while that request is pending. The waiver must be requested prior to the drill, and employees may not transmit amateur communications on their employer’s behalf unless the waiver request has been granted.

In an actual emergency, the Commission’s Rules provide that an amateur station may use any means of radio-communication at its disposal to provide essential communication needs in connection with the immediate safety of human life and the immediate protection of property when normal communication systems are not available.⁵ In those circumstances, rule waiver is not necessary.

For further information regarding matters discussed in this *Public Notice*, contact William T. Cross of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Mobility Division, at (202) 418-0680, William.Cross@fcc.gov.

By the Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; and Chief, Enforcement Bureau.

¹ See 47 C.F.R. § 97.1(a). See also Recommendations of the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks, *Order*, EB Docket No. 06-119; WC Docket No. 06-63, 22 FCC Rcd 10541, 10576 ¶ 111 (2007) (noting that the amateur radio community played an important role in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters).

² See 47 C.F.R. § 97.3(a)(4).

³ See 47 C.F.R. § 97.113(a)(3) (emphasis added).

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 1.925

⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 97.403. See also Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission’s Rules Governing the Amateur Radio Services, *Report and Order*, WT Docket No. 04-140, 21 FCC 11643, 11667 ¶ 52 (2006) (clarifying that amateur radio operators who are emergency personnel may use their amateur radio stations while in paid duty status, but not addressing the prohibition against transmitting messages on behalf of an employer).

County, Cities, and MOUs Hold Annual Drill

County of Orange RACES, along with most Cities in Orange County with a RACES program, the Hospital Disaster Support Communications System (HDSCS), the communicators in the Orange County Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Orange County SKYWARN participated in the annual City/County RACES/ACS & MOU Drill on Saturday, October 3, 2009. The scenario for this drill was "civil unrest." Six OCRACES members served in the Loma Ridge EOC RACES Room, two at the OCRACES emergency communications response vehicle at Craig Regional Park in Fullerton, and one in Anaheim. We received 52 messages at the EOC, sent 22, and handled two on Winlink. The following paragraphs are provided by RACES Sgt. Jim Carter, WB6HAG, as an overview on the drill's visual communications.

This year's exercise provided more interaction between agencies than previous drills. We were more successful in sharing ATV pictures between various groups for the first time. Previously, SSTV has always served this objective effectively, but this time ATV was more successful.

The drill objective was to identify SSTV/ATV video paths between city and County EOCs, for providing P4 or better video to those receiving stations based upon transmitter location, antenna type and height, and transmitter power.

We used 144.345 MHz as the voice communication channel to control both ATV and SSTV frequencies to simplify controlling two video frequencies, because only one RACES operator was monitoring three frequencies.

Six agencies provided either ATV or SSTV transmissions. Those were American Red Cross (ATV) field operator, Costa Mesa RACES (SSTV) field operator, Huntington Beach RACES (ATV) EOC transmitter, Irvine RACES (SSTV) field operator, OCRACES (ATV) two field operators, and Seal Beach (ATV) field operator. One agency, Santa Ana ACS (Santa Ana Response Team), had an ATV EOC receiving station only.

OCRACES members Martin La Rocque, N6NTH, and Jack Barth, AB67VC, were mobile operators. Martin was stationed at Craig Park in Fullerton with a 100-watt ATV transmitter with an 11-element beam. Jack was positioned in Anaheim mobile near La Palma and Brookhurst, using a 100-watt ATV transmitter with a 17-element beam.

The Irvine RACES SSTV signal when received appeared out of sync with our Kenwood Visual Communicators. We could not lock onto their video. They will investigate the cause and we are willing to assist. Costa Mesa's SSTV picture was received without any issues.

ATV operations were very surprising this year. We received P5 picture quality from Huntington Beach RACES EOC, the American Red Cross field operator, Martin La Rocque, and Jack Barth. Seal Beach RACES operated in the field on their pier with P3 to P4 signals using 20 watts. We had a hard time receiving their 144.345-MHz transmission, due to our intermod problems.

Agency interactions using ATV were very successful. Huntington Beach video was seen P5 by Santa Ana ACS. Huntington Beach RACES received P4-P5 video from Jack Barth and P3-P4 video from Martin La Rocque.

Santa Ana ACS could receive P5 video from Huntington Beach. We were unable to contact them later during the event to confirm ability to see video from other stations.

We experienced some agencies not communicating with net control before sending SSTV pictures. This created confusion to other operators who are abiding by the established guidelines. Also, one agency left the exercise unannounced. This caused unnecessary delays in the exercise.

Operations at the Loma Ridge RACES Room experienced intermod issues on both the ATV received signals and our ATV/SSTV communication channel. We will need to evaluate the cause in order to prevent this problem in the future. We also experienced a problem on our secondary monitor that receives video from our VisComm video switcher. An outside contractor wired a satellite video feed in parallel with our ATV/SSTV switcher feed. We were seeing a cooking show along with our ATV/SSTV switched signals. This too will need to be resolved.



Left to right in the Orange County EOC RACES Room during the City/County RACES & MOU exercise are Ernest Fierheller, KG6LXT, Scott Byington, KC6MMF, HDSCS member Ken Simpson, W6KOS, Harvey Packard, KM6BV, and Jim Carter, WB6HAG

Watching The Web

*Web Sites of Interest to RACES Personnel
by RACES Capt. Ken Bourne, W6HK, Chief Radio Officer*

Depiction What-if Mapping Software

<http://www.depiction.com>



This Web site describes Depiction what-if mapping software that makes it easy to add and integrate a wide variety of information from the Web and your own sources, and then discover “what-if.” You can select a geographic area, then download or import satellite images, street maps, digital images, spreadsheets, shape files, or live reports. Your data immediately becomes interactive, influencing the behavior of other elements. You may add, edit, or create new elements, and make rules to govern the interactions between elements in your Depiction. You can organize and display data when and where you want it with Revealers, and you can measure, count, annotate, and more.

As David Friedman, KE6GOY, mentions in November 2009 QST, “Depiction can download and integrate maps, elevation plots, weather data, ‘fly over’ imagery, situation reports, damage assessments, and volunteer movement (from APRS). Then, once critical data has been uploaded, you can take your computer offline and use it in the field as a replacement for unwieldy binders. Best of all, unlike a static paper map, you can position or move resources or objects anywhere with Depiction to provide increased situational awareness.”

An add-on to Depiction downloads APRS data to your depictions from the OpenAPRS Web service. You can select response areas and visualize APRS data points. You can manipulate geocoded data during events and emergencies. You can place the antenna icon on the antenna site, input the correct data for each repeater, and view a map showing the coverage area for each repeater.

Next OCRACES Meeting: November 2nd

The next OCRACES meeting is on Monday, November 2, 2009, at 7:30 PM, at OCSD/Communications, 840 N. Eckhoff Street, Suite 104, in Orange. Our featured speaker is Ray Grimes, N8RG, Assistant Director, Engineering Section, OCSD Communications & Technology Division, who will discuss “County Communications: The Beginning, 2009, and Beyond.” Ray will provide a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the history of the Communications Division (as it is the Division’s 75th anniversary this year!), also describing the numerous current systems in use by the County and its partner agencies, and possible future technologies. Ray will also discuss the new Motorola APX portable and mobile triband public-safety radio products (700 MHz/800 MHz/VHF high-band), and will have a working sample of the new APX7000 portable available for us to see and touch.

OCRACES Goes on Severe Fire Weather Patrol

On Wednesday, September 30, 2009, the Orange County Fire Authority declared a Red Flag Warning, and OCRACES scheduled a Severe Weather Fire Patrol to cover Area 2 the next morning, October 1st. RACES Capt. Ken Bourne, W6HK, and RACES Sgt. Chuck Dolan, KG6UJC, began their patrol at 10:00 AM, covering Santiago, Blackstar, Silverado, Williams, Modjeska, Live Oak, and Trabuco Canyons. Tom Tracey, KC6FIC, handled net control. Temperatures were in the mid-90s, with very low humidity, but the winds remained calm. Therefore, the patrol was concluded by mid-afternoon. The area was heavily covered by other fire patrols as well, including OCSD reserves, Irvine Ranch volunteers, and Canyon Watch. Considering gasoline prices and the time involved, most future OCRACES Red Flag fire patrols will probably be conducted only when a high-wind component exists.

RACES/ACS News from Around the County

"RACES/ACS News" provides an opportunity to share information from all City & County RACES/ACS units and MOU organizations in Orange County.

**Please send your news to:
w6hk@ocraces.org**

Newport Beach

With deep sadness we report that Newport Beach Assistant Radio Officer Ed Karagozian, K6JGN, passed away on October 6, 2009. Ed was previously the Chief Radio Officer of the City's RACES unit. He was involved in and directed many RACES activations over the years, including deployment with the Police Mobile Command Post to the Laguna Beach Fire.

Newport Beach

Newport Beach RACES and CERT Communications held its October 14th meeting at the Orange County EOC on



Randy Benicky, N6PRL, speaks at Newport Beach RACES and CERT meeting at Orange County EOC

Loma Ridge. OCRACES member Randy Benicky, N6PRL, gave a presentation on

the EOC operations, especially regarding the Emergency Communications Bureau—Control One and Sheriff's Dispatch, and provided a tour of the facility afterwards. Tom Tracey, KC6FIC, gave a presentation on OCRACES, and conducted a tour of the EOC RACES Room.

Orange County

OCSD Reserve Capt. Steve Riches, N6SOG, was the guest speaker at the October 5th OCRACES meeting. He gave a presentation on the Sheriff's Search and Rescue Reserve Unit (SRRU). The unit has extensive monthly training and is ready to respond 24 hours a day to saving lives, reuniting families, and apprehending fleeing suspects throughout Orange County and wherever else they are requested to serve. More information about



OCSD Reserve Capt. Steve Riches, N6SOG, talks about SRRU at OCRACES meeting

SRRU is available at http://www.ocsd.org/divisions/reserves_program/reserve_units/search_rescue/.

OCRACES to Activate for HCA POD Exercise

OCRACES will participate in the 2009 Point of Dispensing (POD) Vaccination Exercise on Friday, October 30, 2009. The exercise will be held by the Orange County Health Care Agency's Health Disaster Management Division. In partnership with the cities of Garden Grove, Rancho Santa Margarita, and Santa Ana, along with other response organizations, this exercise will test mass dispensing/vaccination capabilities by providing free seasonal (no H1N1/swine) flu shots to the public at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Cox Communications in Rancho Santa Margarita, and Santa Ana College in Santa Ana. OCRACES members will provide "redundant communications" from the PODs to the Health EOC in Santa Ana. The official exercise is from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM, but we are asked to report much earlier to the PODs and the HEOC.

November 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 <i>OCRACES Meeting & Weekly ACS Net</i>	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 <i>Weekly ACS Net</i>	10	11	12	13	14 <i>RACES Breakfast</i>
15	16 <i>Weekly ACS Net</i>	17 <i>72nd Assembly District Election</i>	18	19	20	21
22	23 <i>Weekly ACS Net & SWACS Frequency Test</i>	24	25	26 <i>Thanksgiving</i>	27	28
29	30 <i>Weekly ACS Net</i>					

Upcoming Events:

- **Nov 2:** OCRACES Meeting, 1930, 840 N. Eckhoff St., Suite 104, Orange
- **Nov 14:** RACES & MOU Breakfast, Katella Grill, Orange
- **Nov 17:** 72nd Assembly District Election (no RACES activation)
- **Nov 23:** Southwest ACS Radio/Frequency Test, 2015
- **Nov 26:** Thanksgiving
- **Dec 7:** Annual OCRACES Holiday Dinner, 1830



www.ocraces.org



Mission Statement

County of Orange RACES has made a commitment to provide all Public Safety departments in Orange County with the most efficient response possible to supplement emergency/disaster and routine Public Safety communications events and activities. We will provide the highest level of service using Amateur and Public Safety radio resources coupled with technology, teamwork, safety, and excellence. We will do so in an efficient, professional, and courteous manner, accepting accountability for all actions. We dedicate ourselves to working in partnership with the Public Safety community to professionally excel in the ability to provide emergency communications resources and services.

County of Orange RACES Frequencies

- 10 m: 29.640 MHz output, 29.540 MHz input, 107.2 Hz PL
 - 6 m: 52.620 MHz output, 52.120 MHz input, 103.5 Hz PL
 - 2 m: 146.895 MHz output, 146.295 MHz input, 136.5 Hz PL*
 - 2 m: 147.480 MHz simplex
 - 1.25 m: 223.760 MHz output, 222.160 MHz input, 110.9 Hz PL
 - 70 cm: 446.000 MHz simplex
 - 70 cm: 449.100 MHz output, 444.100 MHz input, 110.9 Hz PL (private)
 - 70 cm: 449.180 MHz output, 444.180 MHz input, 107.2 Hz PL (private)
 - 23 cm: 1282.025 MHz output, 1270.025 MHz input, 88.5 Hz PL
- *Primary Net—Mondays, 1900 hours

Program Coordinator

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(714) 704-7917

Radio Officers (Lieutenant)

Scott Byington, KC6MMF
Harvey Packard, KM6BV
Ralph Sbragia, W6CSP

Chief Radio Officer (Captain)

Ken Bourne, W6HK
(714) 997-0073

Assistant Radio Officers (Sergeant)

Jack Barth, AB6VC
Chuck Dolan, KG6UJC
Jim Carter, WB6HAG
Ernest Fierheller, KG6LXT

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Questions or Comments?
Contact *NetControl* Editor Ken Bourne, W6HK
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**“W6ACS ...
Serving
Orange County”**

Meet your County of Orange RACES Members!



Ken Bourne
W6HK



Scott Byington
KC6MMF



Harvey Packard
KM6BV



Ralph Sbragia
W6CSP



Marten Miller
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Robert Stoffel
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