

Report of the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee June 28, 2012

“In June, 2011, the ECAC was assigned the following: "The Amateur Radio Emergency Service and the National Traffic System exist as the ARRL's implementation of the basic principle stated in 97.1(a), "Recognition and enhancement of the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary non-commercial communication service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications." The Emergency Communications Advisory Committee is hereby tasked by the Programs and Services Committee to recommend improvements to ARES® and NTS so that the amateur service can better serve the public in providing emergency communications. Specific topics should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. ARES and NTS Objectives and Organizational Structures
2. Integration between ARES and NTS
3. Training, Certification, and Credentialing
4. Relationships with Served Agencies

Progress reports should be submitted to the PSC every 90 days and the final report should be submitted by June 1, 2012.”

The above is excerpted from the January 2012 report submitted by the previous chairman, Dale Williams, WA8EFK to the P&SC.

The committee has gone to meeting twice per month using the ARRL Citrix GoToMeeting software. We have also held the meetings on different days of the week in order to give everyone a chance to participate. Finding a single day (we did a spreadsheet of days that people were available) that 15 very busy people can attend is not possible. Previously we've been able to record the meetings and save them to the Citrix website for viewing by those unable to attend the meeting, thus allowing everyone the opportunity to stay current with the discussion. That option recently disappeared. I'm recording the meetings and they are saved on my computer. I posted the recording from two meetings ago on my own website and it took up 90% of the space. I've requested secure space on the ARRL website to post the recordings and also the surveys that we are designing so that committee members can go there and work collaboratively on them. Staff has responded and hopefully we'll soon have some space. We'd tried using Google Docs to work collaboratively but without downloading some type of Google application some of the committee members were unable to access them.

In order to establish a baseline and a good understanding of the issues in ARES® and NTS, we have been developing surveys for ECs, NTS membership, additional questions for NTS leadership as a follow-up to their survey and a survey for Emergency Managers.

We are in the final stage of the EC survey and hope to get that out shortly on the Zoomerang Survey software that ARRL uses. While it's not the best survey method in terms of how questions may be asked, we've attempted to fit our survey to its constraints.

When the FCC Public Notice became the front and center issue, we were fortunate to have Dave Sumner, K1ZZ, join us on a meeting to explain what the plan was for staff to address it. While the ECAC had not been asked to provide staff with any comments, many of the committee members felt they would like to address the issues. So we had 7 meetings that lasted two or more hours during the course of two weeks to collaborate on comments directed towards the specific issues. As a sort of ECAC PSAR I estimate that we expended nearly 200 person hours towards our effort and were able to pass along our comments in time for staff to use them if they wished. It was a good opportunity for the committee to work together and discuss our area of interest.

Gordon Grove, WA7LNC, had not been attending meetings and his email bounced. He was sent a letter to see if everything was all right. There was no response and an email to Northwestern Director, Jim Fenstermaker, K9JF, was sent explaining the situation. To date I'm unaware of any new appointment or of the status of Mr Grove. Bill Niemuth, KB9ENO, of the Central Division removed himself from the committee due to work travel and Brad Pioveson, W9FX, was appointed by the Central Division Director to fill his place.

According to the directive in the beginning of this report, our tasks were expected to be concluded by June 2012. Even with picking up the pace of the meetings, it is obvious that this will be a much longer project than anticipated if we are to do a credible job.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Cross WI3N
SM MDC
Chairman ARRL ECAC