
Time Out

Publication of the ICRC, Inc.

November - 2006

This Month's Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Friday, November 17th at 7:30 P.M. at the American Red Cross, 209 Farmington Ave. (Rte. 4), Farmington, CT. All are welcome. Bring a friend.

Last Month's Meeting

ICRC Meeting Minutes

Date:	October 20, 2006
Time Started:	7:57 PM
Time Ended:	9:00 PM

Minutes taken by: Rick Johnson, N1WGK

Attendees (Callsign):

N1WGK	N1JWF	K1WMS	KB1KZC	KB1JYX
N1JGR	KA1KRP	K1HEJ		

Last Month's Meeting – cont'd

Secretary report:

E-mailed report to committee for perusal.

Motion to Accept:	N1JWF
Seconded by:	KB1JYX
Abstain:	

unanimous

Treasurer Report:

\$600.00+ came in. Check for \$250 from the bike race. Need to get the paperwork from Chuck to refile the paperwork for our incorporation.

Motion to Accept:	N1WGK
Seconded by:	KB1JYX
Abstain:	

unanimous

Tech. VP report...

Amateur radio is a hobby. The repeater will be repaired as time allows. Anyone willing to assist with the repairs would be greatly appreciated. (Editors note: A work party did get up to the repeater site since this was written. Some work was accomplished, but there is more to be done.)

K1HEJ purchased a new 7800 for packet.

440 is almost ready to go.

Motion to Accept:	N1WGK
Seconded by:	N1JWF
Abstain:	

unanimous

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Discussion of possibly taking down the .15 site has been tabled until next month.

Commentary by George KB1JYX: Dan has done a very nice job getting things put down in the monthly newsletter and getting it out to the membership about a week before the meeting.
(Editors note: Thanks, George!)

Last Month's Meeting – cont'd

Motion to Adjourn:	N1WGK
Seconded by:	N1JWF
Abstain:	

Unanimous

Connecticut Yankee Digital Net

The Connecticut Yankee Digital Net has been meeting on Sunday nights at 8:30 PM on the .88 machine. for several months now. Though participation has been sparse, the few die-hards that show up each week have had an enjoyable time conversing on AMTOR FEC mode. The purpose of this net is to experiment with the latest digital modes using sound card based software. At this point, the net is more of an informal training net where people can get practice setting up and using the software and have any questions they might have answered by our "resident experts". Eventually the net will transition to more of a traditional traffic net, with the intent of practicing the passing of emergency traffic using digital modes.

If you are at all interested, come and join us! You need not have any elaborate interface equipment to participate. Simply download the software you like (readily available on the Internet), connect the audio output of your radio, HT, or scanner to the audio input of your sound card and you will be able to "read the mail". In order to transmit, you will need a sound card to radio interface. There are many simple home brew circuits available on the Internet, or commercially made units are available from Buxcomm and West Mountain Radio. Hope to "see" you next Sunday.

Election of Officers/Board Members

The slate for the Officers and Board Members was presented at the October meeting. The slate was also e-mailed to all nominees. Anyone not wishing to be on the slate will have until the November meeting to notify me to be removed (except Rick C.). The finalized slate will be voted on at the November meeting.

Dan Wall – W1ZFG

Chairman – Nominating Committee

walldan@att.net

Monthly Connecticut Section News Summary

Section Leadership: ASMs: N1FNE, K1STM, KY1F, NK1J, W1FXQ; Bulletin Manager KD1YV; Official Observer Coordinator W1GC; Public Information Coordinator K1SFA; Section Emergency Coordinator K1BRF; State Government Liaison K1MK; Section Traffic Manager K1HEJ; Technical Coordinator N1KHB.

If you missed this year's Nutmeg Ham Fest, you sure missed out on a terrific show! Congratulations to the Meriden Amateur Radio Club on the fourteenth Nutmeg State Convention which many of us affectionately call Nutfest! Thanks to Joe K1IKE for organizing the ARES displays and demos and thanks to everyone who participated in any way. Attendance was up by approximately 14%! There were lots of sellers and demos this year: 40 outside and about 120 inside.

There was an article in The Meriden Record about the ham fest; some of us spoke to the reporter; I used WL2K to send her a message to her email account to further demonstrate our current digital capability. The Web Page on the ARRL site has been updated so don't miss some pictures taken at the hamfest.

All of the forums were attended by approximately 30 people. It was good to see many of you at the ARRL Forum at which, by the way, Director Tom Frenaye, K1KI told us that the number of new hams in CT has increased over previous years. Thanks to all of you who have been running classes--I want to start naming a few but I will miss others. But some coordinators who come to mind are K1MMH, N1TUP, N1JEO, W1TFD, KB1IES, KB1IET, W1WJB, W1JMA, W1RNA, KB1NCN, AA1WT. Other hams participate in the teaching. Thanks to you all. If you are running a class or have run one in the last year, let me know and I'll list you. Let's come up with a list which I can post on the Web site!

YOUR INPUT IS REQUESTED! ARRL is asking for your input regarding the FCC's Report and Order on Docket Wt-040. Because of its importance, I am restating ARLb020 here. I encourage you to get your input to Headquarters regarding this matter.

The ARRL is requesting member input concerning the FCC's Amateur Radio proceeding, WT Docket 04-140, released October 10. The Report and Order will not take effect until 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. This publication date is not yet known. The complete text is available for viewing as a PDF file on the FCC Web site, http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-06-149A1.pdf.

A summary is available on the ARRL Web site, <http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2006/10/11/100/>.

The ARRL is specifically seeking member guidance on how the changes will affect current operating activities on 80, 40 and 15 meters (see the current ARRL band plans,

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/regulations/bandplan.html>,

and an ARRL FAQ, <http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/wt04-140/faq.html>, which includes a chart showing the band changes). Comments may be submitted by e-mail to bandplan@www.arrl.org. All e-mails will be read and considered, but individual responses will not be possible due to the message volume expected. The deadline for comments is October 31. NNNN

If you have not read the summary, it is **IMPERATIVE** that you read it and make comment if you feel the need. Because of the impact this R&O will have on public service and digital communications, I know I will be commenting.

And speaking of public service, ARES members and others interested, don't forget CT's annual Simulated Emergency Test takes place this year on October 28. SEC Brian, K1BRF has appointed a very capable committee who has been working for hours planning this event so that our experience is a worthwhile and real learning experience.

Monthly Connecticut Section News Summary – cont'd

As in the past, a serious effort is being planned so watch for details from your ARES leadership. Please participate! You do not have to be experienced; you just need to be willing to learn and grow in your knowledge of radio communications as it relates to public service.

Oscar Fuller/ KB1LQV made a presentation at the Greater Norwalk ARC covering his volunteer work during the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Oscar was one of six Amateur operators from Connecticut who drove to the disaster area and operated radio nets, providing the only communications available to assist survivors and responders. Oscar urged more hams to prepare themselves for possible duty in future crises by taking levels 1 and 2 of the AREC program.

Bill W1WJB and John W1JMA are teaching a technician licensing class to police, and fire department personnel at the Ridgefield Fire Training Center this month and throughout November. Bill has indicated that “This course is especially adapted to concentrate on Ham Radio's practical uses for personal communications, and for assisting In emergency communications. This course has been designed to be very PRACTICAL . . . “

Bill also coordinated a ham radio demo at the Ridgefield Fire Dept at their annual open house last week. R-Com, the Ridgefield ARES Communications Group will be a part of the new FEMA-DHS sponsored "Fire Corps" organization, an innovative program of harvesting citizen interest in assisting local fire departments in various ways---such as ham radio communications. Amateurs were invited to participate by talking to the group which included children of all ages. The demo was a resounding success! Bill reports: “We have 19 at this point. Mostly Fire Police, with one PhD professor from WestConn, a hospital equipment technical expert from St Vincents, and a retired airline 747 captain. In all cases their primary interest is in emergency communications.” Great work Bill--we need more demos like this!--K1EIC

Toy, K1WYQ, GNARC president writes the following which should be of interest: I guess I have earned bragging rights for being the first Ham Radio Operator in the nation that was fortunate to be included in the first ever Communication Leader's (COML) course sponsored by the Dept of Homeland Security at the Fairfield Fire Training School from September 25th -- 29th This course is to be modified and subsequently taught throughout the country. The course was dynamic and loaded with good stuff that was drawn from the National Wildfire Program that was adapted for Homeland Security. We even had the venerable Tim Walker/ W1GIG who gave an excellent talk on radio spectrum and included a video from the ARRL that was narrated by Walter Cronkite. The attendees for this course were mostly law enforcement and fire officers along with dispatch personnel. The course highlighted past problems with interagency communication and what is presently being done to overcome this problem. Some expensive communication equipment was effectively demonstrated by the military and a neighboring law enforcement agency. The emphasis was on interoperability. All along the program the course instructors mentioned the existence of ham operators and how we are useful communications personnel.

GNARC had as their guest Speaker Richard L Fournier, Area 1 Coordinator for the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Emergency Planning & Preparedness Division. I will be writing Mr. Fournier a letter of thanks.

ARRL Connecticut Section

Section Manager: Elizabeth M. Doane, K1EIC

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New Sub-band Frequency Rules Effect Every Ham Class

==>FCC "OMNIBUS" REPORT AND ORDER CONTAINS PLUSES, MINUSES AND ERRORS

The FCC's recent Report and Order (R&O) in WT Docket 04-140 seems to offer something for just about every sector of the Amateur Radio community, but it's not without shortcomings. Most appear to be unintended consequences stemming from the FCC's arguably too-generous allocation of 75 meter phone spectrum to Amateur Extra class licensees. The FCC indicated it was only doing what the ham radio community said it wanted. "Indeed, a number of commenters argue that the NPRM (Notice of Proposed Rule Making) proposal to increase the amount of spectrum permitted for voice communications would still not meet the demand for voice communication in the HF bands, particularly in the 80 meter band," the FCC said in the R&O, released October 10. Several radio amateurs filing comments justified extending the phone allocation further into the CW band, the FCC continued, citing their arguments that the CW band is "grossly underused and represents a huge waste in spectrum." Once the new rules go into effect, the 75 meter phone band will span 3800 to 4000 kHz for Generals, 3700 to 4000 kHz for Advanced class licensees (ARRL had requested 3750 to 4000 kHz), and 3600 to 4000 kHz for Amateur Extras (ARRL had requested 3725 to 4000 kHz). Far more modest phone expansions were the rule for 40 and 15 meters, the other affected bands.

But the ample 75 meter Amateur Extra class phone allocation not only effectively reduces the amount of 80-meter spectrum available for CW, RTTY and data, it actually eliminates Advanced and General class access on any mode to certain segments where they now have privileges. Sensitive to fallout from the "incentive licensing" debacle of the late 1960s, the FCC in the past has indicated it wouldn't let that kind of thing happen again. In the runup to the April 2000 license restructuring, the FCC assured that any pending changes would not take away any incumbent licensee's privileges, and it carefully avoided doing so in its restructuring R&O. In applauding the ARRL's "refarming" proposal in this docket's NPRM, the FCC pointed out that "as proposed, no licensees would lose any spectrum privileges." Nonetheless that's just what happened: Generals lose 150 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 80 meters but gain 50 kHz of phone spectrum on 75. They also lose 25 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 40 meters but gain 50 kHz of phone privileges on that band. Factoring in another 25 kHz of phone spectrum on 15 meters that's an overall gain of 125 kHz of phone spectrum offset by an overall loss of 175 kHz of CW/data spectrum -- or a net loss of 50 kHz in spectrum privileges. Advanced licensees also lose 150 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 80 meters but gain 75 kHz of phone spectrum on 75. They also lose 25 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 40 meters but gain 25 kHz of phone spectrum there. That's an overall loss of 175 kHz of CW/data spectrum offset by an overall gain of 100 kHz of phone spectrum (25 kHz less than Generals). The net loss in Advanced privileges works out to 75 kHz (25 kHz greater than Generals). The new rules are "nothing but net" for Novice and Tech Plus (Technician with Element 1 credit) licensees. These licensees take home a whopping 250 kHz of additional CW spectrum (CW/data on 10 meters). The R&O contains several apparent mistakes, too. For example, in §97.301(d) the 80 meter row should read 3.525-3.600 MHz for all three ITU regions. In §97.305(c), the frequencies in the first line for 40 meters should read 7.000-7.100 MHz. The FCC will fix these errors when the "official" R&O text appears in the Federal Register later this fall. Other corrections may prove more troublesome. Creating a humongous 75 meter phone band for Extras effectively, but apparently inadvertently, deleted the only 80 meter segment where automatically controlled digital stations may operate -- 3620 to 3635 kHz. The new rules no longer permit RTTY and data there, however. In addition, the FCC accommodated the inclusion of images in data transmissions by defining a range of image emission types as "data" and limiting them to 500 Hz bandwidth in the RTTY/data subbands. Unfortunately, it did so in a way that also limits J2D emissions -- data sent by modulating an SSB transmitter -- to 500 Hz bandwidth.

ARRL President Airs Concerns About Red Cross Background Checks

NEWINGTON, CT, Oct 25, 2006 -- ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, is urging Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and other ham radio volunteers to tread cautiously when submitting information for background checks the American Red Cross (ARC) now requires. The ARC, with which the ARRL has a Statement of Understanding (SoU), this summer notified local chapters that volunteers and staff members must submit to criminal background checks by October 31. Harrison says the requirement extends to ARES volunteers who support Red Cross disaster relief efforts. In a statement October 24, Harrison said the League recommends that anyone submitting personal information for a background check very carefully read what they are giving the ARC permission to collect. "The Red Cross is requiring volunteers to grant permission for more than just a criminal background check," Harrison asserted. "They are also requiring permission to draw a consumer and/or investigative consumer report on the volunteer." Harrison said that could also include a credit check and a mode-of-living check. "The Red Cross has stated that they will not use credit reports," he noted. "Requiring that volunteers authorize the procurement of a credit report is inconsistent with this assurance." The on-line application allows applicants to request a copy of any consumer report resulting from its background investigation. The ARC has contracted with MyBackgroundCheck.com LLC (MBC) in Anderson, California, to handle the on-line background checks. Prospective volunteers visit a secure Web site, click on the ARC logo and submit name, address, Social Security number (or other acceptable government ID), telephone number, and date of birth. Driver's license information, e-mail address and mother's maiden name are optional. In the course of the application process, prospective volunteers must agree to let MBC obtain a wide range of personal information bearing not just on criminal background and creditworthiness but, MBC says, "character, general reputation [and] personal characteristics." MBC advises, "The nature and scope of this disclosure and authorization is all-encompassing . . ."

Some ARES leaders already have expressed concern to the ARRL about the Red Cross policy. One District Emergency Coordinator called the requirement "particularly abhorrent" and "a horrendous invasion of privacy." The Red Cross says the new policy is aimed at safeguarding clients, volunteers and employees alike. "Unfortunately, in this day and age it is critical that the American Red Cross and other agencies, employers and organizations perform due diligence in researching the people who will represent them," the Red Cross said in a statement supplied to ARRL. "We hope volunteers, who have provided blood, sweat and tears in helping fulfill the mission of the American Red Cross, will understand the importance of performing this due diligence." ARRL Field and Educational Services Manager Dave Patton, NN1N -- whose department supports and oversees the ARRL Field Organization -- is among those who believes the Red Cross stands to lose a fair number of volunteers because of the requirement -- and not necessarily just ARES volunteers. "ARES members who are providing communications for ARC are working for ARC," Patton maintained, "and, as such, will follow their guidelines." He added that whatever position the ARRL might adopt, the decision to go along with the new Red Cross policy is up to individual volunteers. The ARC apparently has not disseminated policy specifics at the national level. The only reliable information on what the background checks will entail is that on the MBC site. The sometimes-conflicting information ARRL obtained was distributed at the ARC chapter level. One such memorandum -- supplied to ARRL by a third party -- indicates that a check will focus on an individual's criminal history over the previous seven years (in most states), although MBC's disclaimer doesn't indicate any limit. Some prospective volunteers have worried that "youthful indiscretions" may rule out their suitability as Red Cross volunteers. The check also will verify that an individual's name matches his or her Social Security number. The same memo assures that access to the information gathered "is limited to only those with a need to know and is kept in a secure location."

ARRL President Airs Concerns About Red Cross Background Checks – cont'd

Despite the information MBC provides on the application site, another chapter-level memorandum assures that the Red Cross "is not interested in checking your personal credit/financial records nor will it review any personal/professional reference checks." Several ARES leaders have expressed the belief that they and their volunteers represent ARES when supporting communication for ARC as a served agency. "Our issue is not the background checking, but the fact ARC considers ARES members ARC volunteers," one ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator said. The SoU between the League and the ARC is ambiguous on the subject, however. While the document says "each organization retains its own identity in providing service," it further stipulates that ARES volunteers "in such cases when the operators are required to carry American Red Cross identification" must register as American Red Cross volunteers. Radio amateurs who volunteered in the wake of Hurricane Katrina last year were badged in via the Montgomery, Alabama, staging area as ARC volunteers. The same applied to those who turned out to assist following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, and that practice upset some ARES volunteers. The ARRL-ARC SoU subsequently states, however, that volunteers assisting the ARC with disaster relief communication support "shall be at all times considered ARRL volunteers," but then goes on to say that ARRL and ARES volunteers "may, under conditions and terms established by American Red Cross from time to time, also serve as American Red Cross volunteers for a mutually agreed upon task or function." The SoU does not address the issue of background checks, however. The SoU comes up for review in 2007. ARRL Public Service Team Leader Steve Ewald, WV1X, says ARES leaders can assign volunteers who don't want to submit to the ARC criminal background check to ARES duties "away from the action" that don't involve direct interaction with the ARC. "We certainly understand the risks that are involved in having background checks done -- such as potential identity theft," Ewald told one worried SEC. "Those volunteers who do go through the background check will, indeed, enter at their own risk in this regard." One ARES DEC suggested the ARC policy "is just way too arbitrary." As he put it, "The unfortunate thing is that if a member decides not to submit to this check, then that will hamper our ability to serve the Red Cross in an emergency."

The Red Cross says it's gone to great lengths to ensure prospective volunteers are not giving out their Social Security numbers to anyone other than the contractor, and then only through a secure, encrypted Web site. "No additional information is needed," the Red Cross said, nor are the overall results of the background check shared with the ARC. "The only information provided is that a person has successfully completed the background check with no adverse information, or that a person has potentially adverse information and that additional research is required," the ARC told ARRL. "When additional research is required the contracted company will notify the prospective volunteer and will address the issue with no Red Cross intervention."

Contact the Red Cross (toll-free 800-507-3960) with any questions regarding the background check program.

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For the latest information, visit our website at <http://www.icrcweb.org>