

PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
ROGERS CITY, MICHIGAN
147.02/+

10-26-21

We're just about "on schedule" for our desired bi-monthly meeting schedule. I've finally developed some answers to a few of the questions raised at recent meetings and we've encountered some interesting stuff to talk about.

MEETING

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday November 4 at 7:00 PM. Venue this time is the Presque Isle District Library in Rogers City. I had trouble negotiating the voice menu on the phone and wound up having to go in Saturday to make the arrangements. No masks were in evidence on that day so the choice will be yours.

ARES/RACES

When it comes to public service, the two levels of organization commonly referred to are the Amateur Radio Emergency Service and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service.

RACES is an descendant of the old Civil Defense program. Special Call Signs were issued (and then only to local civil defense organizations) and frequencies not available for general Amateur use were assigned. Communications were restricted to other stations registered in the program. RACES was only put into action when a civil emergency was declared by federal or state government. The FEMA SHARES (SHARED RESOURCES) HF radio program handles these functions now.

So what is the purpose of RACES these days? While public service radio systems are much more capable and survivable than they used to be, it is still possible that they could go down or other, additional, capacity might be needed. In these cases it's likely that at least some Amateur operators would be needed in sensitive locations such as EOC's. Also, a lot of disaster responses are now handled with the Incident Command System to make it easier for multiple agencies to work together. RACES certification now attests to our having passed background checks and being familiar with ICS procedures and the various forms that may need to be transmitted in order to support operations.

ARES covers all forms of public service. The activation threshold is lower and the training requirements often are somewhat more relaxed. Activities cover everything from events such as the Nautical City 5K and Spud Run up to events that may ultimately evolve into a RACES response.

The Michigan Section has encouraged dual qualification to permit seamless transition from ARES personnel and procedures to RACES if a situation develops to that level.

A number of you have had RACES cards in the past. There has been a hiatus due to some confusion as to the format of the cards being changed, administrations and signatures required on the cards changed, and COVID was also listed as part of the holdup. We're finally past that.

If you have participated in RACES in the past and submitted copies of your training documentation, I still have that and will forward it to the County Emergency Manager. It will not be necessary to submit any of this again unless you have completed additional training. I will be sending out an additional e-mail in the next day or so with the Position/Training Matrix and the Background Check Authorization. I will also send a summary of the information I have on file for you. The Emergency Manager plans on being at our next meeting to handle the authorization forms and take the digital pictures to be put on the RACES cards. The intent of this is to make it easier for both you and her. If you can't make the meeting, I assume that it will be possible to go in to her office

at the Courthouse to take care of it but I have not confirmed this.

ANNUAL SIMULATED EMERGENCY TEST

The scenario for the test this year included a loss of VHF/UHF repeater coverage and the need to pass ICS forms by voice on Simplex. On the 2nd District 7 conducted a coverage test. I took the 147.02 repeater off the air and connected my mobile rig to the receive antenna. The premise for this is that whatever would take a repeater off the air (grid power failure or EMP) would probably leave the antenna available. The results were impressive. I heard stations from the Soo and Newberry down to Roscommon and Rose City. Much of this was due to no duplexer insertion loss and no desense from a transmitter. There may also have been a little bit of a band opening but it was impressive nonetheless.

The actual SET on the 9th used the same setup. Not as many stations were heard. Again, the band may not have been quite as good but another damper was net discipline to handle the traffic being moved along with the fact that adjacent districts weren't chiming in to check coverage.

The passing of information on the ICS-213 (General Message) form went much better than I would have expected from previous exercises.

PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY BACKUP FREQUENCY

A little over a week after the SET we had our own experience with the loss of a repeater. At the weekly net session on the 18th, it didn't take long to realize that nobody was making it through the repeater. With my location and antenna I was able to listen on the Input and work Reverse to pick up a few stations. Not too many other stations were hearing each other.

Quite a while ago we determined that, in the event of a repeater failure, we'd all go to the Output frequency (147.02) and work Simplex. We haven't discussed this much for a while and it shows (my fault, sorry). Rigs these days are a lot more capable than they used to be (Good), but they are much more troublesome to program (Not So Good). Some are such a pain that you need to use third-party software to get it done. This is why I programmed 147.02 Simplex into my rigs a while ago. I know I'll never get it done quickly when I really, really, need to. Something else that we can probably talk about at the meeting.

PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY MOBILE COMMAND TRAILER

A question was raised at a previous meeting as to what plans the County has for the Mobile Command trailer that has been moved from inside storage at the airport and is now sitting outside across the street from the Sheriff's Department. They have no plans to dispose of it or any of the equipment in it at this time.

Those are the highlights for now. Be on the lookout for followup e-mails regarding the RACES forms. I hope you can make the meeting.