ARES Connect Monthly Report – May 2019

Number of persons registered per District

	Registered		Registered
District 01 - WD8PNZ	142	District 02 - W8UY	10
District 03 - W8LLY	163	District 04 - N8TFD	117
District 05 - KC8SYF	105	District 06 - W8DLB	54
District 07 - KB8YMN	211	District 08 - N8SUZ	36
District 09 - W8FHF	60	District 10 - N8AUC	173

Total Registered Users: 1072

Number of hours volunteered per District

	Hours Volunteered		Hours Volunteered
District 01 - WD8PNZ	532.25	District 02 - W8UY	0
District 03 - W8LLY	751.62	District 04 - N8TFD	167.25
District 05 - KC8SYF	54.25	District 06 - W8DLB	538.50
District 07 - KB8YMN	507.35	District 08 - N8SUZ	4.00
District 09 - W8FHF	202.85	District 10 - N8AUC	965.85

Total Registered User Hours: 3,723.92
Total Anonymous Hours: 2,683.75

Total Hours: 6,407.67

Breakdown by Event Classification

	# of Events	# of Persons	Hours Credited
Communications Emergency	4	59	369.75
Community Event	31	84	485.02
Exercise	5	13	36.00
Meeting	38	162	469.36
Net	298	756	814.43
Skywarn	31	232	204.00
Training	59	99	777.11
Miscellaneous	25	7	1212.00
Unclassified – All events not listed above	158	636	2040.00
Total	649	2,048	6,407.67

Breakdown of training levels

Level 1	504
Level 2	429
Level 3	139

Total: 1,072

Top 10 persons for hours volunteered in May

Name	Events	Hours
Scott Yonally (N8SY)	50	447.00
Henry Ruminski (W8HJR)	36	153.65
Elizabeth Klinc (KE8FMJ)	48	131.50
Christopher Domenick (KC8CAD)	26	126.60
John Westerkamp (W8LRJ)	49	119.58
Bret Stemen (KD8SCL)	38	108.50
Doug Braun (KB8TGT)	6	86.00
David Noeth (KD8ACO)	14	82.00
Mathew Nickoson (KC8NZJ)	13	78.25
Timothy Gray (KD8IZU)	6	72.00

Top 10 persons for events volunteered in May

Name	Events	Hours
Dan Stahl (KC8PBU)	52	59.25
Scott Yonally (N8SY)	50	447.00
John Westerkamp (W8LRJ)	49	119.58
Elizabeth Klinc (KE8FMJ)	48	131.50
Bret Stemen (KD8SCL)	38	108.50
Henry Ruminski (W8HJR)	36	153.65
Michael Farkas (n8gbu)	34	39.50
Larry Caskey (K8LPC)	29	24.00
Steven Denniss (KC8IDM)	29	5.50
Colleen Roth (N8TNV)	29	14.00

Written Reports:

A Major New Step for ARES in Ohio; NVIS Day 2019 in the Books

A Step Up

Amateur Radio and ARES have been strong partners with the Ohio Homeland Security/Emergency Management Agency for a number of years. We have now been asked to step up our game as a contributing partner to help keep the agency alerted to important developments around the state. This means that ARES operators will be used more frequently in "real" situations- either monitoring potential weather conditions, the damaging results, or other important conditions affecting the state. In other words, we're being asked to put our training into actual practice to do meaningful stuff.

The Ohio HS/EMA "Watch Desk" is staffed 24/7 and is the room which has all the "red buttons" to activate the state's EMA response. In Ohio as a home rule state (the county EMA Director is in charge) the state must be requested to send aid, but gathering accurate information about emergency conditions will help the Watch Desk to gauge how much ramping up they need to do in order to be ready. For example, our recent tornado strike in Richland County drew everyone's attention. Computer reports from NWS and official agencies were at least 30 minutes ~after~ amateur radio reports came in. And it was not reported that after midnight, when the situation was ruled relatively safe, responders elected to wait until daylight to begin cleanup and restoration of services. Amateur radio could have been a help to resolve that kind of issue.

We want to work as partners to our county EMA agencies, and obviously make this beneficial to them… it is the local EMA which must respond and coordinate the level of help. We want to make sure this information goes to them first- thus, it's really important that your county either have a station at the EOC or you are in constant contact with the agency to relay these reports. In most cases, we actually expect the details to come from the EMA's so it works out well either way.

Read this twice: ARES is NOT even thinking about changing the way Skywarn nets operate in Ohio- the system works, is not broken, and definitely doesn't need "fixing." We are not even remotely interested in "taking over" the spotter system. What we are considering is asking local nets to appoint a liaison station (or possibly use existing amateur stations at the county EOC) to report just significant events to The Sarge. Under normal conditions that would probably mean actual sightings or tornado strike, as an example. Most of the information we would want actually follows the oncoming weather: we're more interested in damage and situations which might involve a request to the state. Many counties can create an incident in WebEOC software, but in many smaller operations, the Director might be found at the scene coordinating a response so the overall information would be of value to him and the Watch Desk.

I'm excited about this, it's a big step upward in the profile of amateur radio and ARES across our state. But it's not without its problems. Chief among them is how we're supposed to make all this stuff work!

How are we going to do this?
Working backward in constructing a system, several in leadership have logins to the WebEOC program. During "Snow Net" we were uploading logs regularly to wide acclaim. It was an excellent and successful test of the very situation we've been asked to create. We can enter reports both at the Sarge and remotely. Several also have logins to the "NWS Chat" system, which affords direct communication with the weather offices. That would be simple if only one weather office covered the state, but there are ~six~ forecast offices (Wilmington, Ft. Wayne, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburg and Huntington) which cover counties in Ohio. So there's no real direct route from NWS to State that's simple and concise.

The larger challenge is how are we going to listen/report across the state in a fashion that everyone (hams and agencies) can benefit. For example, a typical storm system moving west- while those western counties will be active, counties in the east benefit by listening- they can gage their response based on what they hear the system doing upstream. In the very rare case of a derecho or Palm Sunday outbreak, a statewide network would be invaluable and very active. But for most situations, we want to keep this all low-key and not jump overboard. Most important, where do we find a dependable statewide network?

We have a robust 80 meter system- both voice and digital data. This system is a proven asset, and we plan to make use of it. However, particularly with summer storms, the resulting static crashes and noise present a formidable challenge to widespread communication. Another situation to consider is that 55% of the licensed amateurs in Ohio are Techs- without HF privileges. It would be great to include them and have a system that would afford handheld coverage from disaster scenes.

Our experiments have included DMR. Snow Net was carried out on both HF and DMR Ohio talk group, with good success and overwhelming support from operators around the state. This was not out of the blue, as Section Manager Scott Yonally, N8SY, had received enthusiastic support a couple years ago from DMR owners. That support continues. We researched the license trustees of all DMR repeaters in the state, and obtained email for all but about 5. We created a survey, and emailed the support continues. We researched the license trustees of all DMR repeaters in the state, and obtained email for all but about 5. We created a survey, and emailed the 50 trustees asking them to take part. 20 did. The results were conclusive, with 19 of the 20 strongly supporting ARES making occasional, low-traffic use of the Ohio talk group 3139.

Here's how we see this working. In the typical "big-time weather system moving this way from Indiana" scenario, we would notify hams by email (EC email list and over 1000 in ARES Connect) that a situation was developing. W8SGT would be ~MONITORING~ on the Ohio talk group and the HF net. That's it…we'd just listen. IF a station or county began to really rock and roll, that EOC station or weather liaison would merely call W8SGT, tells us what's going on, and we'd go back to listening. We would then file the report into WebEOC. The worse it got, of course, the busier we might be but it would take a major event to lead us to actually calling a formal net. So we want to keep it low-profile but functional.
Plans are NOT solid yet, we're still researching and we're open to your suggestions! More to come on this major project!

Amateur radio saves lives in Shelby, Ohio

We learned April 14 that when it hits, it can hit hard and fast! A handful of Skywarn spotters (including DEC-6 Danny Bailey W8DLB and Section Manager Scott Yonally N8SY) were watching the storm move into Richland county. One report of spinning motion was immediately sent to NWS Cleveland, which in turn issued a tornado warning. Thanks to the Skywarn system, the warning was out before the storm struck Shelby, Ohio. No lives were lost, but there were six injuries.

This tornado was rates as an "EF-2" storm, but before you conclude it to be a small little funnel, consider it was on the ground for 17 miles, and reached a width of ½ mile! This developed into a classic wedge tornado. Check out TV video of the storm here: https://www.nbc4i.com/news/local-news/watch-video-of-tornado-in-shelby-ohio_20190414225650/1925752092

And look at the aftermath here: https://www.wkyc.com/video/weather/pictures-tornado-rips-through-shelby-ohio/95-a9702b0d-3313-4f68-8766-f65fafc9fc2c

Immediately after receiving word of the strike, coordinating through the county EMA, Danny and the rest of the crew headed immediately to Shelby, where they met with the Police Department. SEC Stan Broadway N8BHL coordinated with Danny on the 146.94 Mansfield repeater, where all tactical activity was taking place. It was agreed we needed to find more help in order to have enough manpower should dire reports of devastation prove lengthy. Since District 6 was all activated, it was decided to activate two counties to the north and three counties to the south of Richland- meaning District 2 (DEC in Toledo) and District 7 (DEC in west Columbus) as well as Richard KD8PHG in Groveport (southwest Columbus) who would stand by in case of state EOC activation. In order to coordinate resources across this great area, we used DMR Ohio Talk Group 3139. Five responded from Marion County to assist, along with some CERT members from a neighboring county.
The guidance "Do whatever we can to help" proved out here- where no communication facilities suffered, our hams were assigned to walk perimeter to watch for any looting or breech of security. By midnight, when all were accounted for, it was determined to close operation until dawn's light when power workers and others could work more safely.

The take away from this? It hit hard and fast, and there was no time to sit back and theorize about our reaction.

We needed to act quickly, and Danny did that masterfully. So – we aren't kidding when we tell you that you NEED to be active in your local spotters net, keep your battery charged and ready! Ohio weather can turn on a dime- and amateur radio spotters are the key to saving lives!

NVIS Report

NVIS 2019 is in the books, and with band conditions under the "Yucky" category we really didn't do badly. The Sarge had over 40 contacts (all on 80, at least inside Ohio) and worked at least 24 different counties. The band was up and down, but in a real emergency we would have had communication! It wasn't raining, that was a plus. We heard from a number of you that there was a lot of fun to be had- and that is what it's all about. Thanks and see you next year!!

Now Hiring

Folks, we have a deficiency at The Sarge- we need more operators. We do not want to grab more from Franklin County ARES, we're already hitting them pretty hard. So we're looking for operators within an hour's drive of the 270/315 area. We need at least a general class licensee. You should be familiar with fldigi and digital communication on HF and VHF. Experience in emergency response is a plus. You must pass a background check. If you're a seasoned operator - primarily a solid traffic handler or a successful contester – who is comfortable working under moderate pressure, and you're able to take on a modest time commitment (at most one night a week under a schedule with emergency activation always possible) please consider contacting myself or Richard, KD8PHG to be considered!

Now…to get ready for Field Day!!