

MCARCS Meeting Minutes - August 6, 2008

Attendees: Jim Nocera, KG6PUF, Norma Gibson, KF6JHT, Don Morosi, KF6UDJ, Doran Lincoln, KI6ISS, Annie Robinson, W6ANI, Alan Spivak, WA6JBK, John Lemmer, W6FQX, Chuck Heath, K6ZIZ, Liz Heath, K6OKO, Nick Wharff, KI6RIT, Jim Cline, W6JRC

1-Cal-Fire representative canceled at the last minute. Topic was to see what interest MCARCS members have in becoming pre-approved to be called on by Cal-Fire when they declare a "Red Flag Day", (high fire potential). Hams would be asked to drive in designated safe/at risk areas, report fire situations/starts via radio. Drivers would be reimbursed mileage.

2-Meeting/leadership/steering committee. Annie Robinson shared the progression of McHam, conceived by Annie, and Frank McGarvey, of Public Health. The idea fit in to improve county Hospital Preparedness programs, (county Hospitals/Clinics and EMS). Begun in December, 2006, as McHam, evolved into McARCS. With grant funding, Annie was able to purchase power supplies, base/hand-held radios, antennas, have most of the equipment installed, and operating in facilities. The program largely funded 2 Amateur Radio licensing sessions, introducing many to Amateur Radio, most who have obtained their License. The McHam/McARCS group has also participated in several events, from 2007 ARRL Field Day, (at Low Gap county park), to facilitating a county-wide communication exercise for the Mendocino County Office of Education. This exercise demonstrated that amateur radio operators could establish an alternative communication system for the MCOE Superintendent and 11 District Offices. Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman and Office of Emergency Services Coordinator Bill Woodworth observed and had many positive comments. Agreed by all that more work needs to be done.

Last year established weekly local Simplex 2 meter Nets, and a county-wide Repeater Net, allowing more practice by all levels of Licensees, and establishing Net scripts, protocols, and preparation for disaster needs. McHam/McARCS members have regularly assisted with communications during bicycle ride events, Ukiah Pumpkinfest and Truckers Light parades, and The Human Race in Ukiah.

Other activities included this year were 2 major exercises. One, a county-wide Hospital communication drill, and two, participation with Lake County OES/RACES, and many agencies, in a simulated multi-casualty incident causing an influx of severely injured victims for Mendocino County health care Facilities. Simulation included moulaged victims brought in to local Hospitals, emergency radio traffic to parallel the existing hospital systems. Much more work to do also.

3-Discuss a different meeting day/time to allow more interested people to attend. By hand vote, first Thursday each month was selected, time of 5:30 p.m., location/time is confirmed at MCSO Training Center, 951 Low Gap Rd., Ukiah. Cal-Fire has also offered a meeting location at the Cal-Fire Howard Forest Ridgewood location south of Willits. There can be further discussion to use the Cal-Fire location for meetings, or training. A future visit can allow a scheduled tour of Cal-Fire emergency dispatch center.

4-Ham radio equipment is owned by county EMS, not all equipment is installed, (RCMS), current Ham radio station in Public Health building on South Dora has been moved due to an office relocation, not in operation at this time. All equipment should be regularly tested and operational during Nets, prior to a communication need.

5-John Lemmer, W6FQX, has previously provided revisions/comments to **MCARCS organization documents**, none of which are yet finalized by MCARCS, but leading to considerable discussion about a steering committee, officers, and duties. These documents can provide the methods by which our organization can carry out our stated mission, conduct Nets, interface with other Counties, Nets, Operator training/Identification affiliations, activation, message format and Governance. This also expanded to talk of a need for a Liason Officer between served agencies, possibly include Tribal, Scouting, other organizations, and MCARCS, (Doran Lincoln will talk to Shodekai representatives). It was discussed that steering committee members should schedule a meeting with OES/MCSO/Red Cross and other agencies/organizations to obtain consensus as to activation, coordination, and a basic communication plan so efforts are not dis-jointed and frustrate efforts of Volunteers. Evacuation centers opened/closed during recent fires, for example, weren't coordinated between agencies and Red Cross.

6-Short discussion about frequently asked questions, (FAQ), tab for MCARCS.org, future public events, (Farmers Markets, other events, replacement for Field Day 2008). We are approved to set up a station(s) for demonstration at the Ukiah Fire Expo, Saturday, October 4, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

FYI: We have been asked by City of Ukiah to assist in communication/traffic control for 2008 Pumpkinfest, Saturday, October 18.

Submitted by Jim Cline, W6JRC