

Mendocino County Amateur Radio Communications Service

Meeting Minutes September 14, 2015

This meeting was held at the Sheriff's Training Center on Low Gap Road in the Donovan Room. This meeting had been rescheduled from the usual first Monday of the month due to the Labor Day holiday falling on the first Monday.

Attending this meeting (in suffix order) were KJ6EIF W6FQX, W6JRC, KI6MJC, WB9NJS, and KI6RIT (presiding). Also attending was North Coast Opportunities (NCO) Volunteer Network Manager Rebecca Enburg.

The first part of the meeting was a discussion with Ms. Enberg regarding the VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters) effort and the fact that there was essentially no VOAD activity in the Lake County wildfire disasters. It was observed by many that there was no Red Cross emergency communications involving amateur radio in the Lake County disaster. W6FQX remarked that the Red Cross in Santa Rosa told him several years ago when the ham station there was being dismantled that "we don't use radios any more, we use cell phones now". The ARES in Lake County did operate a stated "Open Net" for essential traffic on the 146.775 MHz repeater without any specific net control operator.

There was a discussion about the McARCS web site being down for several weeks. KI6RIT stated that the host server changed their support for the software that was being used for the McARCS web site. At the time of this meeting some parts of the web site were back up but KI6RIT said that he was not able to update the information.

There was discussion about a McARCS bank account and the mandatory \$3 per month minimum service charge. We had held off opening a new account after the other banks had raised their monthly minimum service charge to \$15 which would have affected severely our \$300 (average) bank balance. Since we had recently received a \$250 donation from the Rotary Club for our support in the Mendocino Monster, this made opening a bank account mandatory. Ms. Enberg offered the support from NCO in paying the bank service charge. Treasurer WB9NJS was then authorized to open a checking account with the Savings Bank of Mendocino County.

There was a discussion about the ham radio response to the fiber optic cable cut on September 3 affecting most (if not all) cell phone service, internet service, long distance telephone service, and cable television service. In response to a request from the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services (OES) to open the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for radio communications, several operators were dispatched to the various hospitals and fire stations around the county to verify the presence or absence of communications capability. It was verified that local telephone calls could be made and received using the copper wire telephone service but nearly anything involving long

distance or internet service was not available. W6FQX wondered if this would be a wake-up call for those persons and organizations that have discontinued copper wire telephone service for cell phone or internet based telephone service

WB9NJS questioned why an operator was not dispatched to the Northbrook Healthcare Center during the general communications outage on September 3 but it appears there was not a dispatch of an operator to any of the other-than-hospital health centers either, including the Public Health Department. It appears that neither McARCS nor the county OES have any kind of a priority established for emergency communications services in the event of any kind of disaster, natural or man-made. This needs to be addressed. W6FQX offered to provide his lists of health centers, school district offices, fire stations, and even prospective Red Cross shelters to aid in this determination of priority at a later date.

There was a discussion about the lack of participation by operators around the county in the public service events such as the bike rides. What can we do to get more participation? It appears that net practice and training for disaster communications does not hold enough appeal to many operators. The Harvest Ride was coming up in the next two weeks and, as of the date of the meeting, there were not enough volunteers to provide communicators to all of the rest stops.

KJ6EIF mentioned the California Shakeout exercise to be held on October 15 at 10:15 AM. This will be a very low key event with local net activation and a county-wide net following. This has been mentioned on the county-wide net but it is unknown how many operators plan to participate or even how many even listen to the county-wide net on a regular basis.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Lemmer, W6FQX
Secretary, McARCS