

CAM HAM

A Newsletter for Amateur Radio in Cambria County
Winter 2007-2008, Volume 1, Issue 1

WELCOME TO CAM HAM ISSUE NUMBER ONE!

This is the opening adventure in establishing a newsletter for Cambria County Amateur Radio Operators. I hope to use this quarterly newsletter to keep operators updated on the county RACES program and various other features. But make no mistake about the newsletter, it is not just about RACES, anyone can write or submit information or an article so as long as it is related to radio. This is a vast area that includes, amateur, CB, remote control, family radio/GMRS, Dxing, scanner listening, TV, or whatever is of interest.

Until the newsletter “catches on” I will do most of the writing. I have experience writing newsletters, but help is always appreciated. Ideas are also appreciated. Even if you aren’t a writer, if you give me the information, I will assemble it into some type of article. I would like input!

Also, I am starting small. The newsletter will be distributed on e-mail and also available on the Cambria County RACES web page. If you want your own email copy, drop me a line at n3yfo@atlanticbb.net. You can also retrieve back issues on the RACES webpage. The URL is <http://hunter.homeftp.net/races/>

THE STATUS OF RACES

The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service was rumored to have died

several years ago. This is not true. Federal legislation mentions RACES and the Department of Homeland Security officially recognized amateur radio and RACES as a resource.

There is a lot of confusion about ARES and RACES. I will devote future articles to this matter. Suffice it to say, RACES is under the direct auspices and authority of the Cambria County Department of Emergency Services (CCDES). ARES and RACES work well together in many respects, however they are different in operation and lines of authority.

At this time Cambria County has no operational ARES program and the RACES program is being resurrected after years of neglect. Wish me luck!

EQUIPMENT

You might not be aware of what Cambria County has in the way of equipment for amateur radio use. To date the county sponsors one 2-meter repeater, two 70cm repeaters, a 220 mhz repeater and a 6-meter repeater. Most of this equipment, with the exception of the 2 meter, 145.210 and 442.825 Johnstown 70cm repeater is currently off the air. The county is in the midst of a major radio system overhaul and the installation of a new system. The amateur radios are off the air and in storage so as to make room for the work in progress.

In addition to the repeater systems the DES has a complete HF station located at the Cambria County 911 Center.

There are plans for an enhanced amateur radio system in the future. At the present, most of the county's attention is on the upgrading the 911 and county emergency services. However, when the dust settles, there will be improvements in the amateur radio equipment as well.

TRAINING AND DRILLS

One of the reasons this newsletter exists is to disseminate information to local amateurs about training and drills. A little history is in order here. Prior to some of our nation's experiences with large scale disasters as 911 and Oklahoma City, Hurricane Katrina and others, rescue and recover efforts were locally coordinated. There was no master plan or unified language. If you came to help from another locale, you might as well be in a foreign county where every one speaks a different language.

Imagine if you wanted to talk to the officer or person in charge. What is his or her title, where are they located? Even radio traffic was cryptic. Imagine a center monitoring several police, fire and EMS organizations and amateur radio. How does the jargon of 10-4, 151, 108, received, and QSL translate? Thus the need to provide a common ground and a common set of terminology is a must.

The Incident Command System series of FEMA courses is designed to provide some common ground and terms. Without doing a sales pitch for these courses, they do provide some sense of common ground how an emergency or an incident is managed and by whom. Gone are the days of stumbling in and

learning on the fly. The courses are needed and every RACES and ARES affiliated operator will need to be familiar with ICS. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina a FEMA worker remarked that a badly trained volunteer is more of a part of the problem rather than being part of the solution. No one wants to be thought of in this way.

The specific requirements for Cambria County RACES is not yet determined. However, at a minimum, ICS 100 and ICS 200 will be required. Both area available free on the FEMA web page, <http://training.fema.gov>

WEB PAGE UPDATES DONE

The RACES Web page is one of the best kept secrets in Cambria County. However, the page is completed and ready to go. Included on the newly revised page is the current county ARES-RACES communication plan. This is over 12 years old and will need an overhaul. Other links and information of interest to local amateurs will also be posted in addition to a copy of this newsletter.

FINALLY...

It's New Years Day 2008 as I put the finishing touches on this newsletter. I will be attending a January meeting about RACES and hopefully will have some direction on rebuilding this fine organization. Happy New Year!