



International Amateur Radio Union Region 1 2017 General Conference – Landshut, Germany



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The role and tasks assigned to the Emergency Communications Co-ordinator are specified in the Working Groups Terms of Reference. In this report, I will summarise my activities against each of the tasks listed.

1/ To prepare and keep updated an inventory of emergency communications services provided by IARU Region 1 Societies.

There are 42 countries which have declared some form of emergency communications organisation. Their details are kept in a file with information on frequencies used, number of members etc. The information that the National Emergency Co-ordinators are happy to share is published on the Region 1 Website or through papers to the C4 and C5 committees at Region 1 Conferences.

There is a wide difference between the kinds of services amateur radio is asked to provide in different countries. This is because in some countries, anything that affects their financial systems can also be called a 'disaster'. Other countries may see this as 'Business Continuity' which would not necessarily be appropriate for the amateur service but we do need to understand how our administrations define disaster and then try to meet their needs without putting the Amateur Service in difficulties.

There is a continuing issue of identifying 'emergency communications services'. The exact wording of this term of reference only requests information on services provided by Member societies. In fact many services are provided by groups independent of National Societies and recently an agreement was made between the Radio Society of Great Britain and the independent RAYNET-UK organisation for all emergency communications services to be handled by RAYNET-UK as a Special Interest Group. When considered against other countries such as France which is also has FNRASEC/ADRASEC or the Netherlands with DARES as independent groups, forming a large proportion of members within the Region involved in Emergency Communications independently.

My approach remains to engage with all Emergency Communications Groups so that IARU can represent all radio amateurs involved. This can cause problems sometimes, however Emergency Communications is frequently used to justify the Amateur Service in negotiations with Regulators and I feel that we should be seen to represent the widest possible community.

I will have a copy of my latest information available at Friedrichshaven and Landshut for inspection by the EC if required. It is not published, even within the Emergency Communications Community due to Data Protection concerns. I would like this to change one day !

2/ To act as a focal point on amateur radio emergency communications services with IARU Region 1 to international bodies and user services (e.g. The International Red Cross).

Together with Thilo Kootz and Jacques Verleijen of the PRC I met with Mr Encho Gospodinov of the European Commission before the opening ceremony of the IARU Region 1 conference in Varna and presented our capabilities in emergency communications. This was a good introduction but the opportunity was lost through the regular change of EU Commissioners and Commissioner Georgieva leaving as EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management to be replaced by Commissioner Christos Stylianides soon after the conference.

A second opportunity though was presented with an open public consultation on the Interim Evaluation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism which closed on 23rd February 2017. A submission was made through the PRC highlighting our participation in EU sponsored events or exercises even though the EU did not normally liaise with Non-Governmental Organisations through Member States.

Our consultation response received a positive acknowledgement from the EU and it is hoped that together with the PRC we may be able to get a face to face meeting with EU officials soon.

RAYNET-UK also passed me an enquiry from a UK University about a bid for British Government funding for an education programme in several African countries. This would have supported development of emergency management skills and could have provided funding to develop Amateur Radio as a means of emergency communication in those countries. The enquiry was followed up and escalated to IARU Region 1 EC and ultimately the AC but unfortunately, we were not in a position to provide enough resources to participate in this bid. The level of knowledge about our skills within the University was good though, developed through interaction with one of our Emergency Communications Co-Ordinators in the Middle East. The University had other interests in our ARISS programme and was referred to RSGB in the hope that we maintain our good reputation with them in case there is the possibility to work with them in future.

What is always important is to have a set of good, recent examples of how amateur radio can help in emergencies, reports from all emergency groups are important in making us look relevant to the professional services.

3/ To liaise on emergency matters with IARU Regions 2 and 3.

Liaison with Dr Cesar Pio Santos, HR2P, and Jim Linton, VK3PC, the Regional Emergency Communications Co-Ordinators for Regions 2 and 3 continues with information on disasters and events in other countries being circulated to Region 1 through the website and R1emcor mailing lists.

There has never been an occasion where all the Regional Emergency Communications Co-ordinators and Hans Zimmermann have been able to meet at the same time but I was able to meet with Jim Linton of Region 3 briefly during his holiday to London. We covered a lot of topics which would not ordinarily have been discussed on email and this quick face to face contact was very worthwhile.

I was unable to attend the IARU Region 2 Emergency Communications Conference in Chile in 2016. Sadly, the presentations are no longer available to view online and it is hoped that Region 2 finds a provider to host the files again soon so that information can still be shared between the regions in the absence of GAREC conferences.

4/ To prepare a common guideline on amateur radio emergency procedures.

I contributed to the work undertaken by Rod Stafford, W6ROD, in the production of the original IARU Emergency Telecommunications Guide which is now available on the main www.iaru.org website. This document has now been translated into Romanian and Spanish through the efforts of Region 1 Radio Amateurs, it is however important that any future changes made are co-ordinated between Regional Co-ordinators so that issues do not emerge with translated versions being different to any new versions.

The IARU HF Emergency Operating Procedure remains a separate document requiring significant improvement following the experience gathered from the GlobalSET exercises and from IARU Region 1 participation in events like the ARRL Simulated Emergency Test. Frequently I have to point out that emergencies do not stop at national boundaries, also that stations in adjacent countries are able to offer assistance in message passing, something that becomes important when HF propagation is poor. When a group adopts only its own national standards it becomes a weak link in the message handling chain.

5/ To circulate and publicise information on emergency events in which the Amateur Radio Service has been involved.

As this information is received on events within Regions 2 and 3 it is normally posted to the Region 1 emergency communications co-ordinators mailing list and then reposted on the www.iaru-r1.org website. When appropriate the links are also posted on social media to spread the news of an amateur radio activation as widely as possible. The intent is always that the IARU website is seen as a trusted source of information but this can only happen if the news can be posted quicker than it may appear through other websites.

It became obvious that the R1emcor website is now quicker to update so I ensure that information is posted to the Region 1 website when received from a trusted source as soon as possible so that it may also be picked up by other news websites to spread the news of activations as soon as possible.

6/ To arrange meetings, when deemed necessary, to discuss principle and actual matters on amateur radio emergency communication. Such meetings shall only be arranged after approval, of and in consultation with, the EC.

I was invited to attend the IRTS AGM in April 2015 to speak on Emergency Communications and meet with their Amateur Radio Emergency Network members. This event happened at the same time as the Nepal earthquake providing a challenge in co-ordinating enquiries while out of my home country. No other presentations have been made to National Societies in this reporting period.

The GAREC conferences have effectively been put on hold, GAREC 2015 which was scheduled to be held in Tampere Finland was cancelled due to a lack of pre-registrations placing the organisers at financial risk. The timing of the cancellation meant I felt there was no time to implement the recommendation from the Varna conference to have annual meetings for Emergency Communication groups in the region at the Friedrichshafen HamRadio show.

The first meeting however was held in 2015 with a three-hour session covering a wide range of topics from reports from other regions, proposals to change the IARU Emergency Message procedure and information on the Emergency Communications Groups in Germany, Poland and Slovenia. Around 20 attendees were present from 10 countries and the presentations were made available to all after the event through the Region 1 website.

There will be another meeting on 14th July 2017, the Friday chosen to not clash with the DARC Notfunk-Universität normally held on the Saturday.

7/ To organise tests and exercises to promote international emergency communications and links between countries.

Following the response to the Nepal disaster the format of GlobalSET was altered for 2015 to become an alerting exercise to find out how many radio amateurs could be made available in responding countries. The exercise was deliberately timed to be in the working day when the most difficulty should be experienced within Region 1.

Of nearly 3200 amateurs contacted in Region 1 as part of the event, around 650 stated that they would be available to respond in < 1 Hour which was felt to be a good response for a working day. The exercise report was published to the Region 1 website at <http://www.iau-r1.org/index.php/documents/Documents/Emergency-Communications/GlobalSET-2015-Report/>

Following the GlobalSET 2015 exercise Jose EA9CD the Emergency Communications Co-Ordinator for Spain set up a 'Whatsapp' group to improve notifications between countries within the Region. 10 countries are represented on the group and it provides another channel for emergency alerting and demonstrates the desire of countries to learn and improve after exercises. Experience in later months shows that Whatsapp is not read immediately by all members of the group with some delays being the same as email. To have an effective alerting method requires a number of methods to be used, there is no one method that will work for everyone.

The region continues to take part in the ARRL Simulated Emergency Test in October each year exchanging messages with their American counterparts using radio links only for the USA and

Transatlantic links. This expands on daily nets between the UK, Germany and the USA for formal message handling.

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