

Hello all stations,

With this memo I am resigning my post as the acting State RACES Officer. I have tried to be patient as I was promised progress would resume by now, but that was not to be. Therefore, I see no reason to contribute any more of my time to this effort. I have not named, nor am I aware of any successors.

As you are well aware, the state level MEMA organization continues to show little interest in completing the program changes they had ironically been enthusiastically clamoring for just a year ago. After proceeding with what we thought was a mutually agreeable solution, progress was suddenly and inexplicably arrested back in early spring. At that time we were accused of “talking out of school” about a MEMA plan to close regional offices, and telling EMD’s using (even dependent) on Amateur Radio (AR) communications that MEMA would soon refuse to accept any communications from them not on state systems. Those assertions remain as ridiculous now as they did then. We said then, and continue to say now, that we concur that it is a good idea to use state systems first, then utilizing AR if that effort fails. This also may occur (as it does in many towns) if the city/town does not have equipment (or it is in proper operating condition) to follow protocols such as those found in the *Massachusetts Interoperability Field Operations Guide (MIFOG)*.

I have come to believe that the state MEMA does not desire to have any amateur radio support at the state level, even at the most rudimentary level. Some states have traded RACES for some kind of better arrangement, but few are eschewing it as ours is. MEMA has expressed a great interest in receiving “disaster intelligence” or “ground-truthing” of damage to infrastructure and property similar to the SKYWARN model. They are also interested in civilian volunteers to work various exigency dependent expansion jobs within the SEOC. They also feel they have enough AR licensed operators on staff to use our network in an emergency. However, the MEMA regions seem to view the situation differently as they remain the primary conduit to the state government for most MA cities and towns.

For the past four years, I have been the NGO representative to the state interoperable upgrade process. An impressive and necessary effort was undertaken to improve our state communication systems, leading to a feeling on the part of state emergency response hierarchy that technology will dominate the solution to any problem. These systems are still very vulnerable to power disruptions, and organizational continuation of operations issues. History, as we well know, has shown that organizations which ignore AR can be in peril when massive destructive forces are unleashed. ***Despite its relative simplicity compared to today’s complex public safety communication systems, AR is eminently more survivable and sustainable.***

If I may make a few final recommendations:

1. Most importantly, if circumstances leave you without the technology in the MIFOG and Amateur Radio is available to you, use it! The AR community, including surviving RACES facilities regionally and locally, stand ready to assist you. Get to know them if you don't already.
2. Continue to explore the advantages of using the improving state systems that continue to come online. Contact your Police or Fire Chief for the state plan found in the MIFOG.
3. AR should again focus on those organizations that participate largely in the recovery phase of a disaster. This common mission of all NGO's.
4. We can serve response mission organizations such as MEMA, but it should be on a mission/client need basis only. The old partnership with state MEMA model is dead.
5. Focus on extreme conditions in your training, drills, and exercises. Your simplex exercising should be regular, routine, and as rigorous as you can make it. Remember to practice all year as our services respond differently in dry and moist atmospheres. Think about the impact of CME's and other space weather events.
6. Never forget what we offer even in a high tech world:
 - a. A robust (some might even say mighty) point-to-point system
 - b. A highly effective HF network intra and inter state
 - c. Our digital comm systems that can work without (or patch) the internet
7. I'd like to leave you with mention of R & D work done with the narrow band digital communication systems by our Cape Cod ARES team. Known as NBEMS, you can acquaint yourself to it at your favorite search site. This very impressive effort is being led by Frank O'Laughlin, WQ10, using all frequency bands, modes and speeds legally available to us. For the past year, they have been subjecting the technology to rigorous real world testing and evaluation. This could be the "best game in town" especially if the prediction for a massive attack on the Internet by the DOD comes to be realized.

I am heading to new volunteer challenges and retirement. It has been my privilege to work with all of you. I wish you all the best of luck and success in your endeavors, and good health and happiness to you and yours.