2019 AGM OF BRITISH COLUMBIA COORDINATION COUNCIL

Ed Frazer, VE7EF – BCARCC Secretary

The Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Amateur Radio Coordination Council (BCARCC) was held on Sunday, May 26 at the offices of North Shore Emergency Management in North Vancouver, British Columbia and was hosted by the North Shore Amateur Radio Club. The meeting, chaired by President Ian Procyk, VE7HHS, was attended by 22 delegates representing 13 Amateur Radio clubs in the Province. The meeting was video-conferenced, and 12 members participated by this means.

The meeting received reports from officers concerning repeater coordination issues in the past year. Sixteen new repeaters went on air in the past 12 months: nine FM repeaters in Northern British Columbia and one FM repeater in the Interior as well as 10 digital repeaters. The number of repeaters in the province increased slightly to 425, with the majority located in the southwest part of BC and the Okanagan Valley.

A specific issue concerned a Fraser Valley club using a coordinated 2m frequency pair for an emergency portable repeater. The Council does not approve such exclusive use by a rarely used portable repeater. Subsequently, the club arranged the portable repeater to use the same channel as their normal repeater which would be turned off during an emergency.

The Council has also discontinued listing simplex nodes because their use in packet and Echolink has greatly diminished and because the Western Washington Amateur Relay Association (WWARA), the coordination council in Western Washington, is now using several previous 146 and 147 MHz simplex channels for repeaters, with a 1 MHz offset.

Interest in 1.2 GHz repeaters has increased locally. Since BCARCC does not publish a 1.2 GHz band plan, the meeting agreed to adopt the plan developed by the WWARA.

The AGM also received a report from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) describing problems in the industrial use of uncertified two-way radios, typically programmable Amateur equipment. Radio used in Industrial applications must be type-approved. This problem is especially difficult because of the very low cost of some Amateur equipment. Also mentioned was the use of broadband jammers to interfere with communications. It is illegal to import, sell, possess or operate a jammer in Canada. ISED requested that they be contacted if Amateurs become aware of such usage.

Directors and Officers elected to serve for the next year were: President – Doug McBurney, VA7DJ (Delta ARC); Vice-President – Robert Beaupre, VE7RBE (Sun Coast ARC); Past-President – Ian Procyk, VE7HHS (Coquitlam ARC); Secretary – Ed Frazer, VE7EF (Point Grey ARC); Treasurer – Urey Chan, VE7URE (Richmond ARC); Chief Coordinator – George Merchant, VE7QH (North Shore ARC); Brian Leckie, VA7BXL – Director (South Vancouver Island).

For more information on BCARCC Officers, Directors and Coordinators, repeater lists and band plans visit http://www.bcarcc.org.

Standing: President Doug McBurney, VA7DJ, of Delta ARC; Director Brian Leckie, VA7BXL, of Saanich Emergency Program; Vice-President Robert Beaupre, VE7RBE, of Sun Coast ARC;Treasurer Urey Chan, VE7URE, of Richmond ARC.
Seated: Chief Coordinator George Merchant, VE7QH;Secretary Ed Frazer, VE7EF of Point Grey ARC; Past-President Ian Procyk, VE7HHS of Coquitlam ARC.

When All Else Fails...

Mike Crabtree, VA3MCT – EC York Region ARES

The York Region Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) now has two subgroups, one for Research and a second for Operations.

York Region covers some 1,762 square kilometres and has many obstacles to easy communications, so last year York Region ARES (under the Research group) did lots of testing using variations on digital formats for the purposes of message passing using systems such as D-RATS over D-STAR and Fldigi.

This year's testing is focusing on Winlink and Packet radio systems. A small group has tested both HF using WINMOR and VHF using Packet for Winlink operations with great success. In addition, as the traditional structure of using the three-layer Winlink system (client, RMS and CMS), testing has also included peer-to-peer testing on both VHF and HF line-of-sight links.

A local RMS (Radio Messaging Server) has been installed for testing purposes with the intention of moving that system and frequency for use at the York Region Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to provide region-wide coverage of a Winlink system that can also use HF for larger distances.

There are many aspects to Winlink including use for accessing normal email addresses, e.g., Gmail and Outlook.com, but also RMS-to-RMS modes or local mailboxes, as well as failover mechanisms when no Internet is available locally.

We are encouraging larger teams to participate in the testing group, including local test Nets to help people get started.

While there is still debate about which mode is best for ARES – such as Narrow Band Emergency Messaging Software (NBEMS) vs Winlink – we are aware that whatever we choose locally in York Region cannot be a single system due to the fact that surrounding areas may have chosen a different technology and we all still have to be able to interoperate.

Whatever we choose, it is always fun to learn and play with radios and try different things. That is what the hobby is about after all. But Emergency Operations is a serious business and we need to be prepared for all eventualities.

TCA 🍁