



THE WIRELESS HILL BEACON

The monthly newsletter of the
Delaware Valley Radio Association
P.O. Box 7024
West Trenton, NJ, 08628-0024



September 2009

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Training & Examinations

D. Wright, AA2F

Web Service

S. Huston, W2SRH

Hamfests

Unassigned

Publications

M. Bepalko, N2KIV

Programs

G. Wilson, K2GW

Immediate Past Presi- dent

D. Wilmore, W0YMV

DVRA's Next Meeting...

The regular monthly meeting will be held at 7:30 PM on **Wednesday, September 9th**, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, on Upper Ferry Road at Wilburtha Road in West Trenton. The site is easy to reach from I-95 or NJ-29. Talk-in is available on the 146.67 (PL 131.8) and 442.65 repeaters.

All are welcome!

This Month: YOUR show & tell presentation on what you did this past summer!

We did this last year and would like to make it an annual event. Bring in the ham radio related projects that you worked on last summer or, the new "~~toys~~ important or unique acquisitions" purchased for your hobby related activities. Last year we had 4 project presentations that were excellent. We hope to see at least that many this year.

Now, if you are in the middle of the project and aren't sure of the next step, bring that in, too. There is probably an expert in the Association that can help with suggestions.

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Association Calendar

2009 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

January 14	April 8	July 8	October 14
February 11	May 13	August 12	November 11
March 11	June 10	September 9	December 9

The Directors Meetings are on the same date as the General Meetings above. However, the Directors Meetings begin at 6:30 pm at the club shack. Talk-in available on the 146.67 (PL 131.8) repeater.

TECHNICIAN LICENSE CLASSES

Don Wright, AA2F, periodically holds Technician classes. Classes are held at various locations. Call Don at 609-737-1723 to register.

VE TESTING SCHEDULE

2009 VE Testing Schedule:

January 17	July 19
March 15	September 13
May 17	November 15

All exams start at 12:15 PM sharp!
Testing is at the Hopewell Township Branch of the Mercer County Library, 245 Pennington-Titusville Road, Pennington.
Contact Don Wright, AA2F, 609-737-1723 or aa2f@arrl.net for exam information.

2-METER & 70-CM NETS

2-Meter Nets: All of the following are conducted on the club's 146.67 repeater.

The Pepper Net, 10:00 PM Daily,
Mercer Co. Emergency Net, 7:30 PM Tuesdays, KB2EGI, coordinator.

70-cm Nets: All of the following are conducted on the club's 442.65 repeater.

The Pepper Net, 9:00 PM Daily,

2009 FUND RAISER

DVRA Hamfest Sunday, April **TBD**, rain or shine at the Mercer County Ice Rink

The Wireless Hill Beacon is the monthly newsletter of the Delaware Valley Radio Association. P.O. Box 7024, West Trenton, New Jersey 08628-0024.

Internet: <http://www.w2zq.com>

The editor is T. Mark Bepalko, N2KIV (tmbespalko@aol.com). Submissions are welcome from members and others, preferably by e-mail as a text or Word file. The deadline is midnight on the 20th of each month for the next month's issue; publication of items submitted after that date is not guaranteed.

DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORTS

Membership, T. Reeg, K2TFR

No new members this month.

Radio Station, D. Marlow, K2QM

No report received, per se, but actively involved in the repeater tower issues.

Repeater Operations, R. Schroeder, N2HX

Nothing has been going on with the repeaters. My "committee" has been largely unavailable.

An update on the tower. Rick Connor, the tower man, spoke with the representative from Thackray Crane Rental. He learned that Thackray's quote does not include rigging the tower. We still need someone with a high-reach bucket or fire truck to raise a man up to the tower to attach the appropriate sling. Connor is willing to do this if we can provide the mechanism to get him up there.

Assuming that the shack itself is not in any danger, there is no reason to move the repeater antennas when the tower comes down. We can easily switch to the dual-band antenna on the orange and white tower.

The good news is that I spoke with a rep from Verizon today and learned that the portion of West Trenton where the shack is and where I live is scheduled to have FIOS by the end of September! That's good news (for me, anyway).

Physical Plant, H. Gold, AB2VG

The Tower Crisis

The beginning of the month saw a tremendous windstorm strike the entire Trenton-Mercer Airport complex, which is adjacent to the shack. A combination of factors - high winds, tower deterioration, vegetation pressing against the side of the tower, guy wire problems - caused the 100' tower holding the repeater antennas to buckle slightly about halfway up. It was quickly determined by a combination of director inputs and a paid consultant, that the tower being 30 years old and having significant internal rust in the legs, no time should be lost in taking it down.

The initial problem was that a huge amount of vegetation, including the trunk of a tree, had to be removed before the tower could be dropped. Fortunately, all of this vegetation was growing from the other side of the fence, on the shoulder of the I-95 northbound ON ramp. Therefore it was the responsibility of the NJ DOT to remove it. We contacted them, they immediately appreciated the problem, and within about 10 days the tree was removed and the guy wires cleared.

At this time the decision is now about the best way to drop the tower, since there isn't a lot of working space back there. Dan K2QM and Bob N2HX have been taking the lead in investigating options. These will probably be discussed at the Directors' meeting on Wednesday, September 9, and a plan of action, and a financial plan, will be formulated.

We all feel that the tower should be dropped sooner rather than later, lest it choose to come down on its own in the next storm. The potential damage could be immense. It's not feasible to do the work in the winter, so the job must be done by Thanksgiving, which is now only 2 ½ months away.

August was also a bad month for computers- both my primary and backup failed. New Dell machine arrived two days ago and I am now writing my first memo (this one) on it. But I haven't yet transferred the DVRA files so I don't have access (yet) to more detailed notes. My game plan is to purchase two more

new machines (backup and backup's backup) by the end of the year. Fortunately, August is a quiet business month and the damage will be recoverable.

Public Information, T. Bagdas, N2UI

Nothing to report this month.

Training & Examination, D. Wright, AA2F

VE Exams are Saturday September 12 at 12:15 at the Hopewell Twp Branch of the Mercer County Library. Bring cash or check for \$15 and two forms of ID, at least one being a photo ID.

Anyone interested in classes for either Technician or General can contact Don/AA2Fat aa2f@arrl.net or 609-737-1723 for further information.

Web Service, S. Huston, W2SRH

The Wordpress installations were upgraded again this month as new security problems were found with them. Sounds worse than it is though, that's quite a routine thing with software anymore. I also installed "Google Analytics" stats on the site, so we can see a bit of information about how people got to our site and what sorts of things they are viewing. Nothing too interesting yet, but if I see some good data come from it I'll include it in a future report.

I've also created a "Facebook Page" for the DVRA, which subscribes to the website's news feed. Any news articles posted on the website will also go to the Facebook page, which in turn will show up in the news feeds of people who become fans of the DVRA. There's a discussion board and more there as well, which probably won't be of any interest to people who don't use Facebook but may help to expose amateur radio to those who do.

Programs, G. Wilson, K2GW

The topic for the September meeting is "What I Did on My Summer Vacation". Members bring in whatever new projects or toys they'd like to show off.

2009 Public Service Events

Put these activities on your calendar and plan on getting involved with one of them:



Alzheimer's Ass'n Memory Walk Sunday, October 11th
ETS Campus, Princeton, NJ
Mark, N2KIV Event Coordinator



Step Out for Diabetes Sunday, October 11th
Princeton Forrestal Village, Princeton, NJ
Darryl, N2JVP Event Coordinator

**Minutes of the
General Membership Meeting
March 11, 2009**

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church,
W. Trenton, NJ

There was no formal DVRA meeting for August. The meeting comprised our annual picnic.

A very brief business meeting was held to approve the Minutes in the newsletter and welcome the guests. A good time was had by all attendees. The next formal meeting of the DVRA will take place 09 September at Our :Lady of good Counsel church (the usual place).I hope to see you all there 73

Respectfully submitted,
Joe Sundra, W3ZLP
Secretary

**Minutes of the
Emergency Director's Meeting
to Address the
Main Repeater Tower Damage
August 08, 2009**

DVRA Shack, W. Trenton, NJ

The meeting was held to address damage to the main tower that occurred Sunday August 2, 2009. In attendance were Mark Bepalko, Kip Burnett, Ron Kubinski, Bob Schroeder, Don Wright, Bruce Wortmann, Gary Wilson and Hy Gold.

The points brought up during the meeting are:

1. An expert on antenna structures should be consulted to evaluate the need to take the tower down. John Crovelli, W2GD is the recommended expert. However, the club may ask if members with similar experience can provide free consultation. The club should have sufficient funds for an evaluation and report based on \$75 an hour with a four hour minimum.
2. Our insurance policy will not cover "equipment" damages. Obtaining insurance for the equipment will most likely be cost prohibitive, but a list of club equipment will be revisited.
3. It is expected that the tower will have to come down. With this in mind, it was suggested that the

club ask for multiple interest free loans from members to cover the guestimated \$7000 to take the tower down and find or build a new tower. The club would repay the loans on a yearly schedule for several years.

4. We will refer to the damaged tower as the "Mercer County OEM/RACES Repeater Tower" in our efforts to obtain disaster funding (\$20,000 based on recently estimated costs of a new tower and considering current increases in costs of copper and steel) in conjunction with Mercer County. An inventory of the club towers/antenna will be scheduled.

Completed items: The broken lower north guy wire was re-attached to the anchor with a turn-buckle and chain. It is again providing support under slight tension.

Action items:

1. Bruce and Bob will support with knowledge of towers and obtain estimates for cranes.
2. Kip will pursue government action in support of our cause.
3. Club members will be asked whether free support can be found for crane operations.
4. Consult John Crovelli upon his return from Texas.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Kubinski, KC2PQC
Treasurer

Balanced Lines April 2009

Bob Schroeder, N2HX ©2009

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

The appearance of Hurricane Bill and Tropical Storm Danny heralded the beginning of National Preparedness Month. As of this writing, emergency management officials are watching tropic storm Erika. The wildfires in California are not only threatening homes and people; the communications towers atop Mount Wilson are also in serious jeopardy. If anything happens to those facilities, government communications and obviously television and radio broadcast services will be knocked out. That means no EAS messages and no emergency management communications. Amateur repeater systems that inhabit those towers would also fall victim. This isn't just an imaginary scenario for October's Simulated Emergency Test; this is a real situation that is occurring right now.

Emergency planners are supposed to think about contingency plans long before an emergency happens. Some do, and some don't. One failing that planners are often guilty of is ruling out certain scenarios because they're improbable or just silly. History has shown otherwise. In the case of a natural emergency such as a hurricane or wild fire, nature is completely unpredictable and the best thing to do is mentally extrapolate the consequences to their most extreme. Does our technical arrogance allow us to believe that the California wild fires could never encroach upon the peak of Mount Wilson and knock out communications services? And how many times have we seen instances where depleted government budgets and bureaucratic negligence have led to the collapse of levees and bridges due to a lack of inspection and maintenance? Technological emergencies such as an aircraft accident, gas pipeline explosion, or power grid failure can more readily be planned for. The emergency response plan for New Jersey's two nuclear power plants is a perfect example. Federal guideline NUREG 0654 stipulates what state, county, and plant officials have to do to inform and protect the public and contain the emergency. Just about every contingency has been planned for and regularly tested.

Acts of terrorism are a little trickier. Scenarios depicted on prime time television shows such as *MI-5* may seem whimsical or far fetched; but are they really? If you or I can think up a crackpot idea on how to attack the infrastructure or cause a mass

casualty incident, you can bet there's some screwball or lunatic group who's thinking and plotting the same thing. The attacks of September 11, 2001 are a perfect example. Condoleeza Rice was quoted as saying that she did not imagine that anyone would use a commercial jet aircraft as a missile. When she was national security advisor, she certainly should have been imagining it. But she didn't. This is the shock and awe that accompanied those attacks. As westerners, we do not allow ourselves to imagine that rational human beings would commit such an atrocity. However the people who committed these acts were not westerners and do not think as we do. This is a typical mistake that emergency planners make. The fact is, no act is too vile and no plan is too insidious to be carried out. We do not live in Camelot.

Personal preparedness is an entirely different ball of wax. I would guess that most of the people who read this column have some kind of awareness as to what emergencies are likely to happen and have thus created their own contingency plan for themselves, their family, and their dwelling. Many organizations such as the American Red Cross publish literature which explains how to set up an emergency "go kit" in the event that you must evacuate your home in a hurry. Home fire drills and agreed upon meeting places are an excellent idea. And while a home invasion isn't pleasant to think about, the National Rifle Association recommends a contingency plan which includes a "safe room" for the entire family to retreat to in the event of a home invasion. Just because the eventuality isn't pleasant to think about doesn't mean it can't happen.

Friends of mine who work for FEMA have regaled me with many stories about how human nature and the attitude about emergency response vary across the United States. The observations aren't pretty. From a sociology point of view, you may not be too surprised at the findings. In the western part of the country emergency victims tend to be cooperative and appreciative. In the middle part of the country (i.e. the heartland) Americans tend to be extremely appreciative to the point of being downright apologetic. In the east, the attitude is self-centered and ungrateful. Nationwide, there are many who feel: "It's not my job. The government will take care of me." The diversity of awareness and sense of self-responsibility is staggering.

In my upcoming book on the history of emergency management I will delve into what I call “the human element” in greater detail. Suffice it to say, a bunch of bureaucrats sitting in an office in Washington, D.C. cannot create a national emergency response plan without taking the human factor into account. As I’ve written before in this column, there are some very remote and economically depressed villages on the planet that get battered by storms and other harsh weather, yet they suffer not a single casualty. They don’t get a cent of government money or institutional support, yet they recover, re-enter, and rebuild without anyone’s help. How do they do this? It’s their sense of community and self-responsibility that makes it possible.

What can you do to be better prepared? First, take responsibility for your own actions. Don’t assume that “the government” is going to handle everything. Secondly, maintain some modicum situational awareness. Behaving like an ostrich and hiding your head in the sand won’t prevent or mitigate an emergency. As the old saying goes, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Thirdly, make a plan and keep it updated. Where will you go should you have to evacuate? Are there any hearing or visually impaired persons living in your home? How about mobility impaired family members or relatives who have no means of transportation? For more recommendations, check out the NJOEM web site at www.state.nj.us.

CAN WE TALK?

There appeared in the August 28, 2009 edition of *The Wall Street Journal* a rather disturbing article entitled, “Why Gen-Y Johnny Can’t Read Nonverbal Cues”. From time to time, I write about technology and society and its unintended consequences. Here’s one I didn’t expect. A recent study revealed that on average, teens individually send and receive 2,272 text messages per month. Only a few months earlier, that same study came up with the number of 1,742 texts per month. The National School Boards Association estimates that teens spend an average of nine hours per week social networking. This activity includes blogging, IM, tweets, emails, and other digital modes. Ironically, although most of these activities are conducted on a cellular phone, most of their communication is done via sending written words rather than speaking.

Aside from the fact that the indiscriminate use of digital devices often results in a breach of eti-

quette (“Wait! I have to take this...”), social scientists have discovered that teens have lost the ability to discern and read what psychologists call “nonverbal cues”. When you’re speaking face to face with someone you have the opportunity to observe body language and facial expressions as well as voice inflection, pauses, and loudness. Speaking over the telephone or radio, we lose the visual cues but retain all the verbal ones. When we send text only, there are none of these to go by. Even in the early days of email, one of the cardinal rules of typing a message has been: DON’T USE ALL CAPS. IT MEANS YOU’RE SHOUTING. Other typographical fixes have been the invention of emoticons (e.g. smiley face symbols) and texting abbreviations such as “lol” for “laughing out loud”.

In spite of the proliferation of laptops and PDAs, many companies are banning such devices at company meetings and training sessions. Since the speaker cannot see what others are doing behind the laptop keyboard or hand-held device, it is unnerving to see people in the audience pecking away at their keyboards when they should be listening. This phenomenon now has a name: “continuous partial attention”. Older employees seem to have no qualms about adapting to these “topless meetings”; however the younger employees, who think that pecking at a keyboard is socially acceptable behavior, find the ban hard to understand.

Harder still is the ability of Gen-Y kids to adapt to face-to-face conversation with parents, boyfriends and girlfriends, teachers, and employers. It’s no wonder that we see many teens go into a zombie-like state when they don’t have their cellphone or PDA in their hands. As hams, we don’t have that problem. We talk a great deal. Even the seasoned CW operator knows how to read the “fist” of other friends while on the air. Morse operators even know how to laugh on the air, “Hi Hi”.

All for now.
Comments invited.

Bob Schroeder, N2HX
Past President, DVRA

MERCER COUNTY SKYWARN UPDATE

Leon Grauer N0TAZ

I hope that you've enjoyed the holiday weekend. Just a couple of items.

I have received back only about a dozen completed forms that were sent out a few weeks ago via e-mail. Please remember that you may mail the form to me if you are unable to complete it on-screen or to scan it. A few people have mailed their forms. EVERYONE needs to complete the form and return it to me. Only those who complete the forms will remain on the active spotters list.

Mercer County Skywarn will soon be getting a new e-mail address. You will receive an e-mail from that new address sometime within the next few days. Please make note of the new address when you receive it.

Have a great day!

Sincerely,

Leon Grauer, N0TAZ

Mercer County Skywarn Coordinator

Phone: 973 928 7679

E-mail: mercervskywarn@yahoo.com

Primary Skywarn Repeater: 147.105 MHz, PL 123.0 Hz, + offset

Secondary Skywarn Repeater: 442.200, PL 141.3, + offset

Skywarn Simplex: 146.580 MHz, Tone Squelch 123.0

N0TAZ's EchoLink Node: 8783

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