

Editorial by KC2P – I M H O

There is a Memorandum of Understanding between Ham Radio Operators (ARRL) and various groups (The American National Red Cross, The Associated Public Safety Communications Officers, Inc., The Federal Emergency Management Agency, The National Association of Radio and Telecommunications Engineers, Inc., The National Communications System, The National Weather Service, REACT International, Inc., The Salvation Army, The Society of Broadcast Engineers, Inc.).

The ARES/RACES Ham Radio operators in Erie County are a trained, Federally licensed, group of expert radio operators/communicators. They are not called upon to use their radio communication skills during times of crises in Erie County.

Here in Erie County cross training with various groups is a pipe dream. For a number of years I held the position of Assistant EC/RO in Erie County. As a result of beating my head against a brick wall, not having any cooperation from the powers that be, total frustration, I resigned as Assistant EC/RO.

On October 12, 2006 an unusual snowstorm hit four counties in Western New York, Erie County being one of them. Over three hundred thousand people were without power. Hospitals were requesting four wheel drive vehicles to ferry workers. Our local ARES/RACES group was not activated by anyone in authority to do so. Five days later 200 thousand people were still without power. Still ARES/RACES was not activated. I now ask, "Why did I spend the time to train, to take all of the required ICS and NIMS courses if ARES/RACES is not activated during a disaster".

A spokesperson for the American Red Cross stated in the Buffalo News that communication with Emergency shelters was lacking. However, the ARES/RACES group was not activated.

There seems to be a problem in Erie County with radio communication and cooperation between the powers that be. The State Police do not talk to the Sheriffs. The Sheriffs do not talk to the Municipal Police Departments. The Erie County Emergency Services Department does not talk to any of the above. In my opinion, their mindset is, "The group that controls the radio communication is the one that controls the situation at hand". It seems to be an ego trip. Everyone wants to be in control, or in charge, but no one wants to take orders.

Could it be that we are "Amateur Radio Operators" and not "Professional Radio Operators", or paid workers, the reason that we are not called to assist in times of crises?

Ron, KC2P  
kc2p at arrl.net

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