



Lake County
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ®
Amateur Radio Emergency Services ®
1303 North Milwaukee Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048



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For Immediate Release

Local Radio Operator Shares Weather Experience to Save Lives and Property

America was reminded of the critical role of Amateur Radio in 2005 as ham operators came from all over the country to provide emergency communications when other systems failed during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. A local Wauconda resident helps provide critical weather information during times of local disasters. David Kleckner, also known as KC9GZB among the amateur radio circles, participates in the Lake County, Illinois Sheriff's Department emergency communication group.

Founded in 1952, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (R.A.C.E.S.) is a public service provided by a reserve (volunteer) communications group within government agencies in times of extraordinary need. During periods of R.A.C.E.S. activation, certified unpaid personnel are called upon to perform many tasks for the government agencies they serve. Although the exact nature of each activation will be different, the common thread is communications.

R.A.C.E.S. receives guidance and direction from several federal agencies. For example; the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides planning guidance, technical assistance, and funding for establishing a RACES organization at the state and local government level; the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is responsible for the regulation of R.A.C.E.S. operations.

Lake County, Illinois R.A.C.E.S. organization is administrated by the Lake County Illinois Emergency Management Agency which is responsible for disaster services within the Lake County Sheriff's Department. R.A.C.E.S. is a function of that agency's Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS). This unit combines government RACES and non-government A.R.E.S. (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) activities and identify themselves as an R.A.C.E.S. /A.R.E.S. organization.

The Lake County R.A.C.E.S./A.R.E.S. organization provides a pool of emergency communications personnel that can be called upon in time of need. R.A.C.E.S. /A.R.E.S. groups across the country prepare themselves for the inevitable day when they will be called upon. When a local, county, or state government agency activates its ACS unit, that unit will use its communications resources (RACES, if necessary) to meet whatever need that agency has.

Traditional RACES operations involve emergency message handling on Amateur Radio Service frequencies. These operations typically involve messages between critical locations such as hospitals, emergency services, emergency shelters, and any other locations where communication is needed. These communications are handled in any mode available, with 2 meters FM being the most prevalent. During time of war, when the President exercises his War Emergency Powers, RACES might become the only communications allowed via amateur radio, using specific amateur frequencies set aside for wartime RACES use. ACS provides greater flexibility than RACES for non-wartime emergencies, on any amateur frequency designated in the local, county, or state ACS (or RACES) plan. Activating under the FCC's restrictive RACES Rules is not always necessary when using Amateur Radio Service frequencies for emergency communications. For example, our communicators may need to exchange messages with A.R.E.S. or other radio amateurs who are not government-certified to operate in a R.A.C.E.S. communication network. Our communication personnel also might become involved in non-amateur public-safety or other government communications, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staffing, and emergency equipment repair.



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Whatever need arises, well trained and experienced communication personnel are ready and prepared to help, via RACES/ARES or other duties as assigned. They develop and maintain their communications ability by training throughout the year, including special tactical exercises and public-service events. When that fateful day occurs, the Lake County R.A.C.E.S./A.R.E.S. organization will be there to meet the challenge. Mr David Kleckner has brought his skills, talents and abilities as a professionally trained meteorologist, combined with his amateur radio skills to provide strategic weather information to several otherwise difficult tactical exercises.

In keeping with the highest safety standards, Mr. Kleckner helped develop a “Severe Weather Supplement” is now the benchmark followed for all tactical and public service events which cover a large geographic and lengthy time frame. This allows all participants, and staff to operate within a very comfortable margin of safety. This may delay certain elements of the exercise but will not endanger personnel, or force a complete cancellation of a complex event or exercise due to the approaching severe weather.

Mr Kleckner also provides expert weather guidance during unexpected severe weather events which affect the residents of Lake County. The local SKYWARN radio network will be activated anytime weather conditions pose a threat to the people living and working in and around the Lake County area. Preliminary watches and warnings received from the National Weather Service combined with data from local weather sources are broadcast to the numerous field observers standing by throughout Lake County. Any actual observed significant weather phenomenon from our field observers such as severe hail, rotating wall clouds, funnel clouds, and large tree limbs down are reported directly through our radio network to the National Weather Service in Romeoville, IL. Mr Kleckner has been instrumental, on numerous occasions, to serve as the net control operator for these SKYWARN radio network operations. He has had a positive impact on the citizens of Lake County, and his experience has served as a positive role model among his peers.

For more information on the Lake County Emergency Management Agency, see their website at:
<http://www.co.lake.il.us/sheriff/divisions/emergenc.asp>

For more information on the Lake County R.A.C.E.S. group, please see their web site at: www.races.org, or by email at: lcraces@races.org

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What do Amateur Radio operators do during and after disasters?

Amateur Radio operators set up and operate organized communication networks locally for governmental and emergency officials, as well as non-commercial communication for private citizens affected by the disaster. Amateur Radio operators are most likely to be active after disasters that damage regular lines of communications due to power outages and destruction of telephone lines.

How do Amateur Radio operators help local officials?

Many radio amateurs are active as communications volunteers with local public safety organizations. In addition, in some disasters, radio frequencies are not coordinated among relief officials and Amateur Radio operators step in to coordinate communication when radio towers and other elements in the communications infrastructure are damaged.

What are the major Amateur Radio emergency organizations?

Amateur Radio operators have informal and formal groups to coordinate communication during emergencies. At the local level, hams may participate in local emergency organizations, or organize local "traffic nets" using VHF (very high frequencies) and UHF (ultra high frequencies). At the state level, hams are often involved with state emergency management operations. In addition, hams operate at the national level through the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (**ARES**) which is coordinated through the American Radio Relay League and its field volunteers and through the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (**RACES**) which is coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In addition, in areas that are prone to severe weather, many hams are involved in **Skywarn**, operating under the National Weather Service.

Is Amateur Radio recognized as a resource by national relief organizations?

Many national organizations have formal agreements with the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and other Amateur Radio groups including:

- Department of Homeland Security - Citizen Corps
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Communications System
- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- National Weather Service
- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials



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What are some examples of emergencies involving Amateur Radio?

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita – Sept 2005	Four Hurricanes in Florida and the Gulf - Sept 2004
Hurricane Isabel - September 2003	Northeast blackout - August 2003
Shuttle Columbia recovery effort - February 2003	Wildfires in Colorado - June 2002
Flooding in Kentucky - March 2002	World Trade Center and Pentagon - September 2001
Earthquake in El Salvador - January 2001	Fires in Los Alamos, New Mexico - May 2000
Hurricane Floyd - September 1999	Hurricane Georges - September 1998
"500-Year Flood," Grand Forks, N.D - April ,1997	TWA plane crash - July 1996
Oklahoma City Bombing - April 1995	

To Learn More:

The best way to learn about Amateur Radio is talking to hams face-to-face. To find out how to get started and who to contact in your area, call or write:

The American Radio Relay League, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111

Telephone 1-800-32 NEW-HAM

www.arrl.org/hamradio.html