MINUTES

HAMNET Meeting held at the NARC, Radiokop, on 23rd October 2004.

Chairperson - Francois Botha (ZS6BUU).

The Meeting commenced at 14:00 with some 30 persons attending.

Apologies.

Bernie : ZS6ANU, Derek : ZR6DG, Hans : ZS6AKV, Trevor : ZR6TR, Frans : ZS6ZR.

Welcome and Opening. (ZS6BUU)

Francois extended a welcome to all and a special welcome to the keynote speakers, Charles Norval (Head of Air Traffic Control and Navigation Systems ATNS), Arthur Bradshaw (Head of Aeronautical Search and Rescue for South Africa) and Andy Coetzee (ZS6CEY).

Francois commenced by asking "should amateur radio play a role in civil society and perform a service to the public". (The opening presentation is available by request directly to Francois).

Francois made the point that during an emergency, and for various reasons, we cannot always be certain that regular means of communication will and shall be in operation. These include mainly, the telephone, cell phones and satellite communications. A comment by Riley Hollingsworth K4ZDH who represents amateur radio on the FCC in America, "the energy, compassion and excellent radio procedures in the wake of last fall's terrorist attack (9/11), and describing the overall level of rule and compliance, among the Hams, was outstanding". An amateur radio operator requires a radio, battery and a piece of wire and you have instant communication". Francois also stressed the use of "correct radio procedures", as was demonstrated during the recent Cradle Classic Cycle Race.

This was followed by a DVD presentation of a video compiled by Walter Kronkite, KB2GSD on the subject of amateur radio and emergency communication in various incidents in the USA. This was well received by all attending the meeting.

The guest speakers were then introduced.

Arthur Bradshaw explained how South African Search and Rescue (SASAR) was part of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and had certain legal requirements to fulfil.

SASAR adopt a proactive approach to disaster management. Part of the planning stage, includes Hamnet, as discussed below.

Their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) includes the following:

Preparedness;

Planning;

Awareness;

Directives;

Operations/Implementation;

Monitoring;

Recovery.

They operate under three operational phases:

1. Uncertain.
2. Apprehension.
3. Distress.

Arthur continued by explaining the more operational organisation of SASAR. SASAR runs by way of an Executive Committee with representation from certain statutory bodies.

1. The Department of Transport (DOT).
2. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
3. SANDF.
4. SAPS.
5. ATNS.
6. Portnet.
7. SA Maritime Authority.

There are two centres, one for Maritime located in Cape Town and the other for Aeronautical at Johannesburg International Airport.

The Aeronautical sub-committee is chaired by a senior person from ATNS and comprises two groups.

1. Institutional.

Eg. DOT, CAA, SAPS, SANDF etc. as above and as required.

The Dept. of Constitutional Development.

Provincial and local emergency services.

All the above are required by law to support any request for assistance in the event of an emergency.

2. Volunteer Groups.

The Mountain Club Rescue Unit.

The 4X4 Rescue Unit

Hamnet.

Arthur stressed that the volunteer groups play an important role in the SASAR disaster management plan, not just mentioned as an afterthought. The area of responsibility of the SASAR includes the land and sea areas south of the Limpopo, includes Namibia and stretches down in a triangle to the South Pole. According to Charles, 9% of the Earth's surface.

Arthur concluded by thanking Hamnet for being part of SASAR, and reflected on the Amateur Radio Code displayed at the NARC where he highlighted the words, patriotic and loyalty. These being fundamental to SASAR.

Charles Norval.

Charles stressed that Hamnet members become familiar with the terms used by SASAR and suggested both training and inclusion of these in the Hamnet Manual.

He explained the way a disaster is managed with a controller, at a central control together with an on-site-commander. The latter may well be a suitably trained Hamnet member.

He requested more detailed information on where Hamnet members are located geographically, their resources and a more formal call out procedure.

Charles suggested a disaster exercise where more amateurs are involved; this would include operation on a shift basis to test handover procedures. A skills database for Hamnet members would be a useful document.

Charles extended an invitation to Hamnet to hold a meeting at SASAR, Johannesburg International Airport during 2005. This will also include a tour of the facility.

ZS6BUU commented that the Hamnet Manual shall be updated on a regular basis as new information is forthcoming.

APRS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS. (Compiled by Steve Baynes ZS6XU, Alan Franzsen ZS6BIK and Andy Coetzee ZS6CEY), presented by Andy.

Andy stressed that APRS is a tactical aid to events, and will not replace voice communications.
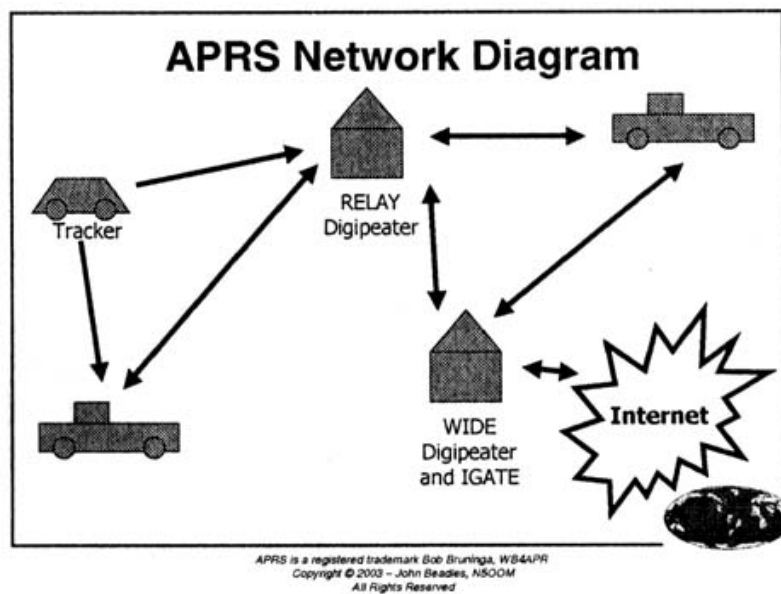
It uses packet radio to relay:

Location;

Course and speed;

Weather information, etc.

All data may be logged and kept for any post-event analysis. Packets can also transmit short messages similar to cell phone SMS's. Igates make all information available on the internet, as illustrated below.

APRS Network Diagram

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Types of APRS Stations:

1. A control station comprises a computer, TNC and radio. In all cases the TNC is not required if a sound card is available.
2. Digipeater stations are used to relay either from fixed or portable sites.
3. Mobile (tracker) stations may use a laptop, GPS Engine and radio.
4. Personal Trackers only require a GPS Engine, a PIC chip and a radio for Transmit only capability. These are now available in kit form and are as small as a sardine tin.

Andy went into some technical details of the above as well as demonstrating some operational uses of APRS. These included vehicle tracking, weather stations and event planning.

The motivations for Hamnet to embrace APRS were listed as :

1. Improved resource management.
2. Relatively inexpensive to set up.
3. Use of existing repeater networks which will not require further capital outlays.

The proposal is for Hamnet to acquire its own set of APRS equipment for use in emergencies and special events. This would comprise:

1. One control room unit.
2. Ten mobile, TX only units.
3. One portable digipeater.

Andy presented a budget of R17 000, of which about half has already been pledged by way of donations. Steve, ZS6XU also has a second potential donor to assist in the funding.

(There may be a legal problem for the ten mobile units in terms of radio licences, these need to be taken up with the SARL and ICASA).

Koos, ZS6JPY, VHF/UHF bandplanner, commented that APRS was part of the nationwide rolling out of the repeater networks.

Francois concluded the meeting by thanking all for attending.

The next meeting will take place at the end of January/early February 2005. Graham Hartlett suggested combining the Hamnet meetings on the same date as the Radio Technology in Action meetings at the NARC. Recently updated Hamnet Manuals were available for those who attended the meeting.

The next Hamnet meeting will be advised in due course and will be a mainly Medical fraternity meeting comprising Para-medics, various medical organisational representatives like Discovery etc, as there has been a call for a closer working relationship with Para-medics and Hamnet.

The meeting closed at 16:00.

My thanks to Alan Franzsen – ZS6BIK for keeping minutes.