



OAKVILLE A.R.E.S. GROUP

Newsletter

Communication between two parties only happens when the message is Sent, Received, Understood and Acknowledged. Everything else is just noise.



FEBUARY, 2009

FROM THE “WHY DO WE DO THIS” FILE

Ever wonder why we bother to belong to an A.R.E.S. group? The following report was provided by our E.C., Rick, VA3NV. It's a glimpse to the past and a warning to the future.

As this is the 30th anniversary of the Mississauga Rail Disaster, it would seem appropriate to revisit the event. Following is the report issued by Chuck Powers, VE3APK, the then ARES Emergency Coordinator for the Oakville Amateur Radio Club.

Rick, VA3NV

THE MISSISSAUGA MISADVENTURE

C. H. Powers - VE3APK

It was just midnight, Saturday, November 10 1979 when I was distracted from the TV by a small explosion. Living on Bridge Road in Oakville I have a clear view of the two refineries to the west and from my back porch, one to the east. A quick check from the front revealed no problems out west. I went to the rear of the house and just as I opened the door the second explosion occurred. I did not wait for the aftershock. I started dressing to hit the road thinking it was the Clarkson Refinery to the east (I failed to recognize the northerly location of the fire at the time). The phone started ringing and a friend in West Toronto said it was north of Highway 5 and appeared to be an aircraft which was down. Realizing it was not a refinery crisis, *I went to the local 2 meter frequency and found that many were on the frequency standing by to hear some news.* Howard – VE3ITN, EC for Oakville was on the road heading toward the fire.

At 12:15 our friend in Etobicoke called back to advise that a derailment had occurred, and that the train was hauling petroleum products and some tank cars had blown up. We stayed by the frequency for an hour gathering bits of information such as the location and the progress reports on the fire. *At 01:30 it appeared our services would not be required.* News reports indicated there were no casualties and the fire department in Mississauga was in control of the blaze. We retired for the night as my good wife and I were scheduled to go on parade with the royal Canadian Legion at 10:30.

We went on parade on Sunday morning and along the parade route, I noticed Tom VE3ITK, one of the Assistant EC's for Oakville, fall in at the rear of our group. Bill VE3HGJ was at the rear and I assumed Tom was taking part in the parade. When we arrived at the

cenotaph for the Memorial Service, I received word that a mass evacuation had started due to the chlorine gas escaping from one tank car, and we were alerting our ARES groups in the Toronto Hamilton area. A quick call to Mike VE3GFN, the Toronto EC revealed that our services had not as yet been requested.

On arrival back home about 13:00 hours, I contacted the Director of Emergency Services, Canadian Red Cross Ontario Division, who informed me that they were just getting organized to handle the evacuees and that he would be in touch as soon as they knew where the evacuation centre would be located. I received the first call from the Red Cross at 16:30 EST advising that the first evacuation centre had been "Square One" a massive shopping centre to the northwest of Mississauga. However, the evacuation boundaries had been broadened and "Square One" was being evacuated. They would need communications as soon as the new centres were known.

At 19:30 hours, the word came from the Red Cross that the International Centre in Malton (northwest of Toronto) had been opened up for evacuees. They required a station there and one at Red Cross Headquarters in downtown Toronto. During the interim (16:30 to 19:30), the ARES groups in the area were being alerted.

As the centre of activity was in Mississauga, Rod Pears - VE3IXB was acting EC for that area. Rod's appointment became official at 00:01 hours November 12 - he sure received a full-fledged initiation. The ink was not even dry on his certificate and he was heading up one of the largest operations ever experience by Canadian Amateurs. Rod was being assisted by Roger - VE3HGC (now an official Assistant EC, also President of the Halton Amateur Radio Club). Mike - VE3GFN, EC for Toronto, was activating his group: also - VE3IMR, EC for Oshawa, was standing by with a task force. The Burlington group were already alert when I turned over to their repeater. They had twenty mobiles ready to go where needed. The Hamilton ARES, under the direction of the EC Bob Richert VE3FCU, was put on stand-by at 22:45 local time.

In the interim, more evacuation centres were opened in the Brampton/Streetsville area, and as each centre became active, a station was put on the air with two operators at each. It was decided the Brampton repeater, VE3MHZ, would be used as the control station using the Peel amateur Radio Club call VE3PRC. All transmissions were cleared through VE3PRC using the dispatch method. The South Pickering Club call, VE3SPC, was used by the Red Cross Headquarters station.

Health and welfare inquires began pouring in soon after the evacuation centres were opened, and it was decided to us a second repeater to handle the overflow traffic. Thus, VE3SKY, the Skywide Amateur Radio Club repeater was put on emergency service. Lawrence Purdy - VE3FPF was being evacuated from his home near the disaster site. He called in and offered to stay in the area once his family was on the move to safe ground. Lawry reached the spill site and after some persuasion, managed to reach the Red Cross official at the Command Post where police, fire and government officials were controlling the evacuation and containment. Suddenly, Red Cross have a direct link between headquarters in downtown Toronto and the commanders at site. The site is assigned a priority and will be manned throughout the operation. We soon realized that arrangements to clear operators through the police barricades had not been made, and each relief operator had to negotiate his way into the area. Fortunately, an official Red Cross vehicle was on hand and came out for each shift change to pick up the relief operator and transport to the command Centre. Hospitals in the immediate area were evacuated early Sunday afternoon with patients being transported to Toronto area hospitals.

As evening wore on, the evacuation boundaries widened and finally, at approximately 22:00 hours, word is received that the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital will be evacuated as a precautionary measure. VE3GUH Dr George Piasecki is on staff and puts out a call for assistance. There are seventy ambulances coming to lift patients to Hamilton and the movement must be coordinated between hospitals. Telephone systems are overloaded but Amateur Radio is available. VE3FCU - Bob in Hamilton arranged the communications links between Hamilton and Oakville - all went well.

Word is received at 23:00 hours that the boundary to the west is now Maplegrove Avenue in Oakville, just four miles to the east of my QTH. An evacuation centre for the Oakville residents is set up at a large school in Burlington; more operators and equipment needed. Burlington/Hamilton will supply the manpower. Another centre is established at the Community college in Oakville. And more operators and equipment are required.

By Monday morning (06:00 hours) a total of twelve evacuation centres were in operation and two command centres plus the Net control station were all directly involved. Auxiliary nets were being maintained during the daylight hours. The Burlington ARES group initiated a 75 meter net to handle health and welfare inquiries. VE3AML Rowland in Sarnia activated his COMSONT net on 40 meters, which covered the province. The ONTARS net, which meets daily on 3755, was also used. My station was on the air during the entire operation: my relief operator being Brian VE3DNF who, fortunately, lives directly across the street, and my good wife who handled the land line calls, logged and did some operating when my voice gave out.

The operation began winding down late Tuesday evening, some 56 hours from the beginning as the first tentative indications of a return home by evacuees have appeared. Some centres are closing, their remaining people and supplies move to other centres. Now the Amateurs are assisting in transport problems, finding out who needs a bus and trying to minimize vehicular traffic.

By Wednesday morning, many evacuees have been allowed to return home. The Net Control is active but carries little traffic. A call to Red Cross affirms our services are still required. We are running short on manpower but vow we will keep the circuits open. We can operate with one person at each location. The day wears on and the boundaries begin to shrink. By 19:30 hours, there are three centres still in operation. Word is received at 19:00 that the railway involved will billet all the remaining evacuees in Toronto hotels "free of charge" until they are allowed to return home. The Red Cross will arrange for a head count and advise of the transport needs. The remaining stations come to life and the traffic picks up. A final tally has been passed and the transportation buses begin to move people to the Toronto hotels. Two centres have people refusing to move. They have already been moved three to four times; they are comfortable, nearer their homes than they would be if they moved to Toronto. Permission is granted for them to stay overnight. The operation is nearing an end.

At 19:45 hours the following message is received and transmitted to all nets in operation:

199 R VE3APK 68 Oakville 0045Z Nov 15/79
TO: ALL ONTARIO AMATEURS AND PARTICIPANTS MISSISSAUGA EVACUATION CRISIS
ONTARIO DIVISION CANADIAN RED CROSS WISH TO EXTEND THEIR SINCERE
APPRECIATION AND ADMIRATION FOR THE SUPPORT GIVEN TO THE SOCIETY DURING
THE MISSISSAUGA EVACUATION CRISIS Xray.
THE HIGH DEGREE OF DEDICATION AND PROFESSIONAL SKILL EVIDENCED BY ALL

PERSONNEL OF ARRL ONTARIO SECTION IS DESERVING OF THE HIGHEST PRAISE XRAY
AS OF 23:59 EST 14 NOVEMBER 79 THE OPERATIONS REQUIRING THE SERVICES OF
ARRL ONTARIO SECTION ARE ENDED XRAY

BRIGADIER GENERAL J. F. WESTHEAD - MBE ED CD (RETIRED)
CHAIRMAN – EMERGENCY SERVICES

MR. KEN MCBRIDE – DIRECTOR – EMERGENCY SERVICES

MRS. MILLIE BLAIR – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – EMERGENCY SERVICES
CANADIAN RED CROSS – ONTARIO DIVISION

Some 80 hours have elapsed since the first call for assistance was received from Red Cross. A total of 255 amateurs volunteered their services from across the province, 174 were actively involved on 2 meters, others were on stand-by or operated the HF bands. Twelve repeaters were used at various times and nine ARES groups were active.

At 23:59 hours, the following message was read by VE3GOL – Noreen Nimmons, STM Ontario:

943 R VE3APK 32 OAKVILLE 2359 NOV. 15/79

**NET BULLETIN – VE3PRC – MISSISSAUGA EMERGENCY NET ON BEHALF OF THE
ONTARIO SECTION OF ARRL WE EXTEND SINCERE THANKS TO ALL AMATEURS FOR
THEIR SUPERB OPERATION XRAY YOU HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE
AMATEUR RADIO FRATERNITY**

**73
LARRY VE3GT SCM
CHUCK VE3APK SEC
NOREEN VE3GOL STM**

THIS EMERGENCY NET IS OFFICIALLY CLOSED.

This is a general overview of the operation from the SEC's point of view. To cover the entire operation would result in a full-fledged manuscript. I am indebted to the EC's who supplied me with briefs covering their involvement, which in turn contributed to this article.

As VE3GFN wrote in his brief, and I quote:

"One thing is clear. Amateur Radio continues to be a tremendous resource of emergency Communications. Radio Amateurs have again shown they are resourceful and generous of their time."

How many of you reading this report recognized a call or two? Did you see the two standard message forms? Try to remember this bit of history when we are participating in one of our S.E.T.'s ... it's one of the reasons we do what we do!

OAKVILLE A.R.E.S. MEETING DATES

A.R.E.S. Group members should mark their 2009 calendars with the following meeting dates:

March 15, 2009

May 10, 2009

Keep in mind that there are additional events such as Field Day, (June 27-28), the annual S.E.T., (sometime in the Fall) and other Public Events through out the year in which we can participate.

FEILD DAY 2009

Plans for Field Day are now under way. This year's event will be held on June 27-28, 2009 and will be a joint operation between the Oakville and Burlington clubs. While not cast in stone, it will probably be in the 3A class which opens up a lot of new opportunities for those participating.

A Wiki server has been set up to facilitate the organization of Field day between the two clubs. You can log on at:
<http://va3tsk.trasuk.com>

Information will also be provided in this newsletter and the FD 2009 Report.
If you would like to join the fun or need more info contact George, VE3OGP, FDC at:

oarc.fd@interhop.net

Still on the subject of Field Day, we have used Google maps a number of times to look at various site locations. Another service, Microsoft Live Search, provides excellent views. As an example I have shown the VE3OGP QTH in the following picture:



To try it out yourself, go to:

<http://maps.live.com>

ON THE WEB

As we move into another season of Flea markets, don't forget to check out the various on –
line swap shops. Check out the newest at:

www.arswapshop.com/

Don't forget these other sites:

www.kwarc.org/swapshop/

www.ontarioswapshop.com/

BURLINGTON FLEAMARKET

The Oakville A.R.E.S. Group is planning on having a table at the B.A.R.C. Spring Fleamarket to promote our group, recruit new members from the Halton area, and provide information about this years Field Day. If you want to sell anything, a dollar will buy a piece of the table. Space is limited so let Rick, VA3NV or George, VE3OGP know ASAP. If you can help, particularly near the end, that would be appreciated (you still need to pay to get in).

REMINDERS

***Oakville A.R.E.S. Group Meeting ***

Sunday, March 15, 2009

Oakville Red Cross

1400 Cornwall Road

Unit 15

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Niagara Peninsula Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

Fleamarket

Saturday, February 7, 2009

St. Catharines, Ontario, ON

Merriton Community Centre

7 Park Ave.

St. Catharines, Ontario

<http://www.nparc.on.ca/content/bigevent>

**Burlington Amateur Radio Club
Spring Fleamarket
Saturday, February 28, 2009
Burlington, Ontario
Royal Canadian Legion - 828 Legion Rd., Burlington
<http://www.barc.ca>**

**Peel and Mississauga ARC
Fleamarket
Saturday, March 28, 2009
Brampton, Ontario
Brampton Fair Grounds, Heartlake Road.
<http://www.ham-ex.org/>**

**North Shore ARC & South Pickering ARC
Fleamarket
Saturday, April 18, 2009
Whitby, Ontario
Iroquois Park Recreation Center.
<http://www.drhamfest.tripod.com>**

**SUPPORT YOU'RE A.R.E.S. GROUP, YOUR CLUB AND THE RAC.
GET INVOLVED, PARTICIPATE AND HAVE FUN!**

**"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it." – Henry David
Thoreau**

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