

MINUTES: Pending General Member Approval

SPECS: Southern Peninsula Emergency Communications System

2008 Jan 19 Annual Meeting, 8 – 12 noon, El Camino Hospital Cafeteria.

www.specsnet.org

8:00 a.m.: Registration and renewals; ID photos by Al Whaley, N6RPR

9:00 a.m.: The 2008 annual meeting was called to order at by President Dru Anderson

Dru introduced the present board of directors' members. Secretary Rick Ellinger counted 60+ people attending the meeting.

1st VP Maynard Stevenson was the logistics captain of the meeting and engineered the planning and preparation for refreshments, assisted by June Welsh KF6WPQ, and others.

The 5 Hams involved with Hospital Net brought their equipment for people to see how it operates and ran an equipment demo prior to the meeting and during the break. The hospital net group encourages more people to participate. It operates at 145.23 and meets the 4th Wednesday at 8PM.

Introduce ECs and their city team members attending:

- Mike Murray KI6JDY reported on behalf of Sunnyvale EC with 5+
- Jerry Haag K6GAC, EC, Mountain View with 5+
- Rich Hyde, EC, Palo Alto with 4+
- Tom Smith KD6SOJ, EC, Los Altos with 5+
- Rick Ellinger KJ6NU, EC Los Altos Hills, with 7+
- Stanford. No report
- NASA Ames. No report
- June Welsh, UHF repeater. 1

Guests:

* Stacy Ness, daughter-in-law of Dru KG6LAD and Bob Anderson KC6ZWG, making a family video.

* Wes Freeman's wife, Louise, ,who assisted with the registration and check-in. Also assisting was Donna Philpot, WA6SCU.

Announcements:

1. Larry Carr, DEC noted "Introduction to packet" training on two Saturdays. Sign up for the county class on that web site www.scc-ares-races.org. The second class is to be at Sunnyvale police department. Larry urges all to take the classes. This is Larry's 10th year at the county. He noted that the county now realizes that the hams can give a snapshot of what is going on at the county in 15 minutes and thus, County has moved the ham activity from logistics to planning. The last earthquake had 'an impact' on how the county thinks of ham radio, he said.

2. Bill Dale, N2RHV, ARRL Santa Clara Valley Section Manager, gave a few announcements. Bill reported that Oregon and Washington called out hams in the big storm this winter on their coast. He reported that Oregon earned a \$250,000 grant as a result of their good work, including having a WINLINK support link to the regular internet. They had a PIC and PIO that reached the governor and got good publicity. They made an application and got the grant. He said that here in Santa Clara we have a good packet system. We are looking at some other digital communication. We should enhance PIC and PIO functions. Bill said his term is up for reelection and he reported that Balloting is April 1.

3. SVECS President Lou Steirer announced that the SVECS quarterly breakfast is Saturday, Jan 26 at Santa Clara Senior Center, and the Silicon Valley Wireless Users and Experimenters Group, will present. Lou's contact info for information is: WA6QYS@arri.net.

Introduction of speakers by Dru Anderson, President.

Dru arranged for the speakers to travel from East San Diego County on Friday, and she escorted them on Friday of a tour of the County facilities, with ham John Snow's assistance Friday afternoon, and of the Los Altos Hills EOC and the 60-foot co-located antenna "tree."

The speakers were:

Roger W Challberg, KB6JKP, Lieutenant for San Diego RACES Eastern Region, and Craig Williams, W6CAW, Public Affairs Officer, Campo Fire & Rescue, and RACES deputy, Eastern Region.

Campo is about 80 miles east of San Diego city and is a small community in the midst of high desert wild land brush and timber. They discussed their experience with the 2007 San Diego Firestorm in October. In particular, Craig and Roger were line volunteers for the Harris Fire that spread from west of Campo, along the Mexican border, and rapidly burned west toward San Diego city.

They also covered details of the interagency 800 MHz Regional communication System that is in place for communication between first responders and local government agencies.

The speakers attended in their RACES uniforms, which they are required to wear when on volunteer duty in San Diego service. They are required to have a uniform, but pay for their own. Roger noted the issued equipment does include for him, because of his supervisory position in the RACES region, a county radio on 800 MHz and a county pager. The San Diego County Sheriff's Communications Center in San Diego city is a \$1M facility, mounted on rubber supports for earthquake safety. The major work of the volunteers is in Search and Rescue and Fires because of the frequent backland fire events. Roger also is on the Fire and Rescue board. Roger and Craig are cross deputies for each other. Fires are their major events as the area is frequented by the Santa Winds, which easily get reach more than 100 mph and the high winds create a special havoc for fire. They cited that 5 people were killed in the Harris Fire on the first day, and the key factor was people who sought to "return" to the fire area to retrieve something. Roger and Craig reinforced that once you're evacuated from a fire area, DON'T GO BACK FOR ANY REASON as it endangers your life and those of the volunteers and public agencies workers.

Craig's document he provided on Wild Fire notes will be posted on the SPECS web site.

In the San Diego area, they noted that Medical response is supported by ARES.

RACES volunteers support the local government emergency agencies such as the Sheriff and the fire departments. RACES volunteers in that county are regarded as part of the volunteer staff of the Sheriff's Department.

Craig described the city's 800MHz system, one of a few in the nation that is highly developed and integrated. He said Alabama now has a good DStar hookup since the hurricane. Texas is doing well on cooperation between volunteers and government. But the San Diego setup is the best of the bunch in the US. They manage communications over 800 square miles.

Their EOC structure looks similar to Santa Clara County in that they strictly follow ICS, SEMS and NIMS standards. They encouraged the volunteers to take the 100,200, and 700 courses, which are on the FEMA web site.

Roger and Craig described the close integration of the volunteers of the ham community and CERT trained teams throughout San Diego County. They reported that there are 2,500 trained volunteers in their county. Many CERT team members are ham operators; for others, they recommend FRS radios.

They referred people interested in the San Diego setup for CERT to go for more information to:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/fireandems/cert/index.shtml>

And to: <https://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>

In the Harris Fire, Roger and Craig noted that the average citizen communications -- regular phone lines and cell phones -- failed quickly, due to the fire damage and high winds. They lost landlines and AC power. Cell sites failed immediately or when their propane power ran out. Many areas were down for 8 weeks, and so hams provided volunteer post-fire support to the temporary telephone stations that were brought into the hard hit communities.

They said that typically communications and logistics are the weak points in disaster response.

The integration of the ham volunteers with the community services included setting up and coordinating with other agencies disaster recovery centers with FEMA, Red Cross and SBA. Churches came in to set up food and shelter. They used ham operators for communication among these groups.

Although the fires got uncomfortably close in some cases, the ham repeaters did not fail!

The reiterated that First Responder agencies in San Diego County have high regard for the tightly organized ham community and know that ham radio works in crisis.

Roger and Craig reported that they had 300 people working 12-hour days during the course of the raging fires, which is only a small percentage of the licensed hams in the county. More recruitment is needed as membership in their groups is declining. They are pursuing the FCC data base to invite more hams to get involved. Some young people are getting involved in amateur radio now with the new licensing that does not require Morse code skill. Some need core training, such as how to turn the HT to simplex from a repeater setting. So on-going training on not only the technical skills, but the proper on-air protocol, and proper behavior and response in highly emotionally charged emergency situations is key.

They need to encourage the hams to speak in plain English, not phonetic spelling on clear channel full quieting packet channels. Make cheat sheets for speaking with one alphabet.

Craig noted that a 3-day response kit should be in the volunteer's responding vehicle. There is a move toward common "typing" of ham radio equipment. For a description of "typing", see Amateur Radio Communications Team at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amateur_Radio_Communications_Team

or: "The National Incident Management System (NIMS) "resource typing" of Amateur Radio Communications Teams (ARCTs) is in the final approval process by FEMA..." at:

http://www.wrrl.org/arct_program/default.asp

They will use RCS800 and Motorola radios. Others are coming on 500 and 700 MHz; 700MHz cannot be used within 125 miles of the US MX border as MX is not willing. MX prefers trunking systems. The newer 800 walkie-talkie is a \$4000 radio. Sheriff radios have GPS on them.

San Diego Regional Communications System is under the board of supervisors and sells this service to other participating agencies. Site trunking is a backup mode of this system. In a total collapse, it becomes like an 800MHz ham radio. Every agency has one dispatch frequency. There is a Hailing county Call frequency and Fire command talkgroups. Tactical talkgroup is to hold conversations or have communications between responders and their IC.

Typical responses of their Campo community in East San Diego County involve 5 agencies. See www.campofire.org

RCS Pagers are alphanumeric county wide. See www.rcs800mhz.org/pager.

Or <https://www.rcs800mhz.org/web/>

They can page an individual pager, a group, or an entire department. Their county GIS system has fire depictions for all years since 2000.

Asides:

- They needed generators to pump water for livestock.
- They found impromptu signs put up by locals to protect their impacted properties such as:
 - "Is there life after death? Trespass and find out."
- The San Diego CERT people are Red Cross Shelter trained.
- They observe through experience that in a disaster, local people taking care of local people worked well. Less well-received are outsiders, individuals or agencies, coming in to "take over".
- They used local churches for meeting places among the agencies.
- ICP (Incident command Post) has AC and Internet.
- They already knew to keep the 5 agencies together with a communications person.

- They needed white boards to write status. For long term recovery, the sprint and other cellular data cards are useful as days later, cellular comes back on even if the phone lines and power are still out. This is needed for the longer term recover.
- Trailer or mobile home parks simply melt. Reverse 9-1-1 works and is NECESSARY.
- RACES room uses switching consoles to switch all the audio signals around to a variety of radios and phone lines. They use WEBEOC and ETEAM for status boards.
- They have an E size plotter alongside to print maps. SAIC put all the local video presentation together to switch any screen to big projectors.
- If the wind had continued, San Diego could have been lost. A fire picture taken from an aircraft carrier in the San Diego harbor was the best illustration of that reality with fire, propelled by its own winds of 200 mph, raced to San Diego. What saved the city was that the winds stopped. The situation was similar in San Diego Fires of 2003 and those of this past 2007.

The audience thanked the speakers, Roger and Craig, with resounding applause, and many positive comments were made in appreciation of their presentation.

“Look to the Future” –SPECS annual BUSINESS meeting – 11 AM

SPECS ByLaws, which were updated and voted on at the 2007 Annual Meeting were available. They also are posted on the SPECS website. President Anderson reminded the attendees that SPECS is non-profit, 501 c3 Corporation, and all is Registered correctly at the state and the AG office. The organization, as a non-profit, may be in a good position to consider grants for special programs that meet the SPECS charter, and Anderson asked folks who might be interested in grant areas to contact her with their ideas. She quoted the group’s charter and noted the focus on education and training, as well as supporting the RA repeater hardware, and said as part of the “Look to the Future” – new ideas and directions will be explored as part of 2008 planning. One of the areas she cited as ripe for further work is getting more youth involvement.

Larry Carr stood up and supported the idea of pursuing more youth to get involved and encouraged the hams to look to “elmer” situations. A couple of hams in the audience cited their individual work with high schools and the junior college. President Anderson noted she will follow up with them. Training Officer Jerry Haag is planning to look to training synergy among the cities, as well.

Secretary’s Report: Rick Ellinger. The Minutes were presented from the 2007 annual meeting and were unanimously approved.

Treasurer’s Report: Wes Freeman, also in charge of the sign-ins and registration of new members, thanked Donna Philpott, WA6SCU, and his wife, Louise, for their help at the sign-in table.

In the Treasurer’s reported, he said that SPECS had assets totaling \$13,590.82 in the beginning of the year 2007 and that there was, as of 12/31/07, a checkbook balance of \$9151.09, plus a CD for \$7,000, earning interest at 4.930%. During the year, the board had approved putting a portion of the assets into a CD to earn higher interest. Anderson and Freeman executed that at the bank where SPECS has its account. Thus, the Total cash assets as of 12/31/07 were \$16,151.09.

This represented a Total of \$2,560.27 gain for the year. Income for 2007 was derived from member dues (\$500.00), bank interest (\$23.69) and the Flea Market (\$3,026.70). Expenses included the Annual Meeting and newsletter (\$431.12), mailbox (\$204.00) and liability insurance (\$355.00).

Receipts from the Flea Market were \$4,899.25 (gate = \$2,820, donation table = \$1489.75 and food sales= \$589.50) and expenses were \$1,872.55 (\$1,575 to ASVARO and \$297.55 for donuts, coffee, sodas and other supplies).

As required by the SPECS bylaws, Rich Hyde, WA6SCU, and Phil Henderson, KF6ZSQ, conducted an audit of the financial records for calendar years 2006 and 2006 and found the records to be in order.

Paul Zander, AA6PZ, moved to approve treasurer’s report and 2nd came from Scott Overstreet N6NXI.

This represented a Total of \$2,560.27 gain for the year.

Ham AA6PZ moved to approve treasurer's report and 2nd came from Scott Overstreet N6NXI.

Unanimously approved by the members.

First Vice President: Maynard Stevenson W7MVT: presented the needs for the SPECS Saturday, Mar 8 next Flea Market. He and Scott Overstreet solicited for the equipment donations to sell there to raise funds for SPECS. Funds are used for training, education, and support of the repeater hardware needs.

Training Officer Jerry Haag K6GAC advised the members to frequently visit the SPECS website at www.specsnet.org for training events listed as there is nearly something every weekend. He passed around forms to record people who are willing to teach others, i.e. ELMER in ham talk, about new skills in ham radio.

Second Vice President: Paul Lufkin reported that SPECS now has liability insurance coverage, made possible via affiliation with ARRL. There will be a discussion among the board and with a special meeting of the ECs about assessing the potential need for Directors and Officers Insurance.

Past President Jim Thornton is the ByLaws lead, and was available if anyone had questions, however there were none.

If you wish to contact board members, send email to: board@specsnet.org

Webmaster Tom Smith maintains the SPECS web site asked members to visit the site to check out the news.

Repeater Group Station Trustee Peter Griffith, as well as RA members Dave Platt and Scott Overstreet, noted nothing major was done to it during 2007 and it continues to run well. The SPECS Repeater organization is now incorporated and working to become a 501 c 3. He encourages others to help at the Flea Market.

During President Anderson's appeal for increasing the youth effort for emergency hams, she heard from K6RJN, Ron, trustee for Los Altos High School club who will write for help on packet. He said Gunn high school is interested in technology discussion.

Los Altos Hills emergency committee member Miles Sevier, a high school student, is setting up an emergency response team for his high school and others in the school group with Crystal Springs Academy.

Dru noted that Foothill College Police Chief Ron Levine is seeking ham help for setting up a ham station at his campus.

Nominations committee was Jerry Haag and Paul Lufkin:

The positions of 2nd VP and Secretary were open.

Volunteering to serve as 2nd VP was John Benza, Palo Alto W6JJB, also a member of PANDA, which is Palo Alto's name for CERT trained.

Volunteering for Secretary was Mike Murray, KI6JDY, Sunnyvale. Mike is a volunteer trail patroller for the Mid Peninsula Open Space District.

It was moved by Paul Lufkin, seconded by Rick Ellinger to nominate these officers to the board, and to nominate the remaining board members to continue to serve. It was noted that Scott Overstreet is now the board liaison from Repeater group, replacing Peter Griffith.

Vote carried with the membership and the new officers were so named.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45pm.

Respectfully submitted, Rick Ellinger, SPECS Secretary 2007