

HAMS SUPPORT CYCLE ACROSS MARYLAND

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Forty-nine radio amateurs supported the Cycle Across Maryland (CAM) Tour, July 24 through 30, 1994. The annual event, in its sixth year and second year with amateur communication support, was a success thanks largely to volunteer hams. Four clubs provided most of the operators: Southern Patuxent ARC (SPARC), St Mary Amateur Radio Emergency Service (SMARES), Maryland Mobileers ARC (MMARC) and Somerset County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (SCARES).

Communication services included a message center set up on the day of registration so that cyclists could send messages to family and friends via the ARRL National Traffic System (NTS). Amateurs set up and staffed Net Control Stations (NCSs) at the beginning and ending points of each day's ride, and five mobile Support Assistance Group (SAG) vehicles. They installed and staffed stations in a Maryland State Police vehicle and in the CAM director's vehicle. They also established one to three stations at rest stops daily.

The tour was billed as "Shore to Shore in '94" because it ran from Leonardtown in southern Maryland (Western Shore) across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and eventually to Berlin (Southern Eastern Shore). About 1700 cyclists, including 12 bicycle-mobile ham stations, pedaled the 350-mile trek across a large portion of Maryland.

For the first time, the southern span of the dual bridges over Chesapeake Bay was closed to motor vehicles, enabling the cyclists to cross in a group. This was a spectacle, with 1700 bicyclists crossing the five-mile span, five abreast for more than two miles. All riders made it over the Bay in less than an hour, and on the Eastern Shore each rider was presented with a pin inscribed "I made history."

The tour was plagued by storms, resulting in wet tents that literally floated, to torrential downpours, and finally tornadoes—just about every kind of bad weather. The cyclists endured and said, "What a great time we're having."

A carefully conceived frequency plan for 2 meters was established using five simplex frequencies. There were one, two or three rest stops at the 20, 40 and 60-mile intervals (depending on the length of the ride each day), equipped with 40-foot towers, J-pole antennas and 50-W transceivers. At each host (NCS) site was a 2-meter J-pole antenna, two 50-W transceivers and a 40-foot tower. Seven mobiles swept the course. Five operators were in SAG wagons, driving and/or operating 50-W transceivers. One amateur rode with the CAM director and one rode with the Maryland State Police. A backup repeater plan was in place and used occasionally.

Each night, as the last rider entered the stopping-off site, an advance crew would go to the next day's stop, find the radio room, erect the tower and set up equipment for the next day's NCS. Thus, there were two NCSs each day. As soon as the distant NCS could hear at least four SAG wagons on simplex, control would be shifted to the forward site.

The volunteer operators participated in all of the assignments—as NCSs, SAG radio operators, rest stop radio operators, State Police liaison/radio operators and as the CAM director's radio operators/advisors. They were involved with erecting antennas and towers, and loading and unloading trucks at rest stops and host sites.

During the tour, there were 33 medical incidents, all handled by the SAG drivers/radio operators. Most were heat stress-related, bee stings and abrasions, and one broken collarbone. Medical problems were passed to the NCS, who would take proper action, usually having the SAG wagon transport the victim and bike to the next rest stop, where medical staff was available. There were more than 200 mechanical problems and this usually resulted in the SAG wagon taking the rider and bike to the next rest stop, where mechanics were available.

The communication functions performed by the amateurs were "phenomenal," according to CAM Director Pat

Bernstein.

This year, the CAM Tour will start in western Maryland at Oakland and proceed through the hills to The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. This should pose a challenge for the hams to maintain communication because, unlike last year's event, which was on mostly flat land, the terrain for this year's event is mountainous.



Cyclists cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

Join ARES: Sign up as an Official Emergency Station

Public service has been a traditional component of the Amateur Radio service since 1913, when amateurs at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University, in conjunction with individual amateurs in and around the region, successfully bridged the communication gap surrounding a large isolated area left by a severe windstorm in the Midwest. In those days, disaster support work was spontaneous and without much organization. Today, disaster and public events work is a highly organized, worthwhile and fun part of day-to-day operation, implemented principally through the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the National Traffic System (NTS), sponsored by the ARRL. This month, we'll look at ARES and how you, new ham or veteran, can fit in.

Q: What is the Amateur Radio Emergency Service?

A: The Amateur Radio Emergency Service consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communication duty when disaster strikes or for public events. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in the ARRL or any other local or national organization, is eligible for membership in ARES. The only qualification, other than possession of an Amateur Radio license, is a sincere desire to serve. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but not a requirement for membership.

Q: How is ARES organized?

A: There are three levels of ARES organization—section, district and local. At the section level, the *Section Emergency Coordinator* (SEC) is appointed by the *Section Manager* (SM) and works under his or her supervision. In most sections, the SM delegates to the SEC the administration of the section emergency plan and the authority to appoint district and local *Emergency Coordinators* (ECs).

Most real emergency organizing is accomplished at the local level because this is the level at which most emergencies occur and where ARES leaders make direct contact with the ARES member-volunteers and with officials of the agencies to be served. The local EC is therefore the key player in ARES. The EC is appointed by the SEC, usually on the recommendation of the *District Emergency Coordinator* (DEC). Depending on how the SEC has set up the Section for administrative purposes, the EC may have jurisdiction over a small community or a large city, an entire county or even a group of counties. Whatever jurisdiction is assigned, the EC is in charge of all ARES activities in his area, not just one interest group, one agency, one club or one band.

Q: How can I join?

A: Simply fill out a short application form available from ARRL HQ or your local ARES leadership, and send to your *Emergency Coordinator* (if known) or *Section Manager* (see any QST, page 8). You'll receive an identification card. You'll then be asked to participate in ARES nets (usually held weekly on a local repeater), practice drills and an annual *Simulated Emergency Test* (SET) each October. When the real thing comes along, you'll be trained and able to provide emergency communication support to emergency management and other served agency (Red Cross, National Weather Service, etc) officials, based on established emergency operations plans. ARES also supports public events, such as marathons, parades and bike tours such as the one described in this column.

Q: What is an Official Emergency Station?

A The Official Emergency Station (OES) is the next step up the ARES ladder and is more than just an ARES member: He or she is capable of operating with emergency (battery or generator) power, is trained in ARES procedures for emergency response, and has made a deeper commitment to the program in general. With experience, OES appointees often become good candidates for "promotions" to ARES leadership positions, such as *Emergency Coordinator*.

Q: That's for me. How do I sign up as an OES?

A: Simply contact your *Section Manager* (see page 8 for his or her address and telephone number). Be prepared to discuss your interest. He or she will take care of the rest. You'll receive a handsome certificate of appointment (shown below). You'll have a more active role in ARES nets, drills and operations.



Willie Garst, N4XMO, operates at Red Cross Headquarters, Macon, Georgia, during the catastrophic flooding in the region last summer. (photo courtesy of Bob Wright, W4OZF)

THE AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE, INC.
HEADQUARTERS, NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT

OFFICIAL EMERGENCY STATION

This certifies that _____ **YOUR NAME AND CALL SIGN HERE!** _____
(Home & cell)

has met the qualifications for an official ARRL Field Organization appointment in the _____ Section, and agrees to abide by the rules set forth by the League. All appointments require regular activity and monthly reporting.

Date of Appointment

KICE
Field Service Manager, ARRL

Authorizing Official

The Official Emergency Station certificate.