



Public Safety Secretary Tom Dravland (left) and DARN President Greg Hall, WB0RJH at the signing.

HAMS SIGN MOA WITH STATE

Dakota Amateur Radio Network (DARN) president, WB0RJH on behalf of South Dakota amateur radio operators signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the South Dakota Dept of Public Safety on September 21, 2007. This historic document will spell a new beginning of cooperation between the state of South Dakota and amateur radio operators. With this document in place, amateur radio will be fully recognized as a partner with the Dept of Public Safety (DPS) and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for providing aid and continuity of communications during disasters. OEM will make available training, coordinate access to disaster areas in times of emergencies, coordinate logistics for amateurs supporting disaster operations, assist in gaining access to various South Dakota resources such as tall communications towers owned by the State, and assist in the acquisition of any surplus property available to DARN member clubs. This new partnership will give amateur radio the opportunity to build a solid foundation in emergency communications in South Dakota by allowing hams to demonstrate how essential amateur radio communications can be in a disaster situation. The original plan of securing a MOU with the State was the brainchild of Jim, KC0WVF who spearheaded the project in its infancy and was instrumental in securing a seat for WB0RJH on a Governors committee to address emergency action deficiencies in South Dakota. Many hours of hard work and negotiations went into getting this MOA signed, with many revisions taking place over nearly two years. WB0RJH and KC0WVF would like to thank the many amateurs who generously provided information, logistics, and time working together as only the amateur radio community can to see this project to completion.

DAKOTA AMATEUR RADIO NETWORK

The purpose of the Dakota Amateur Radio Network (DARN) is to work as a liaison between government entities and amateur radio in South Dakota. DARN was formed in response to address the following concerns:

- No one organization existed that could negotiate with state government on behalf of hams.
- One point of contact with SDOEM was needed during disasters to dispatch and provide logistics for hams.
- Hams could provided their own calling lists, maintained by hams and not distributed to others.
- In the event surplus state equipment becomes available, DARN could assist member clubs in its acquisition.

All recognized amateur radio clubs within South Dakota are eligible to become DARN members. The directors of DARN will consist of one representative from each member club. That representative will maintain correspondence with DARN and assist in the decision making and ruling process of DARN. It is recommended that each member club select an alternate who can act in the representative's behalf during emergencies. The representative will also be able to submit applications on behalf of their club for surplus State property that becomes available. It is anticipated that whenever possible meetings and votes will be conducted by electronic means because of the distances involved.

DARN STRUCTURE.

The group structure is made up of a President, Vice President, Secretary Treasurer, and Directors. The directors are representatives of each recognized SD amateur radio club or organization and are the only voting members. Ultimately those directors working on behalf of their respective clubs will mold the organization into what it will become in the future. These directors have a lot of work to do initially in writing and approving DARN's constitution and by-laws (A draft is in the works). They need to decide what DARN's role will be in interfacing with other organizations such as CERTS (which appears to quickly be replacing some of the traditional roles in ham radio, partly because of hams joining the program). Since this document enables surplus state property like towers, radio equipment, generators, communications trailers etc to be given to amateur radio clubs, the directors will need to provide for that application process. The DARN directors (probably through a member they select) will also negotiate with the state on usage of public towers for repeater sites, and use of other state owned facilities. The directors will also have to determine how hams will respond in emergencies. Will we request government ID cards to facilitate entry into a disaster site? Do we want to modify the agreement to make it more suitable to our uses? All these need to be addressed by the member clubs through their appointed director or alternate. While this MOA doesn't contain everything we wanted, it does provide a much-needed interface between hams and state government.

Questions:

How much are the dues in DARN? While every organization has costs, the use of Internet or even nets to conduct business should keep the cost down. The directors will decide if dues should be charged, but I would hope they do not form a dues paying organization.

Not all hams are going to participate so why should we do this? Hams will always participate in the event of a disaster. That's just the kind of people we are, however if you look at your own club, there are a percentage of people with ideas and opinions and an even smaller percentage that take action.

Why was this MOA done without notifying me first? Many of you have submitted input on the original MOU we began trying to get approved in 2005. We had a real chance to get it done as the Hurricane Katrina and 9-11 communications problems were active in the minds of everyone. Some parts of that document were not acceptable to the state. Some of the state requirements were not acceptable to hams. Through two years of negotiations the document, while imperfect, has evolved to what it is today. It was obvious to the negotiators that our window of opportunity was closing and probably would not open again for some years to come.

I do not like this DARN organization. DARN is just a name. You will determine its bylaws, constitution, decisions and actions.

Why is there a President, Vice President, and Secretary Treasurer in Darn? Simply put, that is what is required before you can incorporate. Those officers are there to assist the Directors, but have no vote. The Directors at their discretion may change the role of the officers.

Why was ARES left out of this agreement? While ARES is the single most important emergency communications organization, it is mentioned only briefly in the MOA. It appears we have not done a good job of blowing our own horn as to the virtues of ARES in South Dakota. Fire, Police, and Ambulance personnel do not even know what hams are capable of. That's just the way hams are, we do the job and let others take the credit. We find that government officials have either never heard of ARES, or view it as an ARRL organization in which non-members are not allowed to participate. Lets work to change this! In the meantime it is up to the DARN directors to place ARES up front and submit modifications to the MOA.

I don't like this MOA thing. This agreement is only good for 3 years and may be canceled with 30 days written notice. You have the option of participating and working to change it or cancel it. If you plan to do nothing, this agreement will have little effect on you.

Our club wants to apply for a surplus communications trailer the state has. How can we do this? With this agreement DARN member clubs would be available to receive surplus equipment if OEM agrees it would be in the public interest. The directors of DARN will have to determine how those requests will be made, and what rules if any need to be addressed.

How do you become a director in DARN? Only your amateur radio club can appoint you. DARN will require a copy of your clubs minutes pertaining to your appointment. It is recommended that your club also choose an alternate for emergency situations that may arise.

Our club doesn't want to participate now. Can we join later? While your club will miss out on organizing and formulating the policy of DARN, you will be welcome at any time. The state wants to make sure as many hams as possible benefit from this MOA, whether it be access to emergency communications meetings with county Emergency Managers,

access to state facilities, or access to the grant application process.

This thing is being run by the Pierre Club right?

The Pierre Amateur Radio Club has not yet selected or considered a director for DARN. Its members will receive this information in their newsletter and will go through the same process as your club. Most refer to the Pierre club as “being in control of this thing”. PARC has had no involvement except that some of their members have been negotiating the MOU. To my knowledge the only club that has formally voted a representative to negotiate the MOU was the South Dakota Amateur Radio Council.

There has been a lot of misinformation going around about the new MOA. This always happens when something changes from the norm. Most of that information has come about because of the perception that DARN is an active group with a working constitution and bylaws. DARN does have a mission statement which is included in the MOA and there is a preliminary draft of a constitution that will have to be accepted/rejected/rewritten by the directors. I hope I have answered some of your questions and concerns.

KD0S