



**For Immediate Release**

## **Wisconsin ARES®/RACES Receives Federal Grant**

Friday January 19, 2007

Wisconsin Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) through WeComm, Ltd. has received a \$72,000 Department of Homeland Security grant from Shared Health Services of La Crosse, LLC. to improve emergency communications for hospitals throughout Wisconsin. The funds will be used to improve amateur radio communication networks and infrastructure to better provide essential communications for hospitals in the case of terrorism and other emergencies that may disrupt normal communications.

Wisconsin ARES/RACES evaluated the emergency communications capabilities of Wisconsin hospitals, and worked with interested hospitals to develop amateur radio communications resources, equipment and programs tailored to meet each hospital's specific needs. Activation plans were jointly developed and practiced to ensure effective assistance in the event of emergency or disaster. This work, by Wisconsin ARES/RACES, led to this grant.

WeComm, Ltd., a WI nonprofit organization, was created to develop and build amateur radio networks in the State to support WI ARES/RACES communication services. WeComm Ltd. is designing and has begun building its state-of-the-art communication networks.

Amateur Radio, also known as ham radio, is frequently called on to provide "last mile" communications in emergency situations. Communications often fail when emergencies and disasters occur, and the flexible and portable nature of amateur radio personnel and their equipment fills essential communication gaps. In Wisconsin, Amateur Radio is most frequently involved in rescue, damage assessment, and cleanup operations following tornados. Amateur Radio is also the most common resource for storm spotters who relay information about weather conditions to National Weather Service regional offices.



Wisconsin Amateur Radio operators also are involved in communication networks supporting hurricane monitoring, and the cleanup in the aftermath of these large storms. They practice and work with local authorities to prepare for responses to natural and technological disasters, as well as using their time, talent and equipment to provide vital communications for marathons, bike rides, ski races, parades and many other events.

End of release.

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