



THE WECAGRAM

Newsletter of the
Westchester Emergency Communications Association, Inc.

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Serving the Public through Amateur Radio and Serving Amateurs since 1972

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April, 2001

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death, But Make Sure to Give Me Your Ballot

WECA members in good standing should have received a ballot on six proposals to amend the bylaws that were submitted by WECA Treasurer Andy Farber, N4OOX. These items will be voted on at the next membership meeting on Monday, April 2nd (note the special date) at 8:00 p.m. at the Westchester County Center. While some of the items on the ballot are of a housekeeping nature, e.g. changing the name of the county emergency agency to its present name of Office of Emergency Management, there are also proposals to create a new WECA directorship, to change the duties of another director, and to create a formal Life Membership category.

IMPORTANT: Unfortunately, the March ballot was printed in error on proposal #5: the actual proposal should read that the statement of qualifications for office is to be distributed with the ballots and *not* included in the newsletter. The proposed wording is correct in the amended bylaws document that accompanied the ballot; only the ballot is incorrectly stated on this issue. In order to prevent recording of erroneous votes, NO VOTES for proposal #5 will be tallied at this time. The proposal will be rebaloted to members later this year.

All WECA members are urged to vote in person at the April 2nd meeting. However, if that is not possible, members may vote by mail by following the instructions included with the ballot. Ballots should be received NOT LATER than Monday morning, April 2nd in order to be counted.

SDN, Skywarn and WECA: Traffic and Weather Together By Alessandro Sicilia, N2TWN

Thanks for the assistance of all those stations who helped me make the Southern District Net (SDN) a successful net, where we can pass traffic, share information, review our skills and be ready in case of any emergencies that may happen. Special thanks go to all those stations that have provided Skywarn reports to the National Weather Service, for a job really well done. Because of you, we have timely weather-related communications with the Westchester County OEM, as well as with other counties and the Skywarn EC, providing up-to-the-minute advance warning of possible weather emergencies. We should all be proud that SDN is the Skywarn net for the County and the Weather Service, and that WECA provides the repeater to facilitate this service.

I can tell you now that our Skywarn activity is very much appreciated by the Weather Service, but there is always more that can be done. To that end, I expect to hold a training session for amateurs who want to learn to become Skywarn participants. I will inform everyone about the time and location of the session here on the net and here in the WECAGRAM. In the meantime, I wish a wonderful spring holiday season to everyone and their families. Once again, thanks to all for your efforts

Please tune in to SDN every night at 9:30 p.m. local time on the 147.060 MHz WECA repeater frequency.

73, Alessandro N2TWN



Southern District Net January 2001 Report By Sandro Sicilia, N2TWN Net Manager

Stations checked in (QNS)	433
Messages received (QTC)	41
Messages relayed (QSP)	39
Total net time duration (QTR)	416 minutes in
Total number of sessions	31



Southern District Net February 2001 Report By Sandro Sicilia, N2TWN Net Manager

Stations checked in (QNS)	398
Messages received (QTC)	64
Messages relayed (QSP)	64
Total net time duration (QTR)	461 minutes in
Total number of sessions	28

THE WECAGRAM

Editor: Mike Arrow, K2NR

The WECAGRAM is the official newsletter of the Westchester Emergency Communications Association, Inc., a Special Service Club affiliated with the ARRL, ARES, the Westchester County Office of Disaster and Emergency Services, RACES, and the American Red Cross, and is a member of the Westchester County Emergency Medical Services Council.

Any questions, comments, items for Swap and Shop, commercial advertising, suggestions, contributions and letters for inclusion should be sent to the editor at wecagram@weca.org or via postal mail at 2 Edna Place, New Rochelle, NY 10804-2516.

Submissions via e-mail to wecagram@weca.org would be greatly appreciated. Submissions may be edited for style and space.

The deadline for inclusion in the newsletter is the third Monday of the preceding month. Timely publication relies on prompt submissions.

All submissions are expressly the opinion of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of WECA, its officers, directors or the editor.

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WECA wishes to exchange newsletters with other clubs. All clubs wishing to receive the WECAGRAM in exchange for copies of their publications should contact the editor.

WECA Officers and Directors: July 2000-June 2001

OFFICERS:

President	Stanley Rothman, WA2NRV
Executive VP	Philip Petrus, W2RWR
VP/General Counsel	Michael J. Weitzner, N2EJI
Treasurer	Andrew R. Farber, N4OOX
Secretary	Milton A. Galamison, KC2GWK
Trustee	Paul S. Vydareny, WB2VUK
President Emeritus	Joseph Brown, KB2NBN

DIRECTORS:

County Liaison	(vacant)
Digital Modes	Richard L. Benda, WB2QJA
Director at Large	Sanford H. Fried, N2SF
Education	Efrem Acosta, W2CZ
Engineering	Robert A. Wilson, N2DVQ
Membership	Angelina R. Morgante, KC2COR
Newsletter Editor	Michael M. Arrow, K2NR
Public Relations	David J. Weiss, N2OGK
Public Service	Robert Kantor, N2TSE
Repeater Operations	Dwight P. Smith, N2FMC
Social	Thomas R. Raffaelli, WB2NHC

WECA gladly accepts donations of equipment in new or used condition (e.g. from estates). Please contact WECA by e-mail, postal mail or telephone for further information.

WECA operates the following repeaters under call sign **WB2ZII/R**. All repeaters use PL 2A (114.8 Hz).

147.060(+), 224.400(-) and 447.475(-) MHz

The WECAGRAM is available on-line at:

<http://www.weca.org/wecagram>

Views from the Shack #9: A Year After: Did It Work?

A year ago this month, on Saturday, April 15, 2000, a major federal event took place. No, it was not "income tax day," which fell on April 17 that year. It was the effective date of the present amateur licensing structure. As most hams know, new or upgraded licenses became limited to Technician, General or Extra Class only and were granted after passing updated tests (or, in some cases, getting "grandfathered" into General Class under a rather unusual set of rules). The most salient change in the licensing requirements was the reduction of Morse code speed for General and Extra Class to five words per minute.

These changes did not affect most pre-existing hams that were not upgrading, so that all the Novice and Advanced Class hams can continue to operate and renew in the same class indefinitely. Tech Plus Class operators could maintain their privileges, but upon renewal, the Tech Pluses would be listed as "Technicians." As with the VE program, the FCC had passed some of the burden of licensing from itself to its licensees, this time requiring Tech Pluses to maintain proof of their eligibility to operate on CW in the HF bands.

What was the practical effect of these changes? Some older Technicians and Tech Pluses became Generals without examination. It became easier for Generals and Advanceds to become Extras, especially if their affinity for code was not so hot. But what about the main purpose of the new rules, which was to advance the amateur service?

I think the jury is out. Surely, the Extra written exam needed modernization and upgrading, a work still in progress. The radio art advances, and so must our licensing exams. Many excellent, proficient operators, who just don't have the knack for code, became eligible for upgrades, which are well deserved based on their radio knowledge. (For the record, from a 20-wpm Extra: the reduction in Extra Class code speed from 20 to 5 wpm makes the new Extras no less deserving.) The Novice Class, which for me and lots of others was the entrée to amateur radio, long since lost that place to Technician Class, so its disappearance from the menu for unlicensed persons won't be seriously missed.

On the whole, however, I'm not so sure that the new structure is really getting at the heart of the matter: *attraction* of new, motivated would-be operators and *retention* of present licensees in the amateur fold. The Technician Class remained unchanged, and without the Novice Class, initial licensing actually became somewhat harder. More importantly, a new 5-wpm Extra who used to be an Advanced may not be any less likely to let his license lapse upon expiration. I wonder whether more non-hams became hams, and whether fewer hams became ex-hams, this year than last. That may be the real legacy of 2000.

73, Mike K2NR

From the President... By Stan Rothman, WA2NRV

I certainly hope the LAMB of April is here. We were very active with weather situations last month. Alessandro N2TWN needs a rest from Skywarn activities. He would like an assistant to work alongside him.

The nominating committee (N2TFC, N2AMP, & N2GGY) would like to hear from you. It is important that we have members with new enthusiasm and ideas on the WECA board. These are important areas for the health of the club and the benefit of our membership. Call them before the April meeting. The election will be overseen by the elections committee: N2KIM, K2ZVI & N2OLU.

It looks as if our support will be needed in New Rochelle, where the local government is trying to reduce the tower height requirement to 35 ft from 75 ft. If this local regulation passes, which city will be the next to propose another? There are a few issues, which will become evident within the next few months. Listen on the repeaters as well as the WECA web site for details.

If you are interested in the club project, a PSK31 transceiver, as shown at the last WECA meeting, contact Nick K2ZVI. If there is none left at the initial price, we can obtain more units at \$50.00 each.

The ARRL insurance program now will cover antennas, towers, and associated items. Check with the insurance provider to make sure you have the required coverage.

I also want to thank all the WECA members who work in the background on behalf of our club. They are our unsung heroes. Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing all of you on April 2nd at the Westchester County Center for the WECA general meeting: 7:30 PM for the social half hour followed by the meeting at 8:00PM.

73, Stan WA2NRV

Renew your ARRL membership and help WECA!
WECA receives \$2 for every ARRL member who renews through the club. Best of all, it costs you no more! Please make your check payable to "WECA", and mail it with ARRL membership form directly to our Treasurer: Andy Farber, N4OOX, 29 Tarryhill Road, Tarrytown, NY 10591.

From the Education Director... By Efrem Acosta, W2CZ

Today, while listening on the 20-meter band, I came across something that had me glued to the radio in excess of three hours. What I came across was the Maritime Mobile net, and what they were doing was helping a vessel in distress. The vessel had aboard a man who I believe was shot by thieves, and since the vessel's VHF marine radio was damaged as a result of the incident, the HF amateur radio was the only lifeline left to his wife who used it to summon for help. The hams on the net coordinated a rescue involving the Coast Guards of three different nations, and using relays from hams in four countries, some four hours later help had arrived. Yes, I was proud to say, "I am a ham" after hearing this, but then the question arose: am I ready?

"Ready" means many things to folks, but to hams, it means "is my equipment and am I ready to render aid?" Remember last year after a storm hit, it was Westchester hams, many of whom were WECA members, who responded out to Cortlandt to render aid and assist relief agencies. About a day and a half later, it was confirmed that a small tornado had struck that area. We talk about emergency preparedness, but do we have extra batteries, generators, have we had our equipment serviced and ready? These are some of the many questions we need to ask in order to achieve that state of preparedness.

Some of our questions can be answered through training. In the next few weeks, we hope you will take the time to go to a Skywarn class and learn how to spot and report threatening weather. In addition, in May, I will set up a class to teach non-traffic handlers how to format NTS radiograms and familiarize them with NTS procedures. Yes, in case of an emergency where normal communications are disrupted, NTS radiograms can be used to pass emergency traffic, as well as health and welfare traffic. This undertaking will be done under the guidance of WECA's own Sandro N2TWN, the net manager for the Southern District Net. Sandro is also the Skywarn coordinator for Westchester County, and I am sure that he would welcome the addition of more hams that are trained and ready to assist in emergency incidents. It has been said many times before but it is worth repeating: "Emergency" is WECA's middle name!!

73, Efrem W2CZ

Think Hams are Indispensable? Check Out Our Competition... Grant Nishanian, KC2FNU, found the following in the January 2001 issue of *Dispatch Monthly* magazine (<http://www.911dispatch.com>) regarding emergency communications in India:

While some agencies are debating whether to spend millions on an 800 MHz trunked radio system, the officers of the Orissa [India] police are feeding and training 55 mph carrier pigeons to deliver messages to headquarters from outlying districts. The 27 pigeons [fly] as far as 310 miles, and the system itself dates to 1946 when communications [were] only slightly less reliable. The pigeons aren't used very often, but during last year's cyclone that killed some 8,500 persons, they are indispensable when communication lines are down.



**Next Membership Meeting:
Monday, April 2 at 8:00 pm
NOTE SPECIAL DATE
County Center, White Plains
Bylaws Balloting**

**From the Membership Director...
By Angelina Morgante, KC2COR**

Congratulations to Jeffrey Steinberg, KC2GUC, who upgraded to Extra Class.

To the following members have not renewed for 2000-01: AA2ZG, AC2G, K2RRR, KA2FZI, KB2UCN, KC2 CEX/CGI/CHX/FKY, N2 CVZ/LE/N2000/OR/OZX/WIE, W2 HVK/IRE/SLC/XX, WA2GF/QEH/VXO: *please renew your membership today*, so that you may continue to be counted as an active member, retain your voting rights and receive the WECAGRAM.

WECA badges for the following members will be available to be picked up at the next membership meeting on April 2nd: KC2 ESU/FVU/GWH/GWK/GYP, W2CZ, WG1HM

Look forward to seeing you on April 2nd.
73, Angelina KC2COR

Remember: "Emergency Communications" is WECA's middle name!
Learn more and maintain readiness. Contact Alan N2YGK or Joe WB2VVS for more information.

**From the Public Service Director...
By Robert Kantor, N2TSE**

The following public-service activities are scheduled:

Sunday, April 29th: March of Dimes, Mt. Kisco.
Sunday, June 3rd: American Diabetes Tour-de-Cure bicycle ride, SUNY Purchase.
Saturday night, July 14th: NY Philharmonic at Westchester Community College, Valhalla.

Please ask your entertainment/event planner and/or your better half to put these events on your calendar so you can reserve it to come out and play "ham." And don't forget: PLEASE SIGN UP in good time to participate. Call me at (914) 949-4231, see me at the membership meeting or e-mail me at n2tse@weca.org for further information.

73, Robert N2TSE

***Want to see your name on this page?
Upgrade your license!***

WECA sponsors VE exam sessions every other month. The next WECA VE exam session will be held on: **Thursday, April 12, 7:00 pm**, at the Westchester County Emergency Operations Center Sub-Basement, 148 Martine Avenue, White Plains. Good luck from Sandy N2SF and the WECA VE team.



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PLEASE DO NOT DELAY**