



# 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*

Volume 26, Issue 3

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## ***WECA Operators Shine in the Gloom of WTC Disaster***

*The hours of training, public-service events and drills WECA operators culminated in an overwhelming, well-organized response to the World Trade Center disaster on September 11 in New York City. Over 45 WECA operators gave unselfishly of their time and abilities to support rescue and relief efforts on behalf of thousands of New Yorkers. In addition, WECA members who are emergency service leaders helped mobilize the Westchester chapter of the Red Cross and the County Emergency Operations Center to provide key assistance to New York City counterparts. This support includes leadership in the local ARES and RACES organizations.*

*We do not forget the hundreds of hams who assisted us in the New York area, including many hams from New York City and nearby suburban counties in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, from upstate New York and New England and from elsewhere in America. We also must not forget our amateur brethren who helped out in rescue and relief efforts for the other shocking events of that infamous day: the destruction of a portion of the Pentagon and the tragic crash of the hijacked airliner in western Pennsylvania. It has been a time of pride as well as sweat, tears and grief in the amateur radio community, and a reaffirmation of the value of amateur radio public service in the era of cellular telephones and the Internet.*

*This issue of the WECAGRAM is devoted to the WECA response to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. It is dedicated to the memory of the brave emergency-response workers who lost their lives trying to save thousands, as well as the many innocent victims who were caught up in the tragic events in New York, suburban Washington, DC and western Pennsylvania and the brave passengers on the stricken airliners who fought the hijackers and prevented even more damage to our national institutions and the American spirit.*

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### **WECA On the Air at the Red Cross Westchester Chapter**



Alessandro N2TWN



Alan N2YGK, John N2YHK, Grant KC2FNU,  
Tom WB2NHC, "Wires" KC2FYY

# 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](mailto:wecagram@weca.org) or via postal mail at 2 Edna Place, New Rochelle, NY 10804-2516.

Submissions via e-mail to [wecagram@weca.org](mailto: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 2001-June 2002**

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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 #14: Amateur Radio's Finest Hour

The World Trade Center disaster event on September 11 galvanized every American to what happens when terrorists attack. Terrorism by definition is meant to frighten, confuse and disable normal activities. In the famous words of the movie "Ghostbusters," when the bad guys wreak havoc on New York City, "who're you gonna call?"

It did not take long for one answer to emerge: *radio amateurs*. Sure, people heard of hams when hurricanes knock down cell phone towers, when floods wash away landlines, when a panicked populace craves communication. We're ready to respond to the plane crash, the storm, the power failure, even a pirate attack on the Caribbean Sea. But what happens when madmen deliberately fly two jumbo jets—laden with explosive fuel—into the biggest skyscrapers of America's business capital? Could amateurs respond effectively to *that* level of destruction? Could anyone?

New Yorkers are tough birds, and the amount of panic on the streets of lower Manhattan was fortunately limited. Our amateurs, too, did not panic. Of course, they were shocked, appalled and fearful for their country and its largest city. But they treated this event like a big flood, or a big plane crash, or a big earthquake or explosion; in fact, it was all of these. Maybe to a lesser degree, but we have been there in the past. We were as ready as it was reasonably possible to be in response to this disaster. We were ready *and we acted*.

The firefighters and police officers killed in the line of duty were brave men and women who thought of others' welfare before their own. The ones who survive were just as brave. Quite appropriately, they received a nation's thanks and respect early and often in this disaster. Red Cross and other aid workers were also rightfully praised. Nevertheless, we played a part in the response, but the Gotham-based media did not utter a peep about radio amateurs. Where is the recognition of the "Ghostbusters" who came with their radios to try to save New York? Or is it, "you mean there are *still* ham operators around nowadays?"

WECA operators have been out there in force trying to aid the rescue and bring comfort and information to those vitally in need of it. America is our country, New York is our home and Manhattan a source of employment and enjoyment for many of us. We should be proud to have played such an important role, even if an unsung one, in the recovery of our great metropolis. We can be proud, too, of our fellow hams from all over that rushed in to aid us in our hour of need.

The ARRL made the allusion to hamdom's response to the World Trade Center disaster as "amateur radio's finest hour." Winston Churchill might well have agreed. Let's not just be proud of our response; let's let the world in on our pride too.

73, Mike K2NR

# What WECA Did: A 911-Style Response To The 9/11 Emergency

## By Mike Arrow, K2NR, WECAGRAM Editor

The news came over commercial radio to Tom Raffaelli, WB2NHC at work at about 9 a.m. on September 11, 2001: a hijacked jet airliner crashed into a tower of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan. At that moment, Tom, the WECA emergency services director, assumed his *alter ego* as Communications Director of the Westchester County chapter of the American Red Cross and rushed to the chapter headquarters on North Broadway in White Plains. On the way, he notified Alan Crosswell, N2YGK, another WECA member who is the ARRL Westchester County Emergency Coordinator (EC) for the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). The third major player on the Westchester amateur radio community emergency team, Joe Bruno, WB2VVS, is also a WECA member and is the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) coordinator for Westchester. He, too, was mobilized early. All of this happened as a second hijacked plane struck the other tower of the trade center, and even before the collapse of the towers shortly thereafter. These three WECA members were soon to become some of the most important responders to the swiftly unfolding tragedy.

Like countless other New Yorkers, Tom, Alan and Joe were shocked by the dramatic events of the morning. Unlike most of them, however, they were ready with a plan: the mobilization of amateur radio operators to support emergency response teams and governmental officials who needed to take decisive action. Westchester County officials, like Liam Murphy, deputy director of the county Office of Emergency Management, recognized the need for emergency response, both to assist neighboring New York City and also to safeguard the public in Westchester. Mr. Murphy has had a close working relationship with WECA and radio amateurs, and activated RACES in the county before noon. Telephone calls went out to amateurs who had previously signed up as volunteers for ARES and RACES should emergency strike. A call for amateur volunteers was made on the WECA repeater on 147.060 MHz, which was activated by noon as the amateur radio communication emergency network hub in Westchester for dealing with the disaster.

The role of amateur radio soon became clear as landline and cellular-based telephone services rapidly overloaded with frantic calls from victims and escapees of the disaster and worried family members. Even police and fire radio networks became swamped with calls as the dimensions of the disaster increased. Amateur radio became a vital means of communication for government and rescue coordinators. WECA people were on the cutting edge of these efforts.

While the Westchester Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was being rapidly staffed with governmental officials and amateur radio operators—people like Adam Epstein, N2DHH, an assistant EC and WECA member who rushed in and served as the amateur network control operator at the EOC for many of the critical early hours—the New York City EOC was in danger. By the afternoon, the collapse of the twin 110-story towers rained down debris on a 40-story neighbor, 7 World Trade Center. Ultimately, No. 7 collapsed and destroyed the New York City EOC housed within. The communications nerve center of New York City emergency response was crippled. Westchester County officials desperately tried to establish contact with their New York City counterparts, who no longer could be reached via the City's EOC. Once again, WECA came to the rescue: Adam, while working at the Westchester EOC, raised a ham in New York City who was in contact with New York City officials who had fled to a remote temporary EOC. Through this linkage that was instituted by a quick-thinking WECA emergency operator, County Executive Andrew Spano and other Westchester officials were able to lend support to New York City in a timely way.

In the meantime, relief efforts to victims of the disaster—the injured and the displaced—and their loved ones began to be mounted by Red Cross agencies throughout greater New York. The Westchester County chapter was a vital part of this effort, and WECA members established a communications center at the chapter. Relief stations called “care centers” were quickly established to provide mental and physical first aid to the affected population within the county as well as anticipated victims arriving from New York City. These centers were established at the Westchester County Center in White Plains and at remote sites in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and Yonkers. All of these centers were manned by WECA operators, who relayed logistical messages on behalf of the Red Cross and its aid workers, from their establishment on September 11.

Some time after the initial incident, a communications vehicle went to lower Manhattan and soon found itself involved with an unusual mission at Ground Zero. WECA Engineering Director Bob Wilson, N2DVQ, an engineer with Cingular Communications, took portable equipment that permitted establishing communications links with an estimated 300 pagers in the disaster site. As no other vehicles in the area had as tall an antenna as did the communications vehicle, Bob fixed on the signals of these pagers caught in the mounting rubble, which helped to identify victims.

WECA operators also joined New York City-based relief efforts starting on September 11 and continuing for weeks afterward. In the first ten days following the disaster, the Westchester County Red Cross chapter assembled a list of 123 amateur radio operators, including over 45 WECA members, who volunteered for various assignments in and around New York. The Westchester-based, WECA member-staffed communications team helped coordinate logistics for housing, feeding and transporting amateurs from north of New York City, including amateur volunteers from upstate New York and the New England states, from the Westchester chapter office. They assembled groups of amateurs needed to staff the New York City

disaster shelters; provided the amateurs with credentials, equipment and transportation to New York and kept order in the frantic outpouring of volunteered service in the amateur radio community. As the crowd of well-intentioned volunteers and the needs for their services exploded, the New York City relief effort needed organization to keep all working in harmony and synchronization to help the needy. The Westchester team provided the amateur radio “troops” to its New York City counterpart, who mustered these and other dedicated amateurs from around the United States and put them to work in coordinated support of the total New York-based relief effort.

After ten days of round-the-clock activity, the Westchester amateur communications network began to be dismantled. This did not mean the end of the participation of Westchester hams. The need for an oasis of support for victims and families, provided for by 12 Red Cross shelters in New York City, was itself supported by hams—including WECA members—on rotating 12-hour shifts of one or more operators per shelter. The vast network of relief workers, spread far and wide throughout America’s largest city, could not be supported entirely by commercial communications carriers: the amateur radio community guaranteed swift and accurate message service for vital functions. The Westchester ARES/RACES network operations finally closed down on September 22, followed on September 24 by the closing of their larger NYC counterpart operations.

WECA members were not the only amateur radio operators who participated in the relief effort, even among the amateur community in Westchester and nearby counties. Hundreds of radio amateurs from many areas responded quickly, willingly and unselfishly to the call to aid the rescue and subsequent relief effort. Some of these amateurs were newcomers to emergency response service, but many were seasoned and trained veterans who prepared for emergency response through amateur radio clubs such as WECA.

What continues to make the Westchester Emergency Communications Association outstanding has been its dedication to emergency service through programs of formal off-line training, on-the-job training at public service events and participation in emergency drills. Many WECA members have participated in at least one of these events in the past year, taking to heart WECA’s unofficial motto that “*emergency communications* is WECA’s middle name.” As a public-service club, WECA tirelessly offers to prepare its members for emergencies big and small. While no one in Westchester could have anticipated the double hijacking by terrorists of American commercial aircraft to destroy twin landmarks of New York City in a single day—and the attendant loss of life and havoc wreaked on the American and local economies—WECA members were ready to help in an organized fashion. Training and dedication provided the foundation for WECA members to be able to provide *useful, timely and competent service* to the community.

### ***Tips for Westchester amateurs in disaster response***

1. If you hear of a disaster or widespread emergency, tune in to the WECA repeater on 147.060 MHz for news, bulletins and calls for assistance. Listen for emergency activation of the repeater as a network control station, at which time amateurs should refrain from non-emergency-related communications over the repeater. Report any actual or potential emergency conditions via the network. If the repeater is overloaded or non-functional, you may be directed to the WECA repeater on 447.475 MHz.
2. Emergency network control (“Net Control”) operators are there to keep order in emergencies. They are vital to the ability of amateur emergency communications to function properly. Please do not make random calls when the network is activated; direct *all* calls to Net Control. If you need to reach another station standing by on the network, call Net Control to request permission to call the station directly.
3. If you are ready, willing and able to assist in emergency response, call in as directed by Net Control on the repeater, or contact your local Emergency Coordinator (EC). In Westchester, the EC is Alan Crosswell, N2YGK and the RACES coordinator is Joe Bruno, WB2VVS. You may also contact Tom Raffaelli, WB2NHC, WECA’s emergency services director, as a secondary source if other sources are not available.
4. Emergency response to a disaster requires coordination of trained persons who are recognized by governmental and relief agencies. “Too many cooks *can* spoil the broth” if well-meaning amateurs respond willy-nilly. Therefore, ***DO NOT GO TO A DISASTER SITE WITHOUT EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS FROM AN EMERGENCY COORDINATOR OR HIS DESIGNEE.*** Participation in emergency response does *not* mean that “it’s off to the RACES” for you unless you are *explicitly* instructed to do so. If help is needed by specific relief agencies such as the Red Cross, you will be directed to the proper place by the coordinator.
5. Prepare a “jump bag” of spare/protective clothing as well as radio and radio-related equipment for use at short notice. Consult the WECA Operations Manual for further information regarding suggested contents of a jump bag.
6. While many hands are needed in major disasters, the most useful hands are *well-trained* ones. Get ready to help by engaging in training and public-service sessions *before* disaster strikes.
7. Sign up for the ARES and RACES emergency service rosters so that you may be reached quickly in emergencies by the coordinators. Keep contact information current, and notify Alan N2YGK of any changes promptly.

## From the President By Stan Rothman, WA2NRV

WOW ! I'm speechless. Now for a ham, that's quite a feat. I have been a ham for over forty years. In that time, I have seen a lot of situations that relied on amateur radio communications to effectively save the day. In all those years, I have never been as proud of our hobby, WECA members, and hams in general, as I am today.

With the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, OUR COUNTRY was put in a situation like we have never previously seen here in the Northeast. Our brother and sister hams jumped in and provided the communications required to coordinate the emergency workers, shelters, medical efforts, and many other areas. We did it twenty-four hours a day, for almost two weeks. Thank you all for doing your share. I would not attempt to list names of individuals, so many of whom came from near and far because they were needed.

This is the type of situation that we have been training for with all our practice drills, walkathons, marathons, Turkey Trots, concerts, Indian Point drills, Southern District Net sessions, and even Field Days. Without the experience gained from all these events, we would not have been as qualified to have the net in place as quickly as we did. Again, my WECA hat is off to all that participated. My true hope is that you will never be called upon to do it again.

I want to thank all WECA members who sent their dues in early to help with our touchy financial situation. It helped avoid a very difficult time for our club. Although we are still trying to keep a tight rein on our spending, we are in a more stable condition at this time. We are trying to find new ways to increase our funds. You can help. If your employer has a program in place to help tax-exempt organizations, please let Andy N4OOX know whom to contact.

Of course I know that I don't have to remind you that we have more events coming in the near future, including the Indian Point Drill, NYC Marathon, etc. Look for the schedule in Robert N2TSE's article.

Also, please send Angelina your current E-mail address so she can update her records. Let her know if you would like to be listed on the WECA web reflector. It will forward mail addressed to "your call@weca.org" to your regular E-mail address.

Although I will be visiting my sister and unable to make the meeting this month, I am sure you will enjoy the meeting. The rest of the members will be looking for you on Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 pm at the Westchester County Center. Steve Mendelsohn, W2ML, ARRL vice-director of the Hudson Division and Communications Director for the NYC marathon, will be our speaker this month.

73, Stan WA2NRV

## WECA On the Scene at Ground Zero





**Next Membership Meeting:  
Monday, Nov. 12, at 8:00 pm  
County Center, White Plains**

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

Please welcome Bill Hart, KC2IJH, Port Chester, NY. He was a member in the past and decided to join us again. We also welcome two new members into the WECA family this month: John Syvarth, K2QCF, Mamaroneck, NY and Robert T. Wheeler, K6SEM, Waccabuc, NY.

Please be patient as the renewal payments are processed. Also, please keep me informed of your current e-mail address and any license upgrades or call sign changes at [angelina2@msn.com](mailto:angelina2@msn.com).  
73, Angelina KC2COR

**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, October 11th, 7:00 pm**, at our NEW location:  
Westchester County Fire Training Center  
4 Dana Road, Valhalla, NY.  
Good luck from Sandy N2SF and the WECA VE team.

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

The following people helped out at on Sept. 21st at the Leukemia & Lymphoma Walk on September 21: AB2JD; K4ZGE; KC2 CLZ,FYY (and KC2FYY's mom and sister); N2 AMP,CAV,NAA,TJE,TSE,WQG,YYL; and N4OOX. Many thanks for your help!

Many thanks to all the operators who came out and supported the rescue and relief efforts in Westchester and New York City during the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster on September 11.

The following public-service activities are scheduled:  
*Sunday, September 30*, 8:00 am: American Heart Association, White Plains.  
*Saturday, October 13*: Boy Scout Camporee, Croton Point Park, Montrose.  
*Sunday, October 21*, 8:00 am: American Diabetes Walk, Rye Playland, Rye.  
*Sunday, November 4*: New York City Marathon.  
*Sunday, November 18*, 8:00 am: Turkey Trot race, Mamaroneck.  
*Wednesday, December 19*, 6:00 pm: Santa Claus at Blythedale Children's Hospital, Valhalla.

PLEASE SIGN UP in good time to participate.

73, Robert N2TSE



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