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|  | EMERGENCY MEASURES RADIO GROUP |
|  | OTTAWA ARES |

Two Names - One Group - One Purpose

Yearly Strategy Plan EMRG-303

**Version: 3.2
2007**

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TRAINED VOLUNTEER RADIO OPERATORS PREPARED TO PROVIDE
COMMUNICATIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

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1.0 REVISION SUMMARY

| Date of Change | Revision Number | Summary of Changes (Section #, type of change) |
|----------------|-----------------|---|
| 2004-05-04 | 1.0 | Initial document |
| 2004-05-23 | 1.1 | Re-number as EMR-303 and add classification to page header |
| 2004-07-29 | 1.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change name to Year 1 Project Plan to reflect the 12 months of work, rather than calendar year.• Update sections of document based on known changes since last update• Add Carlington Heights requirement |
| 2005-02-16 | 1.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update objectives based on discussion in January Management team meeting |
| 2006-02-12 | 2.0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change name to Yearly Strategy Plan• Update for 2006 using previous plan as a base |
| 2006-03-31 | 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add general objectives so plan becomes overall EMRG strategy, not just a technical project plan. |
| 2007-01-12 | 3.0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial 2007 Plan |
| 2007-01-18 | 3.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update with Management Team review input |
| 2007-05-05 | 3.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add section 3.4, Guiding Principles |

2.0 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Yearly Strategy Plan defines the work that EMRG will focus on for the year, to guide planning and maintain focus.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 5 YEAR PLAN

The Emergency Measures Radio Group (EMRG) developed a 5 year plan in 2003, called the "*EMRG Disaster Communications 5 Year Plan*" [EMRG-302]. The plan defined a series of projects that EMRG identified as required in order to provide effective communications in an emergency.

The objectives of the 5 year plan remain viable, so the plan is still an important reference document, although the time lines are no longer valid.

3.2 YEAR 1 (2005)

The first year of the Yearly Strategy Plan was 2005. The year was very successful in terms of moving forward, but in the end, many tasks remained to be completed. The project objectives set for year one turned out to be far too aggressive and the work activity realistically will require 4 to 5 years to complete.

Some of the lessons learned that impact progress, includes;

- 1) The planning, engineering and organization of many of these projects takes as much or more time than the project itself. There are a limited number of people who have the skills to plan many of the projects.
- 2) The projects are only one aspect of EMRG activity. Meetings, exercise and training sessions must also be prepared and delivered in parallel. The strategy needs to include these as part of a total yearly plan.
- 3) Sometimes things move slowly, so equipment or space does not always become available when planned, although it does become available eventually.
- 4) Unexpected events force sudden changes in the plan, such as the Pioneer Amateur Radio Club shutting down their UHF repeater, which introduced an additional project for EMRG.

3.3 FUNDING

The City of Ottawa, through the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), provides funding for EMRG projects. Year 1 (2005) had the largest grant, \$5000, while subsequent years are funded at \$1000 each.

Funding is used to buy parts and equipment required to complete projects. This also includes work done to adjust radio equipment for repeaters, which EMRG contracts to TimeMCI. EMRG and OFS have an agreement that EMRG will use a commercial radio shop to align repeater equipment to ensure there is no interference to OFS or other radio systems.

3.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.4.1 The EOC Is a Decision Centre

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a decision making centre. EMRG provides a radio operator to provide a channel for information into, and out of the EOC.

- EMRG Net Control should be separate from the EOC, either in another room, or another facility.
- Information not destined for the EOC, should not route through the EOC.

3.4.2 Deploy Communications Co-located With Users

We are an alternative to the phone, so we should be located where the phone would be, with the users. Radio operators at the back of the room, down the hall, or in the parking lot, are not effective communications solutions.

3.4.3 Local Communications Is The Priority

The majority (80 % or more) of Amateur Emergency communications will be within the local area. This communications will be used for collecting and distributing information from shelters, Community Services, Red Cross, EOC or local citizen patrols.

- The probability of a localized communications failure is much higher than the probability of a City Wide or Eastern Ontario communications failure.
- Any long distance (HF) communications still requires a local infrastructure to collect and distribute information.

3.4.4 Promote The Benefits Of The “1 To Many” Controlled Net

Even if phones are working, there are benefits to using radio communications due to the “1 to many” aspect of radio, where everyone gets the same message at the same time. No busy signals or voice mail.

- Amateur radio can and should be more than the “solution of last resort”.

3.4.5 Where Possible, Build Portable Solutions

Make solutions as portable as possible, so equipment is moveable within our own area, or for Mutual Aid.

3.4.6 We Are A Communications Provider

There are a limited number of Amateurs available in an Emergency. In some situations, the Amateur will set up and maintain the communications system at a site, but may not operate the radio.

- Solutions must be simple enough that partner staff can operate them if required.

3.4.7 We Are Not A Replacement For Municipal Responsibility

Municipalities have a responsibility to their residents and to their employees, to provide suitable and sufficient communications capability to support Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS).

- Amateur radio is not means to avoid legitimate Municipal costs.

4.0 STRATEGY FOR THIS YEAR

4.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

There are 4 areas that make up the general objectives. These areas are the non technical aspects of EMRG as an organization.

4.1.1 Meetings

Meetings are opportunities to get people together for group think sessions, training, or exercises, with a brief EMRG information session at the beginning. Meetings can include a mix of training, hands on practice, or tabletop exercises, all aimed at developing and testing specific skills.

The meeting strategy has evolved over several years and remains unchanged. There are typically **3 General Meetings** per year; September, January and May/June.

4.1.2 Training

The key objective for this year is to continue to implement the training plan. While training has been taking place in the past, there was no overall strategy for course structure, content, development paths for members, and linking of training with exercises.

The training plan will pull together the ideas and concepts that have been implemented so far, or discussed in general terms, putting them into a common document. One of the longer term objectives for the training plan is an outline for a basic Amateur radio course, so we are prepared in the event we are approached to offer one.

The training strategy is to **offer 5 courses** per year, which can include a mix of meetings, evening, and half day/full day weekend sessions. Some training will be new, while other courses will be existing courses presented for new members or people who missed a previous session.

4.1.3 Exercises

Exercises provide an opportunity to practice skills, identify areas that need improvement and work together as a group. Each exercise is designed to from an objective, such as practising skills learned in a course.

The exercise strategy is to **complete 3 exercises** per year, which can include a mix of tabletop, limited deployment and full deployment exercises.

Where possible, deployment exercises should be with partner agencies, to build skills and understanding between the partner staff and EMRG members.

4.1.4 Recruitment

Recruitment is an ongoing task aimed at maintaining the membership level. Each year some members drop out due to loss of interest, family, work, or health constraints. The strategy is to maintain visibility within the Amateur radio community through presentations at local Amateur radio club meetings and the yearly EMRG booth at the Ottawa Amateur Radio Club fall Hamfest. **We will attempt to find someone who will specialize in recruiting suitable new members.**

4.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The yearly project objectives are a subset of the objectives outlined in the EMRG 5 Year Plan and continue the work originally set out for year 1. The Yearly Strategy Plan outlines activities for a 12 month period starting in January. This years plan will continue to focus on 3 high level objectives, listed in order of priority;

4.2.1 Maintain Existing Infrastructure

Ensure existing infrastructure is complete, robust, documented and people are properly trained. Existing infrastructure includes the voice repeaters, the EMRG communications room at Fire Dispatch, the radios in the EOC at City Hall and the radios at the Ottawa Red Cross¹

- **Complete loose ends and focus on completion of documentation**

The EOC, EMRG Communications Room and the Red Cross, form the primary communications triangle for EMRG. The objective for this year is to **complete the work, so the three sites support VHF (144 MHz) voice & data, VHF (220 MHz) voice or data and UHF (440 MHz) voice or data.**

4.2.2 Voice Communications City Wide

1. Expand voice communications infrastructure (repeaters) to support communications between any locations, urban or rural, within the City of Ottawa.
 - **Two repeaters remain to be completed**, the West end VHF repeater in Carp and the UHF Repeater with VHF link at Baseline and Woodroffe.
2. Build an inventory of basic radio equipment (radios, power supplies, antennas & coax) to ensure sufficient equipment is available to provide consistent reliable radio communications from deployed locations.
 - **This year a focus will be made on completing the kits for half of the equipment.**

4.2.3 Data Communications In Urban core

- Establish a basic data communications network, to provide coverage within the urban core,
1. Improve our single digital repeater (digipeater) and establish data communications capability at the EMRG communications room, the EOC and Ottawa Red Cross¹
 - **The new radio has been installed and is waiting for wiring.**
 2. Build 3 portable data communications systems, each with a laptop, data modem and radio, for communications from deployed locations
 - **The equipment exists, it needs to be wired and packaged, along with training and practice sessions.**

NOTE 1:

- EMRG maintains and operates the radios located at the Ottawa Red Cross headquarters, but any costs are paid by the Ottawa Red Cross.