

WICEN in the future

After reading the recent Emails on the topic, here are my thoughts.....
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SUMMARY:

1. Commercial channels & radios:

Get a grant to purchase 10 units and channel license.

2. MOU:

Produce a draft Memorandum Of Understanding

3. State Borders:

What is the WIA's position? Make contact!

4. Log keeping

It's just a matter of practice – get used to making some notes in a diary, daily.

5. Message Pads:

Pads seem archaic & a waste of time

6. Voice procedure:

Voice procedure, or WICEN credibility suffers.

7. Data Comms:

Digital communications would seem to be a way forward for many members.

8. Dissent in the ranks:

'Wicen is split down the middle'

9. Crystal Balling!

Are we basically a staffing supply organisation?

10. Relief Centres:

WICEN expertise & equipment have been shown to be desirable is the ERC

11. SES Frankston:

Running their radios during a large incident, freeing their people who could be 'out on the ground'

12. 80 Mtr Tuesday night Net:

The Net should count towards the yearly event participation award.

ASSOCIATIONS:

1. Commercial channels & radios:

For use with other agencies. Why not? So often when giving a talk at a MEMPC meeting, I need to set people straight in that "No, I can't give your members a HH radio to take away". At about \$700 a radio, get a grant to purchase 10 units and channel license.

2. MOU:

Firm clients? Who are our clients? We need to produce a draft Memorandum Of Understanding for presentation to agencies that show an interest in our existence. IE: Municipalities – MEMPC, Local CFA & SES, DEWLP, Police. This would be customisable to their specific needs. MOU's don't need to tie us to guaranteeing a specific outcome – they can be indicative in nature.

3. State Borders:

Sharing operators across state borders – Arrangements (insurance) need to be implemented off season. WIA as the overseeing national body with representation in National Emergency planning bodies. What is the WIA's position? Make contact!

TRAINING:

4. Log keeping – Comments that we are good at Log Keeping – I disagree – MOST of us are very rusty & feel log keeping is a task to avoid if possible. – **It is a very necessary procedure**, but rarely practiced.

Specifically 3 types: –

1. WICEN log
2. Other Agencies logs
3. Personal log.

It's just a matter of practice – get used to making some notes in a diary, daily. Its sounds too easy, but its surprisingly hard!

5. Message Pads:

Logs OK, but message pads? Many members regard the message pad as archaic – time consuming & if viewed by other agencies, they would form a very poor view of WICEN operations. The training for message pads & the sending & receiving of voice messages of a critical nature is being rejected by members – BUT, It is important for every WICEN operator to practice the discipline of message handling in all its forms – Pads, voice & data. Pads seem archaic & a waste of time, but the training instils all the required attitude of exactness, efficiency, repeatability & accountability. But, lets not labour on it – its only a small part of the training.

6. Voice procedure:

Prowords, Net operation, Neatness & Efficiency of communication. Its not just important for our comms. to run efficiently, its important that anyone listening – either in the room or on the air – is impressed with our professionalism when it comes to voice procedure, or WICEN credibility suffers.

7. Data Comms:

Digital communications would seem to be a way forward for many members.

Mundane tasks like message pads are now redundant – where a scan or photograph of a written note from an incident controller, or indeed a short MP3 voice note, can be attached & sent or received over the public Email system. This uses HF transmissions – Via the public internet or Peer to Peer connection. Attached documents can be legally encrypted in WICEN communications.

8. Dissent in the ranks:

Members of WICEN have expressed concern – or even making statements like 'Wicen is split down the middle'. There is confusion amongst members – Data Comms. requires a fair bit of investment & time from members. But with 2 different systems doing basically the same job – which way to jump. Its interesting to note that Winlink was adopted by the COM some 8 years ago as the endorsed system. To my knowledge, that decision has not been rescinded. Im not going into the pros & cons of both systems in this document. Suffice to say, even though we have tried to utilise both systems, for the sake of uniformity of training, equipment, software and penetration, we cannot continue with both.

NEW AREAS OF OPERATIONS:

9. Crystal Balling!

Are we basically a staffing supply organisation? Is that bad? What is the difference between what we think we are and being a staff supply operation? – basically, who is the owner of the transmitter!

10. Relief Centres:

One new area in which WICEN expertise & equipment have been shown to be desirable is the ERC – Emergency Relief Centre. Voice & HF Email – connecting the ERC to the MECC, and providing Email contact for evacuees.

11. SES Frankston:

A couple of years ago, the Frankston SES approached me about involving WICEN personnel at their base, running their radios during a large incident, freeing up their people who could be 'out on the ground'. As far as I was concerned, it was a worthy idea, as long as we could obtain some introductory training in their equipment & procedures. A MOU was proposed. This was passed up the line, and to date, I have not heard more.

12. 80 Mtr Tuesday night Net:

With so few regular & occasional checkins each week, it seems to reflect the general lack of commitment & interest in WICEN activities. The Net seems to have little purpose – a general check in, announcements of upcoming events and general information from each station. Participation in each event is recorded towards a yearly prize, awarded at the AGM. I think that checking into the Net should count towards the yearly event participation award. 1 point for 80 mtr, 10 points for Event. Don't forget, training days count towards the Event participation award. The all expenses holiday to Las Vegas is NOT the prize!

Conclusion:

Not much has changed when it comes to the agencies shiny new equipment of the era – if they become overloaded (staff or equipment) or fail, we can step in as a last resort – but we need exposure & training with the various systems in need.