

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HOSPITAL ANTENNA PROGRAM **By Bill Carpenter, AA8EY**

The hospital antenna testing program is one of the core COARES programs. Many members who have joined COARES in recent years are not aware of the origins of this important program. We asked Bill Carpenter, AA8EY, to provide a history of the program, and we are grateful for the following article – K8LE:

2001 was the year that the antenna program began. Central Ohio ARES, COARES, was a part of the emergency response group in Central Ohio. Bi-monthly meetings were hosted in members' buildings and rotated as needed. At one of these meetings, I had the opportunity to sit next to Don Barnett, W8HHK.

Don was representing the Delaware ARES. Don told me that Grady Hospital in Delaware, Ohio had installed a 2-meter amateur antenna in that hospital to accommodate amateur radio operators during drill activity and, of course, for a real emergency should that happen. I thought this was more than wonderful as I recall many times the RF traps at hospitals and the difficulties of trying to run outside to hear and then transmit and run back into the hospital to relay the messages then back outside if I heard someone calling me so I could be heard. I asked Don to relate this idea to the group of responders at the meeting to see what interest it would generate.



Bill Carpenter, AA8EY and Mary Carpenter, N8OAM

K8UB photo

Don then told the group about the installation of the antenna at the hospital in Delaware County. The interest was immediate and very positive. Central Ohio Trauma, COTS, told the group that they would look into funding of antennas for Amateur Radio at the hospitals perhaps using funds from FEMA. I suggested that Mary Carpenter-N8OAM would be our person to represent COARES in working with COTS.

You will recall that 2001 was the year of the infamous 911 attacks on the NYC World Trade Centers. During that event it became very clear that agencies such as Fire Departments, Police and hospitals could not really communicate with each other directly because they were on different frequencies. This resulted in a lot of confusion and additional loss of life. When it became known that Amateur Radio Operators would volunteer their time and expertise in a disaster, Amateur Radio Operators became part of a disaster response team. Hams could be placed at agencies and through the Amateur Radio communications, information could be passed between those agencies. This is especially valuable when sending injured to hospitals. A need to know which hospitals are full, and where to send burn victims can be facilitated immensely by Amateur Radio. Mary-N8OAM worked with COTS and costs for antennas and the installation of them was determined. COTS contacted the hospitals in the Columbus Metropolitan area and got them on board to participate in the program. The money was found to put multiband antennas in the hospitals. A program to test the antennas each month was implemented so as to be sure the antenna was working at all times and to familiarize our Hams so that they were comfortable with the setup and working with people in those hospitals. In 2002, I stepped down as COARES Emergency Coordinator and Mary-N8OAM gave up her assignment as administrator of the hospital testing program and Mark Griggs KB8YMN became the administrator of the activity.