

WICEN (Northern Rivers)

SETTING UP A COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE

(COMCEN)

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Webmaster's Notes:

The following information has been extracted from the WICEN (NSW) Inc. Manual - WICEN Training Manual, Operator (NTS001) Ver. 1.5 of 15/1/2000.

The text has been retained but the formatting has been condensed to reduce the number of pages for downloading.

These Methods and Information should be quite adequate to give Operators enough basic knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities in a competent and efficient manner.

Setting up an efficient COMCEN is essential for a successful operation.

You may or may not be in your own accommodation or in an ideal location.

Radio or creature comforts may not be what we might like.

By applying the principles outlined herein as fully as possible you will be able to provide the best possible service to the client with the least operator fatigue and discomfort.

WICEN (originally Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network) is an organisation of Amateur Radio operators throughout Australia. Their time and facilities are made available to the authorities in times of emergency and also for civil benevolent and safety operations at other times.

This extract is by WICEN (Northern Rivers) Region based in Lismore, North Eastern New South Wales. See our page and associated pages at -

WICEN (NR) <http://www.phonetic.org.au/alphabet.htm>
Also SARC <http://www.sarc.org.au>
Phonetics at <http://www.phonetic.org.au/alphabet.htm>

Please send feedback or comment to - vk2jwa@sarc.org.au

I hope you find this useful, 73, John Alcorn, VK2JWA
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SETTING UP A COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE (COMCEN)

A **COMCEN** has certain requirements. The net control station (**NCS**) will usually be located at the headquarters of the client. This module is designed for a large headquarters.

Smaller stations would be tailored down to suit the requirements.

Usually a WICEN operator will be on his own and/or working his own station as a sub-station in the field.

In the case of an exercise, most operators will be working with other checkpoint people on their own.

This means that they will have to consider how best to set up their radios etc with regard to the checkpoint.

The factors that concern the WICEN supervisor are:

Location

Size

Staff requirements.

Facilities offered

1. LOCATION:

This is usually a room in the operations area of the SES or RFS (BFB) headquarters.

It should have access to the operations room and to the outside.

The **COMCEN** should have good lighting and ventilation.

It should be a quiet room. Access should be restricted to the operators and operational staff on duty.

Headsets should be used where possible.

No WICEN personnel or other people should enter the COMCEN unless on business.

The Coffee machine and rest area should be in another part of the building.

Should an operator be required, he can be called on the radio as most operators have a hand held.

In a COMCEN the less traffic the better.

The COMCEN should be located with attention to antennas and cables.

The closer to the outside the better for running cables and less losses.

The antenna needs to be mounted as high as possible and either a beam or omnidirectional antenna to suit the requirements.

The size of the COMCEN should be sufficient to allow operators to move and to install the required equipment.

Depending on the size of the operation, the number of staff will vary. For ease of operation there should be two operators per circuit.

One will operate and logs, the other to support, writes IN messages and liaise with the client.

To keep noise and fatigue at a low level the operator and log keeper are well advised to use headsets.

Most COMCENs are small and are acoustically poor.

The radios and phones ringing cause an increase in noise levels.

2. LAYOUT OF A COMCEN.

The COMCEN should be laid out so that the operators do not have to move greatly while still able to work.

The phones should be in cubicles if possible and each circuit should have wire baskets labelled "**IN**" and "**OUT**". These to be accessed by the messenger as he will have to direct the messages in to the operator or out to a destination within the building.

3. STATIONERY:

The stationery required in a COMCEN is:

Message forms WOF08 Log sheets / book WOF07

Attendance form WOF01 Casual worker forms WAF10

Activation reports WOF05 People tracker WOFI 1

Operator deployment list WOF09

Other items to be included are maps, pens, pencils, erasers, carbon paper etc.

4. STAFF REQUIREMENTS:

The staffing requirements of a COMCEN varies depending on:

The level of traffic,

The length of the activation,

Number of circuits in use.

When Operators are activated and are being used, additional operators should be placed on standby. A time and location for the new operators to commence may be agreed upon at the time of contact. Additional information regarding items such as equipment, food and other requirements should be discussed at that time to allow the new operator to properly prepare.

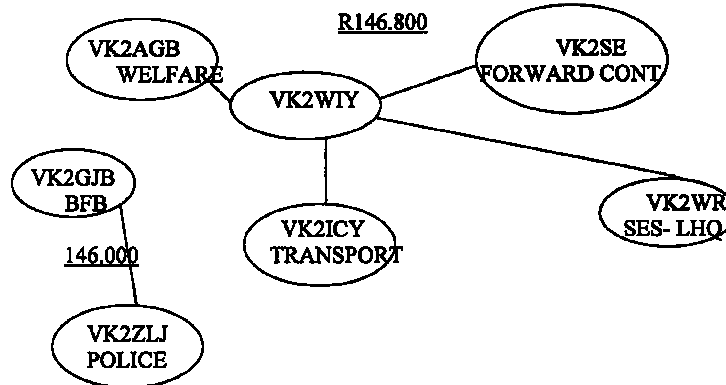
5. FACILITIES OFFERED:

The client may have facilities available for operators. Such facilities are for the comfort of operators and feeding. Other facilities may be photocopying, fax machines, meals, rest areas. In a large complex these facilities although available, may not be obvious. The Supervisor should make himself aware of such facilities.

6. WHITE BOARDS:

There is a need for the NCS to know who is on the net. A method to have a ready access to this information is the use of a whiteboard with a circuit diagram of operators or stations that are on the net.

An example is:



A board displaying the location, callsign, ETA and other information is helpful. It is important for the NCS to know where all operators on duty are AT ALL TIMES. This board could be used in conjunction with form WOF09.

OPERATOR	LOCATION	TIME ON	LAST HEARD	NOTES
VK2AGB	WELFARE	2330	0234	TO BE REPLACED
VK2ICY	TRANSPORT	2100	0225	OK
VK2WR	SES	2100	0223	OK
VK2SE	FWD CMD	2100	0207	OK
VK2AGF	REST AREA			RESTED
VK2SAD	REST AREA			RESTED
VK2GJB	BFB	2130	0210	TIRED
VK2ZLB	POLICE	2122	0210	OK
VK2CD	AT HOME			RESTING

List the operators as shown. "Last heard" can be filled in during quiet times. When an operator stands down or is resting, the Supervisor should note it on the board. The Operator should note his arrival and stand down on the attendance sheet in person or direct the supervisor to make a note.

Refer to FORMS Ch 7 for forms WOF07, WOF08, WOF09.

Learning Outcome 5: Set up and operate a station.

Assessment: Practical demonstration.

- Performance:
- Set up a station to operate on 2 bands one of which is HF. Station must not be inside a vehicle. The vehicle battery may be used. If vehicle must be used, consideration is to be made for Client access, ie shade, protection from weather.
 - Operate with an assistant.
 - Be self-sufficient. (Not including food preparation)
 - Demonstrate knowledge of Occupational Health and Safety.

SETTING UP A COMCEN

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. The person in charge of a COMCEN is called the
2. The COMCEN should be run quietly and access should be restricted to
3. To keep noise and fatigue at a low level the operator and log keeper should
..... whenever possible
4. There are several items which should be kept as stationery. They are:

Message forms, logbooks, area maps,forms, etc.
5. The length of activation, Level of traffic and the number of circuits in use will determine the:

.....
6. White boards can be used to show and
7. In ops there are other facilities available.. These may include
and
fax machine or,for our use.
8. Details of other stations, particularly mobiles, should be updated regularly.
The Net controller should maintain the Operator deployment board.
9. The role of the Supervisor is to and
10. COMCENs should have access to theroom and to outside.