

An Introduction for the Walk-In Ham Volunteer

YOUR CALLSIGN: (Please fill this in now.)

Thanks for volunteering! You have expressed your consent to help _____ County ARES/RACES with emergency communications support during this incident. Our ARES/RACES group works with _____ County Emergency Management. That means that, while the hams in our group will be assigned by our Emergency Coordinator, the agencies we serve will be based on needs assessment of the county Emergency Manager. Accordingly, you may be assigned to any one of a number of duties, with any one of a number of agencies, to provide emergency communications support. Please remember that our group is serving the agency, not the other way around. Maintain a positive, friendly and helpful attitude, and follow all policies and standard procedures of the served agency, so long as there is no violation of FCC rules that might endanger your license. Remember that your goal is to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Please fill out this form and keep it with you at all times. Return it to the EC when your assignment is finished.

The Emergency Coordinator (EC) or an assistant will give you your assignment. Write it down below:
Name Of The Agency You Are Serving:
Contact Person At The Agency:
Telephone:
Location You Are To Report To:
The Tactical Call Sign You Will Use:

The following pages contain several items of importance, which you should read before leaving for your assignment. If you have questions concerning any of these items, ask them of the person who assigned you before you leave.

- 1. The name and call, where applicable, of ARES and RACES officials you will be working under. This includes the Emergency Coordinator and Assistant ECs, with their areas of responsibility.
2. The repeater and simplex frequencies we use, and a telephone number to use to reach the Emergency Management's Emergency Communications Center (this is the room with all the radios - where the Net Control Station (NCS) is located).
3. Some Key Operating Practices - a description of how we communicate on the repeater during emergency nets, including sample tactical messages.

4. Incident Command System - some terms you may hear on the air or see in messages.

5. Your packet may also contain an ARRL Radiogram and instructions to assist you in composing formal messages (traffic).

DO let members of the served agency talk on your HT if it is warranted.

DO attempt to log all messages you send and receive - date, time and the names of the sender and intended recipient. That means you need paper and pencil. Don't go overboard with your log - do it as you can. If you miss one in the heat of the moment, try to reconstruct it when you can. Your log may be needed to reconstruct events in connection with a future investigation or even in legal proceedings, so it is serious business.

DO keep a positive, friendly attitude. Remember, we are volunteering to help, not hinder.

DO pass messages clearly, quickly and efficiently.

DO follow the instructions of the Net Control Station - they have absolute authority on the air.

DO follow the instructions of the ARES/RACES ham assigned with you. They know the ropes.

DO use your tactical callsign. Ending a series of transmissions to Net Control with your tactical and FCC callsigns signifies that this exchange is complete and meets identification requirements.

DO identify with your FCC callsign every ten minutes if you are NCS or involved in a lengthy exchange.

DON'T lose the official you are shadowing if your assignment is to "shadow" someone.

DON'T use unnecessary words when on the air - clear and succinct are the goal.

DON'T adjust, or otherwise modify any piece of equipment in use for this incident, period.

We appreciate your help! ARES and RACES Officials

ARES = Amateur Radio Emergency Service, sponsored by the American Radio Relay League (a private organization).

RACES = Radio Amateur Emergency Service, administered by _____ Emergency Management (a governmental body).

Personnel:

Section Emergency Coordinator (the head of ARES for the section):

Chief RACES Radio Officer (the head of RACES for the state):

District Emergency Coordinator (ARES official that covers several counties in your district):

Emergency Manager (county government official in charge of response to the incident):

Emergency Coordinator, (head of our ARES/RACES group of hams):

Assistant Emergency Coordinators:

County RACES Radio Officer:

Red Cross Communications Officer:

Shelter Coordinator:

ARES OPERATING FREQUENCIES

PRIMARY REPEATER:

PRIMARY - FM SIMPLEX:

PRIMARY - USB:

SECONDARY REPEATER:

SECONDARY - FM SIMPLEX:

SECONDARY - USB:

Telephone number of the Emergency Communications Center:

Some Key Operating Practices

All operators need to know what to do and how to do it when it comes to operating in our voice net. Here are some tips that all operators should heed.

1. Make sure you have your HT on the correct frequency, with the correct ctess (also called PL), to avoid delays. Also, lock in the frequency to prevent unwanted changes if you accidentally bump a button. Use the minimum power necessary to communicate reliably to conserve your batteries. Insure that all your equipment (including antennas) is in good working condition before you leave for your assignment. Make sure your batteries are charged and you have spares with you.
2. Be on time and handle your traffic on the net in a timely manner. Remember that this is an emergency net - make your transmissions short, clear and to the point.
3. Always follow the instructions of the NCS - they have absolute control over the net. Always go through the NCS when you need to speak to another station. Let the NCS run the net and resist any temptation to help them do their job. Do not leave your station without notifying the net control station. If you must leave the net for any reason, simply ask permission of the NCS first. Otherwise, they may call you for a safety status check if they do not know you are gone. When transmitting, keep everything short and simple. "Net control, this is WB9XYZ. Request permission to be off the air for approximately 8 minutes while I fill with gas for the next assignment." Assuming you have finished and are back: "Net control, this is WB9XYZ. Back on the air and proceeding to my next assignment."
4. Know something about the area around your assignment. Have a map of the area with you, if possible.
5. If available, take water and a light meal or snack with you to your post.
6. Get all the information you can (situation, location, frequencies, shift length, agency of primary responsibility, reporting time, etc.) before going into action. These sheets will help you do that.
7. Remember, WE MUST PASS FORMAL TRAFFIC EXACTLY THE WAY WE RECEIVE IT. If you have a question concerning a message, ask it before you pass it on. Do not assume anything where a piece of traffic is concerned.
8. On VHF/UHF voice networks, we assume message importance ("precedence") is Routine (choices are Routine, Welfare, Priority and EMERGENCY) unless otherwise stated. Since Routine messages are not normally handled during an emergency it is imperative that you know the importance classification for each piece of traffic you receive. If you are to send a message and no precedence has been assigned by the sender, try to set it yourself and transmit it with the message. Remember that Emergency is reserved for messages that have life and death urgency. Use this classification only when it is that important. Most messages on behalf of a served agency are Priority, which also includes messages that have a specific time limit or of a time sensitive nature. Check the "pink card" (ARRL FSD-218) for details. Realize that if a message's precedence is set too high, a more important message may become delayed. If set too low, your message may be delayed. Timely delivery of a piece of traffic is just as important as the content.
9. Any message that you originate should be in writing and signed by the person authorizing the message. A later reference or correction may be required. Also keep a log, as you can, listing each message you send or receive. Date, time, who sent it, who it was addressed to and a few words describing its content are important.

Sample Voice Message

A poor message: "Hey Bud, I have a message here from a deputy in Delavan; he wants two ambulances up there right away to take care of more injured.

The preceding message doesn't tell who sent it or where it needs to go, and there are other important elements missing as well. The same message in proper voice format might read as follows:

Number 705 EMERGENCY N9VE 17 Delavan July 22
Ambulance Commander
Break
two additional ambulances requested at Delavan Fire Station as soon
as possible to handle additional injured parties
Break
Deputy Swanson
N9VE END NO MORE

FORMAL TRAFFIC

Although our goal is to pass messages (traffic) quickly and efficiently, use a little discipline and prepare most messages as formal traffic. It is much easier to keep a record of, forward, and respond to formal traffic. Formal traffic has a minimum of:

a message number, precedence, a station of origin, place of origin, (time) date, address (destination), text, and signature.

If you know how to count the check, give it between the station of origin and place of origin, otherwise don't hold up the message worrying about it. If handling instructions are needed they come after the precedence, use them only if you need them and don't hold up a message trying to figure out if you should add a handling instruction, just send it if in doubt.

The address must be as complete as necessary. If the destination is a person on the net, name and callsign should be sufficient. For an outside party, such as for a health and welfare message, get the complete name, street address, city, state and telephone number.

For more information, please refer to the separate hand-out "NTS on air Training." Although prepared to be used as an on-air training tool, please read it over for helpful advice on preparing formal messages in the National Traffic System format.

Incident Command System

All fire personnel and many law enforcement agencies use the Incident Command System (ICS), a management tool designed to assist anyone who has the responsibility for the successful outcome of an emergency incident. An emergency incident is any planned or unplanned occurrence or event, regardless of the cause, which requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property or natural resources. ICS training requires hours of study, even at the basic level. You have no time for that now. However, below are a few terms and definitions - you may hear these or need to pass them in messages.

Incident Commander (IC): the person responsible for the management of the incident. In very small incidents, this person may accomplish all ICS functions without the assistance of others. However, the IC will usually delegate some responsibilities to others in the organization even in smaller incidents. The IC still has overall responsibility for the incident, regardless of what duties they may have delegated to others. It is common to encounter incidents that cross over jurisdictional boundaries. When this happens, it is common for a subset of ICS known as Unified Command to be put into place. This allows the multiple jurisdictions to develop unified objectives and strategies for the incident.

Incident Command Post (ICP), or just Command Post (CP): The place where the IC and other members of the Command Staff do their work. The Command Staff assists the IC and reports directly to the IC. In a large incident, all five of the following sections of the Command Staff may be operating. The heads of 2 - 5 are known as Chiefs.

1. **Command - The Incident Commander.**
2. **Operations -** responsible for directing the tactical actions to meet incident objectives. The Operations Section commonly uses Branches, Divisions, Groups, Task Forces and Strike Teams to maintain unity, chain of command and span of control.
3. **Planning -** responsible for collection, evaluation and display of incident information. It also maintains status of resources, preparing the Incident Action Plan and incident related documentation.
4. **Logistics -** responsible for providing adequate services and support to meet all incident or event needs. This is the section where communications groups, including hams, are managed.
5. **Finance/Administration -** responsible for tracking incident related costs, personnel and equipment records and administering procurement contracts associated with the incident or event.

Base: location where primary logistics functions are coordinated and administered. This may or may not be co-located with the CP.

Clear Text: plain English - no ten-codes or other agency-specific codes are used for communications. Under ICS, messages are supposed to be passed in clear text.

Dispatch Center: a facility from which resources are assigned.

EM: Emergency Manager.

EOC: Emergency Operations Center. Sometimes ECC (Emergency Communications Center) is also used to describe a radio room, often located in or next to the EOC.

HazMat: Hazardous Materials.

Helibase: facility for parking, fueling, maintenance and loading of helicopters.

Helispot: a designated location where helicopters can safely take off and land.

Information Officer: member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media.

Mutual Aid: agreement between agencies to assist each other with personnel and equipment.

Perimeter: a zone or line that encloses an area of limited access. Note the following three zones inside a perimeter for HazMat incidents.

1. **Cold zone:** an area that should contain no hazards related to the incident. The command post (CP) is located here, well away from the dividing line between the cold and warm zones.
2. **Warm zone:** intermediate between the hot and cold zones; an entry point to the hot zone. Persons who enter the warm zone need specialized training and equipment to cope with the dangers!
3. **Hot zone:** Most dangerous area, closest to the actual incident. Entry may be life threatening, and anyone who has entered here is considered contaminated and must be decontaminated before leaving. **NO HAMS HERE.**

Staging Area: locations where resources are placed while awaiting tactical assignment.