

## “A few thoughts about ham participation in events”

Let's step back and take a look at what we are **REALLY** doing in an event. To do this, we will have to be brutally honest. Are we really making a difference? If we were not there, would anyone really notice? This may seem harsh, but it's for a reason. Think of your major events and see which one fits yours the best.

1. One is based in tradition: "We've done it this way for years and it works. Why change it?"
2. New technologies, like APRS, Win-link, IRLP and Echo-link aren't welcomed. No need for them. Does this sound familiar to anyone?
3. You've stood on the same corner for many years. No pre-event briefing is needed; everyone has been doing it the same way every year. Observe and report. Take no action; just report what you see to net control. Maybe answer some questions, give directions. Just stand there, hold your radio and look official, but if we looked carefully, we would see other people doing what we're doing; police officers, fire fighters, and others who are trained to do more than just observe. So, why shouldn't we be trained as well, after all we do serve the public?

What training can **WE** get to make our self's more useful at an event? Are we trained in First Aid and CPR? Why not? Are we active in the CERT program yet? Participating in events can really be rewarding. But from time to time, we need to look at how we can improve. We continually demonstrate this by participating in numerous training exercises such as Field Day, SET, Training Nets and communications during public service events like parades, bike-a-thons, and races, but is this enough. Public Service has and will continue to be a very important part of Ham Radio. Our continued existence as a hobby may be dependent on our ability to demonstrate a continued need of our very valuable part of the radio spectrum.

Over the last several years mainly due to reduced licensing requirements we have added many new Ham's to our hobby. While there is strength in numbers, ours is still a technical hobby and we depend on this level of expertise when participating in public service events. It is the responsibility of every individual volunteer to prepare themselves and to develop their skills in the art of emergency communications.

As Ham Radio Emergency Communications has continued to evolve, it has become apparent that some form of formal certification would soon be necessary in order to assure that we continue to provide trained and professional communicators for public service events. The ARRL Certification and Continuing Education Program, approved by the ARRL Board in January 2000, has been designed to fill that bill.

Volunteers from all around the country assisted in putting information together for these courses. Because the topic of emergency communications is so diversified and so much information is available, the material is broken into three levels: Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced Emergency Communications (Levels I, II and III). **These courses will help you to become a better emergency communicator.** You will learn how to work effectively with the public and with volunteer agencies during a communications emergency.

One of the basic goals of **Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)** is to provide a pool of experienced communicators during emergencies. All Ham Radio operators are encouraged to become certified in the ARRL's Certification and Continuing Education program. These courses are suitable for both the older and newly licensed operators. For those who have been actively operating Ham Radio a year or more, they will find much of the terminology and many of the practices more familiar and easier to understand. This should not discourage the newly licensed individual, but should merely inform you of what to expect. The following are brief descriptions of the ARRL's Certification and Continuing Education Courses:

## **Level 1 Amateur Radio Emergency Communications**

## **EC-001**

Introduction to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications. A basic course to raise awareness and provide additional knowledge and tools for any emergency communications volunteer.

## **Level 2 Amateur Radio Emergency Communications**

### **EC-002**

Intermediate Amateur Radio Emergency Communications. A more in-depth study into amateur radio emergency communications to enhance the skills and knowledge received from previous experience. Level I ARECC is required prior to taking Level II.

## **Level 3 Amateur Radio Emergency Communications**

### **EC-003**

Advanced Amateur Radio Emergency Communications. This is the third and final stage of the planned 3-level ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Courses. This course is designed to bridge the gap between basic participation and leadership. Both Level I and Level II certifications are required prior to taking this course.

To register for these courses, go to the following address to get signed up and start having fun. <http://www.arrl.org/cce/>

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