

## “Basic message handling for drills and actual emergencies”

If you are handling a query (request for information), make sure you follow up and get the answer in a timely manner. When you have the answer, check in with net control and let him or her know that you have the response. If you cannot obtain the information needed, or it is impossible to contact the intended recipient, be sure and let both net control and the originating station know. If you need assistance in your efforts, ask net control for help.

Always obtain the name and, if possible, the position of both the originator of a request and the person(s) who answer the query. Try to get a physical signature if you can. This is very important, and is necessary to assure all involved that the information is both genuine and accurate. In situations where formal messages are not being used, this is critical!

If you are handling written traffic, get a “count” of the number of words in the original message, and any reply message (see example below). This count should be passed with the traffic and verified by both ends to make sure words were not missed. Make sure the count is correct before acknowledging receipt of the message.

When handling message traffic by voice, spell phonetically any unusual words or names the first time they occur. Common words and well known names can be passed as spoken words. Pause and ask the receiving station to confirm the text received from time to time if conditions are bad. Typically, pause after the address block and after every 5 words.

The required parts of a message are as follows. Additional information regarding messages may be found in any ARRL Handbook or the ARRL Operating Manual.

1. Origination group: This is also where any reply will be sent. You must include the originating person’s name, mailing address or place name, and, if available, telephone number. Also, include the date and time of origination. Typical date-time group: 01/06/08 0330Z
2. Who is the message going to? As above, include name, mailing address or place name, and if available, a contact telephone number.
3. Count of words and number groups. See example below. The count is needed to verify that the message was transmitted correctly. The count is called the “check”.

4. Text of message: Make every attempt to limit message length to 25 words or less, including number groups and punctuation. Long messages can cause problems in emergencies.

Example: Need 15 water barrels at airport X Have 22 cases food rations on hand X All personnel have shelter

(signed) Joe Doe

(This message has a count of 19. Each word or number group counts as 1 word. Also, “X” counts 1. “X” (spoken as “x-ray”) is used in place of the period at the end of each sentence except for a single or the last sentence. Note that the “signature” is NOT included in the word count.)

5. All messages must have a signature (the originating person’s name). Try to get a physical signature, if possible, on the “original” copy (text) that you used to generate the message.