

Documentation, Accreditation and Requirements

It is coming to light with the efforts now going on in the Nation that the landscape has changed for us as Amateur Radio Operators and other Emergency Responders. Most recently the Red Cross and Salvation Army, to name a few of the organizations who are assisting in the relief efforts, have been asking for more and more assistance from us as Amateur Radio Operators.

What is also becoming more noticeable is the simple fact that the requests for assistance is now coming with a price tag.

That price tag is called training and that training has to be documented and available for the served agency to assess your ability to perform the job they want you for. I do not think that you will for the foreseeable future hear of any mandates from the ARRL to take certain training. That more or less goes against the original intent of the statement in the Public Service Communications Manual for ARES. It goes like this:

“The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when

disaster strikes. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization is eligible for membership in the ARES. The only qualification, other than possession of an Amateur Radio license, is a sincere desire to serve. Because ARES is an amateur service, only amateurs are eligible for membership. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but is not a requirement for membership.”

This is directly from the PSCM. Several things of note are the fact that people need to “voluntarily register”, “every licensed amateur, regardless of affiliation, is eligible for membership” and “the only qualification is a sincere desire to serve”.

So, let’s take a look at those statements a little closer.

Voluntarily Register: It is important that you are registered with your local Emergency Coordinator and in turn with the local Office of Emergency Management. The reason for this is that it allows the local EC to assess his needs at any given point in time and to truthfully tell his served agency what he can and cannot do due to man-power issues. Things happen that will prevent some people from assisting at every event and so any

good EC and even any Served Agency knows that when someone promises a certain number they can in general figure that a percentage of those will not show or back out for any of many reasons. Still this allows for some idea of what resources are available as opposed to having no idea at all when no requirement of this type is present.

Every Licensed Amateur: Seems pretty clear to me and it should to you also. With nearly 700,000 Licensed Amateurs, it would seem that we have a large pool of resources. Quite the contrary is true. It has been estimated that only 30 to 40 percent of those licensed have registered or expressed an interest in Public Service and of those there is only about 10% whom are active sometimes and then there are the remainder, about 5%, that are trained and faithful to training nets and drill participation.

Being Qualified: This unfortunately is where the waters get muddy. Many of our served agencies are now realizing that a trained individual in many forms or disciplines is a much better asset to them than an untrained or ill-trained one. It is incumbent upon you as an individual to assess where you are and what you can do to better yourself for the good of your service to the served agency and Amateur Radio. The Federal Government has

begun making the requirement of NIMS (National Incident Management System) and ICS (Incident Command System) mandatory for all Emergency Responders. Technically that means that you have a responsibility to at minimum take a look at what is going on and be aware of the concepts expressed in these systems. In many areas of the United States certain training has been made an absolute requirement for access to and Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Certain Counties and other states in this nation are making certain types of training mandatory for any individual who is registered with them. This is a government issue not an ARRL or Amateur Radio issue. If we are going to serve at the discretion of the served agency's we need to comply with all of their wishes.