

“EMERGENCY AND EVENT OPERATIONS”

Initial Action Checklist

The net control station and or officials on the designated emergency net will provide additional instructions, including information on frequencies used or other resource and tactical nets.

1. Check that family and property are safe and secure.
2. Be prepared to operate. Check all equipment and connections.
3. Be prepared to deploy to an assignment/location with your GO-KIT.
4. Monitor assigned frequency and follow check-in instructions.
5. Initiate personal event log of dates and times of various events performed while activated.
6. Enter assigned frequency(s) on log sheet. Log all traffic sent or received, and other significant events.
7. Deploy to assignment/location.
8. Obtain tactical call sign for location/assignment (if appropriate).
9. Use a formal ARRL Message Form when a precise record is required.
10. If appropriate, use tactical call sign, while observing FCC’s ten-minute ID rule.
11. Monitor your assigned frequency at all times. Request permission from NCS before changing frequency. Notify (and/or request permission from) NCS if you have to leave frequency or location.

National Incident Management System

The **National Incident Management System** is a consistent nationwide approach to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size or complexity. **Incident Command System** is component tool of **NIMS** which provides a coordinated system of command, communications, organization and accountability in managing emergency events. **NIMS/ICS** uses;

1. Clear text and common terms. No “10” codes, “Q” signals or jargons.
2. Unified command.

3. Flexibility
4. Concise span of control.

Integral to the NIMS/ICS model is **Unified Command**, there is one individual responsible for the overall operation, which, no matter the size of the emergency event, will always include planning, logistics, operations, and finance functions. Amateur radio operators are expected to be communicators. **Within an ICS event, this is the Logistics Section.**

In the event of an emergency, during which any of the communications organizations may be of service to the community, any responsible official of your County Department of Emergency Management, the Red Cross, National Weather Service, or other agencies may request a number of amateur radio operators regardless of their affiliation with any group. In these cases, the ARES EC/RACES Officer may assist in determining what modes of communications are best suited for the emergency.

All jurisdictions will be required to adopt ICS in order to be compliant with NIMS.

Amateur Radio Emergency Operations

All emergencies will initially be treated as ARES events until such time as your County Department of Emergency Management, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, or FEMA declares the incident to be a RACES event. At that point, only RACES-enrolled members will be on the frequencies.

Arkansas ARES-RACES members and other amateur radio service volunteers, upon becoming aware that an emergency exists, shall monitor the following frequencies:

§ 3.987.50 on 75 Meters, 7.260.00 on 40 meters, 146.520 the National calling simplex frequency and your assigned local 2 meter repeater.

Amateur Radio Traffic

Tactical traffic is the first response communication in any emergency situation. It may be instructions or inquiries: “Send ambulance,” “Where are water supplies?” Though tactical traffic is generally unformatted and seldom written, on responses, all traffic should be logged to protect both the amateur radio operator and the served agency.

Formal traffic is generally long-term communications, often in ARRL message format and handled on NTS nets.

Packet mode is handy for detailed or lengthy messages. The operator may prepare the message ahead of time and edit off-line as text files.

Image communications are live pictures of an area for damage assessment or Welfare traffic. ATV using FSTV requires more expensive equipment than Slow Scan SSTV.

Principles of Disaster Communication

1. Monitor primary or assigned frequency. Stay on assigned frequency.
2. Keep the interference level down. All stations should remain silent until called or unless there is necessary traffic to pass.
3. Avoid spreading rumors. Report first-hand knowledge. Relay transmissions should be officially authenticated, authorized and repeated word for word.
4. Authenticate all messages. Messages of an official nature should be written and signed (ARRL Message Form). Amateur operators should avoid initiating disaster or emergency traffic. Amateur Radio does the communicating; the agency officials supply the content of the communications.
5. Strive for efficiency. Instead of trying to operate a station full time at the expense of health and efficiency, volunteer for a shift at one of the better

located, better equipped stations, manned by relief shifts of the best qualified operators. This reduces interference and assures well operated stations.

6. Use the selected mode and band. The merits of a particular band or mode in a communications emergency have been evaluated impartially by the authorities and the EC with a view to the appropriate use of bands, modes, equipment and purposes.

7. Be courteous of and cooperative with other communications groups responsible for emergency communications support. The primary objective of emergency communications is to save lives and property.

8. Use all communications intelligently.

9. Operators will not transmit the name of an injured, trapped or deceased subject, but may request that the Net Control Station send the appropriate authorities and assistance to the location using Emergency or Priority traffic protocols. Operators will not transmit the name of a minor lost or separated from responsible adults, but will be prepared to respond to NCS with description and or identifying information established ahead of time. Should this not suffice, have authorities authorize transmission of the name.

10. Don't broadcast. Amateur radio transmissions are not intended to keep the public informed. Emergency Communications are intended to support authorities handling an event.

Repeater Operation

Pause: To allow NCS, liaisons, or operators with Emergency or Priority traffic, immediate access, operators with Routine/Welfare traffic should pause after a station finishes a transmission and count to 2 or 3 before transmitting.

Listen: Listen much, transmit little.

Think: Think before transmitting. Stick to facts, control emotions. Write out what is to be transmitted before sending the message. Be as short and concise as

possible.

Articulate: Don't slur. Speak close to the mic, but talk across it, not into it. Keep voice down. Talk slowly and calmly.

Amateur Radio Nets

A Declared **Net** begins with a statement that a net is being started for a particular purpose. There is an identified Net Control Station], perhaps identified backup and or logging stations, and in some instances, liaison(s) between NCS, served agencies and other amateur stations.

Open Net: A net is declared. Normal use of repeater or frequency continues. Any licensed amateur radio operator can start a net to get assistance with a situation. Usually, such nets involve personal circumstances such as automobile assistance, making travel arrangements, or other non-commercial activity. Sometimes such nets may be a precursor to a Directed Net as operators begin to organize and discuss possible events, such as weather emergencies.

Directed Net: The NCS declares the net and actively controls the frequency. Normal usage of the frequency or repeater is stopped. Specific topic, conditions, and/or instructions for check-in are given.

Informal Directed Net: Public service nets and practice nets.

Formal Directed Net: Activation of specific nets for a specific purpose or emergency.

Emergency nets are reserved for **danger-of-death or serious-injury** situations, an accident or other crisis where people and or property are in distress. Emergencies are nearly always recognized and declared by agencies or authorities outside of the Amateur Radio Service, such as the National Weather Service, the local Emergency Manager and or the local Red Cross. Amateur radio operators do not have independent authority to declare an emergency.

Sub-net: The Net Control Station may establish independent sub-nets with or without their own frequencies and NCS's reporting to the main net.

Principles of Net Operation

1. The ARES/RACES Net Control will usually, but not always operate from a

location other than that of the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). A liaison may be located at the EOC to pass information to and from the net. Emergency power is available and amateur radio station equipment is located at most EOC's.

2. Once a net is declared, the NCS will begin to build an Asset List to match the requirements of the event. ARES-RACES members and other amateur radio volunteers should follow the procedures outlined in instructions from NCS which will depend upon the circumstances of the emergency and may vary throughout the course of the event. For example, the NCS may request check-ins by calling for those stations who have been notified by telephone or for RACES members, from only those stations with specific traffic to pass, from stations which are or can be mobile or portable, or from stations with other equipment, modes or operating capabilities, from operators in specific or certain locations in the area. The size of an emergency net will guide and be guided by the National Incident Management System/Incident Command system plan, but it could change very quickly. In a major event that is likely to grow, the NCS may request and keep a large Asset List of standby operators who may never be required to activate or give a report.

3. As each operator checks in, the NCS may request;

- a. Call-sign.
- b. Name.
- c. Equipment. (type of radio(s), antenna(s), power supply, and transportation)
- d. Initial Status. (mobile, stationary) and Location, and
- e. An estimate of the length of availability.

4. The NCS may then ask for a "standby" to organize the available personnel resources to meet the logistics of the event. A local net responding to a large-scale incident may require more functions than can be managed by a single NCS. As the situation develops, NCS may establish a subnet structure to handle some of the traffic. This is a principle of the NIMS/ICS.

5. Available operators may then be assigned to function as;

- a. Backup NCS.

b. Logging or Liaison stations.

c. Resource NCS to direct specific tasks created by the complexity of the event, or

Resource NCS, Logging and Liaison stations, and other stations may also be assigned locations. Operators/spotters may be assigned duties on a Resource or other subnet and frequency for which they will be given instructions.

6. Mobile and portable units may be dispatched, within the limits of personnel and equipment, as needed to schools, shelters, hospitals, fire stations, or other locations necessary to support emergency communications. Operators may be assigned to vehicles operated by EMA, Red Cross, or other cooperating agencies or groups. Mobile and portable units may be contacted by NCS while in route, but will always report in upon arrival at the assigned locations.

7. Operators will monitor assigned frequency and notify the NCS, if it is necessary to leave or if relief is needed. Transmissions will be made as instructed or at the request of the NCS or for Emergency (life and death) or Priority (property damage, threat to human life), or other traffic initiated by the official in charge at that location. All formal traffic shall be handled and formatted in accordance with the individual organizations' operating procedures. This could be in either plain English text or on the standard ARRL Message Form and using numbered Radiogram messages.

8. Information concerning the nature of an emergency event and the extent of ARES/RACES involvement will be transmitted to all volunteers as it becomes available and updated when possible. However, ARES/RACES will avoid

transmitting identifying addresses of the most severe damage, license or other identification numbers of vehicles, possible reported causes, names of an injured, trapped or deceased subjects, and names of a minors lost or separated from responsible adults except as outlined and agreed upon by the authorities or agencies in the **NIMS/ICS** for the event.

9. Federal regulations provide that licensed amateurs shall exert direct control over all transmissions on amateur frequencies. This does allow for “third party traffic” where the amateur operator retains control of the transmission and has advised against the use of foul language or the conduct of commercial business. Relays often become incorrectly “translated” by the relay operator, especially if there is a high percentage of special agency terminology, technical terms.

Communicating with the Media

When involved with an emergency situation, all attempts for interviews from the media should be referred to the designated spokesperson of the convening authority. It is good practice to follow this protocol during practice nets and public service events as well, referring questions to the organizers or directors of the event.

Amateur radio operators will not make any comment to a member of the media regarding information about injuries, deaths, addresses of the most severe damage, license numbers of vehicles, rail car numbers, and possible reported causes which might lead them to a “trail of responsibility and blame”. **“I can’t answer that question,”** is always a good reply to the media.