

“EMERGENCY NET OPERATIONS”

NTS TRAINING SUMMARY

An Emergency Net is a lifeline for all of the members of the net, and you should assume that every member has important traffic that needs to be passed. The process of passing emergency or priority messages effectively and accurately is a valuable skill. Operating in an Emergency Net requires those operating to pay close attention to the procedures and protocols being followed by the Net Control Station.

To Check-In:

(1.) **LISTEN:** Like any other net, the Net Control Station will ask for check-ins on a regular basis. It is the responsibility of the Net Control Station to leave sufficient time between transmissions to allow new stations to check-in and stations with high priority traffic to list their traffic. It is also the responsibility of the Net Control Station to ask for check-ins and stations with traffic to list on a regular basis.

(2.) When you hear an invitation to check-in, listen for other stations checking in and, if none are heard, check-in by saying: “This is” followed by your call sign. If the NCS heard you, they will recognize you as quickly as possible.

When you have traffic to send:

(3.) If you have traffic to list, indicate this as follows; “This is” your call, with 2 Routine.” the NCS will recognize your messages and ask you to transmit them or wait until asked to do so at a later time.

(4.) If you have traffic listed, the NCS will ask you its destination. If you have multiple destinations for your traffic, you must identify them to the NCS prior to sending the message so that those stations involved can be organized to receive the traffic in a single transmission, if possible.

(5.) NCS may ask you to pass your traffic on the Emergency Net frequency, or may ask you to take your traffic to a nearby frequency to pass it to the receiving station, and ask all stations to return to the Net frequency when the traffic has been passed.

(6.) If traffic with higher priority than your traffic is being passed, be prepared to wait until the frequency is clear and permission to transmit your traffic is granted by the NCS. If the

traffic you have is of a higher priority than the traffic being passed, you should wait until the traffic has passed and transmit it at the earliest opportunity with the permission of the NCS. If the traffic you have has "EMERGENCY" priority, break the net unless the traffic being passed is also emergency priority. If the traffic is priority or routine, there is probably no reason to break the net. Use your best judgment to determine how to enter your traffic in the least disruptive manner.

(7.) When passing traffic, make sure that you pass your message as quickly as possible, however do not read your message so fast that the receiving station(s) cannot write the message.

(8.) Keep the frequency clear as much as possible. An Emergency Net is not intended to pass personal "chit chat", non-status changing weather reports, or other communications while it is in operation. The only transmissions that are authorized during an emergency are: Check-in/Check-out; responding to the requests of the NCS; and passing traffic of an official nature. It is the responsibility of the NCS to maintain an orderly net.

(9.) If you will be leaving the frequency or closing your station for some reason, the NCS should always be made aware of it.

MOST IMPORTANT: ALWAYS KNOW WHAT YOU WILL SAY BEFORE YOU PUSH THE TRANSMIT BUTTON.



How to ACT as a Net Control Station in an EMERGENCY Net!!

If you are put in a position where an NCS is needed what should you do?

If you are in the best position to be a NCS, it can be due to your ability to continue when another NCS needs a break, due to geography where your station is in a central location, or due to equipment where your equipment allows you to perform this function better than other stations on the frequency. If you find yourself in this situation, proceed as follows:

(1.) Be certain that some other station is not already performing this function. There is nothing more disruptive than multiple stations attempting to act as NCS. The NCS is typically the station(s) assigned to do this by the Area Coordinator(s) or by the Net Manager (s) for your area.

(2.) A NCS is a facilitator; their job is to provide the environment that best provides the

ability for its members to pass their messages. This means that the most efficient Nets are mostly silent. If there is a lot of traffic to pass, it is the job of the NCS to have these stations pass their traffic in the most efficient way. This could be by determining where some traffic is going to and sending these stations to another frequency to pass the traffic, asking the stations to return to the Net frequency when they have passed their traffic. As an NCS, if you send station's off to another frequency, you must keep track of where they went in case you need to get them back quickly.

(3.) The NCS enforces the process on the net to keep information flowing as effectively as possible. This means that they minimize the amount of "chit chat" to a minimum. It also means that they are going to try and maximize the amount of opportunity for the members of the Net to check-in, and pass traffic. The NCS makes sure that no station gets "starved out" of the attention of the Net. The NCS is aware of the status of each station; this means that, if the station has not been heard from in a long time, it might be good to see if they are still there.

(4.) The NCS must recognize when they are fatigued and look for relief.

How to COMPLETE and TRANSMIT traffic during a EMERGENCY Net:

Every message originated and handled should contain the following component parts in the following order:

I. PREAMBLE

- a. Number.
- a. Precedence.
- b. Handling Instructions. (not normally used in declared emergencies)
- c. Station of Origin.
- d. Check.
- e. Place of Origin.
- f. Time Filed.
- g. Date.

II. ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER.

III. TEXT.

IV. SIGNATURE.

PRECEDENCES:

EMERGENCY: Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons, which is transmitted by Amateur Radio in the absence of regular commercial facilities. This includes official messages of welfare agencies during emergencies requesting supplies, materials or instructions vital to relief of stricken populace in emergency areas. When in doubt, do not use it.

PRIORITY: Important messages having a specific time limit. Official messages not covered in the Emergency category. Press dispatches, other emergency-related traffic not of the utmost urgency, Notification of death or injury in a disaster area, personal or official. .

WELFARE: A message that is either an inquiry as to the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area, an advisory or reply from the disaster area that indicates all is well should this precedence. These messages are handled after Emergency and Priority traffic but before Routine.

ROUTINE: In disaster situations, traffic labeled Routine should be handled last, or not at all when circuits are busy with Emergency, Priority or Welfare traffic.

HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:

The ARRL Radiogram used includes a field titled HX. This stands for handling instructions. This field is not normally used during emergency operations.

STATION OF ORIGIN:

_____ The call sign of the first amateur handler to transmit this emergency traffic. Do NOT change to your call sign if you are not the originator of the traffic.

CHECK:

The check is the word count of only the text portion of the message. The following rules should be utilized:

- a. Punctuation (X's) count separately as a word.
- b. Mixed letter-number groups (1700CDT, for instance) count as one word.
- c. Initial or number groups count as one word if sent together.
- d. The signature does not count as part of the text.

- e. Telephone numbers count as three words if the area code is included or two words without an area code.
- f. Zip codes count as one word or two words for the zip plus 4 codes.

Although it is improper to change the text of a message, you may change the check. Always do this by following the original check with a slash bar, then the corrected check. On phone, use the words “corrected to.”

PLACE OF ORIGIN:

The hospital, shelter, emergency operation center, or other location authoring the message.

TIME FILED:

The LOCAL time the message was received by the originating amateur handler from the signatory.. Do NOT use AM or PM. The time must be followed by CDT or CST this will indicate the exact time to a reader outside of our time zone.

DATE:

The date the message was received by the originating station. Use three letter monthly abbreviations and the two-digit day of the month. Do NOT use the year, as it is a given fact during an emergency. For example: Oct. 05, which would be transmitted on phone as October zero five.

II. ADDRESS:

Include

any and all multiple recipients in a single message. Do not send the same message over and over to different destinations. This minimizes critically short airtime during an Emergency Net.

III. TEXT:

X should be used in place of periods in the text, and each X counts as a word. Commas and other punctuation are never used. Never end a text with an X, as it just wastes space and makes the word count longer. X is transmitted on phone by saying “X-ray.”

IV. SIGNATURE:

The person and his/her title, who wrote the message, not the amateur handler. **“ALWAYS GET A SIGNATURE PRIOR TO SENDING A MESSAGE”!** This will provide you with certainty that you have it right; it also eliminates unnecessary messages.

TRANSMISSION OF THE EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

It is not necessary to name each part of the message as you send it. For example, the attached message would be sent on phone as follows: “Number one, Priority, K5WTH, check twelve, Garland County EOC, fourteen forty CDT, July one five, To, St. Josephs Regional Hospital, Hot Springs, AR, What is your current bed count. Break, Signed, Garland County DEM. The signature is followed by “More” if there is another message to follow, “No more” if it is the only or last message. Speak clearly. Spell phonetically all difficult or unusual words, by saying, “I spell” Do not spell out common words.

NEVER USE Q-signals in phone traffic handling.

ALWAYS GET A SIGNATURE.



“GENERAL RULES OF EMERGENCY TRAFFIC HANDLING”

During a declared emergency an organized net is formed. ALL traffic is controlled under the direction of the Net Control Station.

All amateur handlers assigned to a Shelter, Hospital, or the Emergency Operation Center shall transmit traffic to the net control station. Whenever possible, traffic should be sent directly to the destination intended but only after requesting and receiving permission from the net control station to contact the receiving station(s).

When requesting permission from the Net Control Station the following terms are used; “Request permission to contact W5RXU,”and the NCS will respond with “Permission granted, call your station”. Multiple destination stations of the same message should each acknowledge their readiness to copy text before the text is read. This saves critical airtime during an Emergency Net.

No casual or normal communication (including casual weather

reports) is allowed on a frequency once the net control station has declared the frequency to be operating an Emergency Net.

SUMMARY: Emergency Net Procedural/Protocol Check-List:

1. LISTEN, every net, like all other amateur communications, depend upon one station transmitting at any time. If you don't hear any activity may mean that an immediate emergency is in process and the frequency is being kept clear for key traffic. Listen for the net control station. If you don't find a net control station, check the other amateur emergency frequencies used in your area to determine if the net has changed frequencies.
2. If you have emergency traffic, call the net control station and check-in. If you have routine or priority traffic, call to check-in with the net control station when no traffic or lower priority traffic is being passed.
3. Before you originate traffic, **GET A SIGNATURE ON IT.**
4. Follow the directions of the net control station. Communicate only when directed to by the Net Control Station.
5. Determine what you intend to say before you push the Push to Talk button on your microphone. The most effective nets are primarily silent, where traffic is passed and the net is available for the next station with traffic to communicate immediately, as the need arises.
6. Advise the Net Control Station of changes in your status, such as a change in operator or closing your station and when returning to your station.
7. Remember, you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. Always choose to be part of the solution.

Tom Harris, k5wth