

STM Principles of Disaster Communications

1. Keep the noise down

In a disaster many stations may have weak signals. It is essential that all stations remain silent unless they have traffic. Do not transmit until recognized by the Net Control Station and do not break into a disaster net just to let them know you are there.

2. Monitor established disaster frequencies

Most ARES groups have primary and secondary repeaters which are nearly always monitored. Other areas use an established net which becomes the disaster net in an emergency. Most of the designated repeaters have emergency power sources.

3. Avoid spreading rumors

Amateur bands, as well as local public service bands, can be monitored by the public. Only pass those messages that you have been asked to do so by the agency served. Do not expand, modify or exaggerate on the messages you send. All messages should be written down and signed by the responsible representative; this prevents misinterpretation of verbal information. Also control your voice and remain calm at all times.

4. Authenticate all messages

As mentioned above, all original messages should be signed by the person authorizing/requesting their

transmission. The signature line should always include their title and agency. ARES members should not initiate traffic.

5. Strive for efficiency

During an emergency some people have the ability to remain calm, others become hysterical and some amateurs may feel the need to become “sleepless heroes” operating without rest.

Instead of operating around the clock arrange shifts at the best equipped and best located station. Arrange relief shifts so that everyone gets adequate rest. In the initial stages of a disaster there is a large amount of chaos but after things get organized there will be the need for communications for a long time. It is essential that operators are fresh and alert and able to respond to the needs for the agencies served.

6. Select the mode and band to suit the purpose

Some amateurs prefer their favorite band and mode. In an emergency the best band and mode for the situation should be used. Amateur radio has a huge advantage over all other radio users; we have 15 bands and multiple modes available to us, including CW, voice and digital.

The primary purpose is to get the traffic through.

- (1.) Insure you have the most appropriate antenna.
- (2.) Choose the best band and mode for the job.

- (3.) Use 2 meter or 70cm for local communications.
(up to 50 miles)
- (4.) HF for longer distances – choose the best band for the conditions.
- (5.) Consider simplex for passing traffic from one site to another, leaving the repeaters free for Net operations.
- (6.) Winlink 2000 and packet is useful where a degree of security from scanners is required, such as casualty lists, or lengthy lists such as supply requests or damage reports need to be transmitted.

7. Use all communications channels intelligently

While the prime objective of emergency communications is to save lives and property, amateur radio is a secondary communications means; normal communications means should be used if available.

8. Do not broadcast

While the general public may be listening to amateur radio traffic it is not our purpose to broadcast. Our purpose is to communicate *for*, not *with*, the general public.

9. National Traffic System

Within the disaster area itself ARES is primarily responsible for communications support. During a

disaster the first priority of NTS operators in or near the disaster area is to make their expertise available to their Emergency Coordinator. For timely and effective response this means that NTS operators need to talk with their EC's before the disaster so they know how best to respond.