

The questions of “What is an emergency net”, “Does H&W traffic during an out of State disaster constitute calling up a local emergency net”, and “What constitutes an emergency and thus an emergency response”.

This evening’s session should clear up these and other questions concerning emergency nets. The reference materials I used to put this training session together were:

1. **The ARRL Certification and continuing education program, EC001.**
2. **The FCC rules and regulations part 97.**
3. **The National Traffic Systems Operations Manual.**
4. **The Arkansas Ares/Races Plan.**
5. **The Arkansas Ares/Races Standard Operations Plan.**
6. **The American Red Cross.**
7. **The ARRL Technical Coordinators Manual.**
8. **The Emergency Coordinator’s Manual.**

First, let’s take a look at what the FCC says, **Subpart E, “Providing Emergency Communications”**. Is a brief but important section of **Part 97**. It addresses disaster communications, stations in distress, communications for the safety of life and protection of property, and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service. Providing emergency communications is also basis and purpose of the Amateur Radio Service.. **When it comes to supplying emergency communications, that is, communications related to the immediate safety of life and/or the immediate protection of property, in the absence of other communications facilities, the rules permit amateurs wide latitude [97.403].**

FEMA and Homeland Security define a communications emergency, in the ICS manual section 1.9 as “planned or unplanned occurrence or event, regardless of cause, which requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources”. (This information is also found in the ARRL Certification and Continuing education Program).

The “Statement of Understanding between the American Radio Relay League, Inc. And the American National Red Cross” reads in **section 7, paragraphs 11 and 14**

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11. Whenever there is a disaster requiring the use of amateur radio communications facilities, the Red Cross, through its local chapter or through the National sector, may request the assistance of the ARES and NTS **NEAR** the scene of the disaster. This assistance may include: alert and mobilization of ARRL amateur radio volunteer emergency communications personnel in accordance with a pre-arranged plan, establishment and maintenance of fixed, mobile, and portable station emergency communications facilities for local radio coverage and point to point contact between American Red Cross personnel and locations and maintenance of the continuity of communications for the duration of the emergency period until normal communications channels are substantially restored, or until Amateur radio communications are no longer necessary in support of the response to the disaster.

**AS I SEE IT , THE ONLY RED CROSS CALL OUT THAT WOULD FALL UNDER THE FCC’S GUIDELINES OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS IN THIS INSTANCE WOULD BE IN OR VERY NEAR THE DISASTER SITE ITS SELF WHERE NORMAL LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS ARE DOWN AND THERE IS A THREAT OF/ OR IS LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY. NOT**

## **SOMEPLACE 4 OR 500 MILES AWAY WHERE H&W TRAFFIC WOULD BE HANDLED AT SHELTERS.**

14. The ARRL recognizes that Red Cross chapters not in the disaster area may have the need for health-and- welfare (Disaster Welfare Information) traffic transmitted or received by amateur radio. The ARRL will encourage ARES and NTS volunteers to work with the Red Cross chapters to provide this service using procedures cooperatively established during any particular incident. All DWI traffic passed by amateur radio operators must follow NHQ ARC 2079H format. This is a Red Cross message form with people's info that is sheltered.

**UNDER THESE STANDARDS, THIS WOULD NOT QUALIFY AS EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS. AGAIN, THERE WOULD BE THE NORMAL LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS THAT WOULD BE OPEN, AND THERE IS NO DANGER TO LIFE OR PROPERTY. ALSO, THE PROCEDURES DURING THE LAST FOUR EVENTS WERE, EMERGENCY TRAFFIC NETS ON THEIR ASSIGNED FREQ.S, AND HEALTH AND WELFARE TRAFFIC WAS HANDLED AS NON-EMERGENCY TRAFFIC ON OTHER FREQ.S.**

OK, now that we know what an emergency net is, and that **H&W traffic during an out of State disaster does not constitute calling up a local emergency net** here in Arkansas to handle H&W traffic. Let's take a look at the "Arkansas Ares/Races Standard Operating Procedures" and the "Arkansas Ares/Races Plan" which go hand in hand with each other to see what procedures we need to take when an emergency net needs to be called up any place in the State of Arkansas. These Plans are on the web at [www.arkansashams.org](http://www.arkansashams.org) and I suggest that everyone goes to this site, click on ARES and take about 10 to 15 minutes to read these plans.

Looking at section 4, paragraph 2 of the SOP you'll read: Whenever a local ARES/RACES group activates for a disaster, **the Emergency**

**Coordinator is responsible for advising the District Emergency Coordinator** of the activation and of the scale and scope of the disaster. **The DEC should assess the situation** to determine if adequate resources exist within the district to meet the needs of the local activation, and assess the potential for State wide impact.

Paragraph 3 says: **The District Emergency Coordinator is responsible for advising the Section Emergency Coordinator**, as well as other DEC's that could possibly have impact in their jurisdictions of the nature, size and scope of a disaster, as soon as possible after local activation.

Paragraph 4 says: **The Section Emergency Coordinator will be responsible for assigning ARES Mutual Assistance Teams (ARESMAT)** to help staff jurisdictions without sufficient resources to meet the needs of the served agencies-particularly those with which the ARRL has formal memoranda of understanding for support-inside or outside of an affected area as appropriate.

**Paragraph 5, Brings the Arkansas ARRL Section Manager into the loop and he and his Section Emergency Coordinator and Section Traffic Manager make the proper decisions and coordinates the EC's, and DEC's of the affected area or areas.**

The ARRL has MOU's with several organizations and they all clearly state what declares an emergency situation, thus what it takes to qualify calling up an emergency net. Although H&W traffic may seem like an emergency to the people that are displaced or in shelters and are seeking to find their loved ones, **H&W traffic does not constitute calling up an EMERGENCY NET**. As a rule, the Red Cross and other disaster response organizations will not even consider sending H&W traffic for 72 hours after the disaster/emergency event has happened.

Folks, when any of the above steps are not followed, or the proper FCC Regulations are ignored, our system falls apart. This knee jerk reaction has happened in the State of Arkansas this year and could have caused some problems for the Arkansas Section leadership. This is why we **TRAIN** our members and why continued training must be done. The ARRL Emergency Communications Course's cover this subject as well as others that are very important for us to understand and I would suggest that all Ares/Races members take them.

Now, for the final words for this evening, a little something I found on the internet that goes along with this evenings training session:

**As long as some continue to support the notion that it is an effective utilization of the amateur resources for individuals to recruit their own cadre of amateur operators, many of whom are untrained, inexperienced and undisciplined, and who attempt to set up and operate their own networks for their served agencies, amateur radio emergency communications will continue to wallow in confusion, and our mission of service to the public (part 97) will be only mediocre at best. Unknown Author.**

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K5WTH