Southern Florida Section
Emergency Communications Plan

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Revision Level

Revision	Date	Description of Revision

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This plan is written for 2 purposes, the first is local Emergency Managers to understand both the scope and capabilities of the ARES organization, the second is to provide ARES members a standard method of handling emergency communications.

1.2 The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES[®]), is composed of FCC-licensed Amateur Radio operators who voluntarily register their capabilities and equipment for public service communications duty.

1.3 Under Federal regulations, Amateur Radio public service communications are furnished without compensation of any kind.

1.4 ARES[®] functions under this Emergency Plan under the direction of the ARES[®] Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) for the Southern Florida Section, who is appointed by the Southern Florida Section Manager.

1.5 The Section EC may appoint as many District ECs and County ECs as needed for ARES[®] to function efficiently.

1.6 The county EC may appoint as many Assistant ECs as necessary to fulfill his mission.

2. ARES Organization

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service: An Overview The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®) consists of Amateur Radio licensees 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 to apply for membership in ARES. Training may be required or desired to participate fully in ARES. The local ARES Emergency Coordinator can provide specifics. Because ARES is an Amateur Radio program, only licensed radio amateurs are eligible for membership. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but is not a requirement for membership.

2.1 ARES Organization:

National Level There are four levels of ARES organization — national, section, district, and local. National emergency coordination at ARRL Headquarters is under the supervision of the ARRL Field Services and Radiosport Manager or his/her designee, who is responsible for advising all ARES officials regarding their problems, maintaining contact with federal government and other national officials concerned with amateur emergency communications potential, and in general with carrying out the ARRL's policies regarding emergency communications. These functions are carried out through the ARRL field organization supervisor and the emergency preparedness program. The section ARES relationship with the ARRL national organization is depicted in figure 1.

American Radio Relay League Amateur Radio Emergency Service
American Radio Relay League Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Info
ARRL Southeastern   Division Director
                  ARRL Southeastern   Division Director

 Section Manager

                            Section Manager

    Section EC
    Section EC

    District EC
    District EC

    County EC
    County EC

                       Figure 1

2.2 Section Level

The Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) is the assistant to the Section Manager (SM) for emergency preparedness. The SEC is appointed by the SM to take care of all matters pertaining to emergency communications and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) on a section-wide basis. The SEC post is one of top importance in the section and the individual appointed to it should devote all possible energy and effort to this one challenging organizational program for Amateur Radio. There is only one SEC appointed in each section of the ARRL Field Organization. Responsibilities:

2.2.1 Encourage all groups of community amateurs to establish a local emergency

organization.

       2.2.2 Advise the SM on all section emergency policy and planning, including the development of a section emergency communications plan.

       2.2.3 Cooperate and coordinate with the Section Traffic Manager so that emergency nets and traffic nets in the section present a united public service front, particularly in the proper routing of Welfare traffic in emergency situations. Cooperation and coordination should also be maintained with other section leadership officials as appropriate, particularly with the State Government Liaison and Public Information Coordinator.

       2.2.4 Recommend candidates for Emergency Coordinator and District Emergency Coordinator appointments (and cancellations) to the Section Manager, and determine areas of jurisdiction of each amateur so appointed. At the SM's discretion, the SEC may be directly in charge of making (and canceling) such appointments. In the same way, the SEC can handle the Official Emergency Station appointments.

       2.2.5 Promote ARES membership drives, meetings, activities, tests, procedures, etc., at the section level.

       2.2.6 Collect and consolidate Emergency Coordinator (or District Emergency Coordinator) monthly reports and submit monthly progress summaries to the SM and ARRL Headquarters. This includes the timely reporting of emergency and public safety communications rendered in the section for inclusion in QST.

       2.2.7 Maintain contact with other communication services and serve as liaison at the section level with all agencies served in the public interest, particularly in connection with state and local government, civil preparedness, Federal Emergency Management Agency, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, the National Weather Service, and so on. Such contact is maintained in cooperation with the State Government Liaison.

       2.2.8 Section Emergency Coordinators are encouraged to complete ARRL Emergency Communications training Introduction to Emergency Communications (EC-001) and Public Service and Emergency Communications Management for Radio Amateurs (EC-016).

2.3 District Level

In the large sections, the local groups could proliferate to the point where simply keeping track of them would be more than a full-time chore, not to mention trying to coordinate them in an actual emergency. To this end, SECs have the option of grouping their Emergency Coordinators (EC) jurisdictions into logical units or "Districts" and appointing a District EC to coordinate the activities of the local ECs in the district. In some cases, the districts may conform to the boundaries of governmental planning or emergency operations districts, while in others they are simply based on repeater coverage or geographical boundaries. Figure 2 depicts the typical section ARES program leadership structure within the section. The ARRL District Emergency Coordinator is appointed by the SEC to supervise the efforts of local Emergency Coordinators in the defined district.

 Responsibilities:

       2.3.1 Coordinate the training, organization, and emergency participation of Emergency Coordinators in your district of jurisdiction.

       2.3.2 Make local decisions in the absence of the SEC or through coordination with the SEC, concerning the allotment of available amateurs and equipment during an emergency.

       2.3.3 Coordinate the interrelationship between local emergency plans and between communications networks within your area of jurisdiction.

       2.3.4 Act as backup for local areas without an Emergency Coordinator and assist in

maintaining contact with governmental and other agencies within your area of jurisdiction.

2.3.5 Provide direction in the routing and handling of emergency communications of either a formal or tactical nature, with specific emphasis being placed on Welfare traffic.

2.3.6 Recommend EC appointments to the SEC. Coordinate the reporting and documenting of ARES activities in your district of jurisdiction.

2.3.7 Act as a model emergency communicator as evidenced by dedication to purpose, reliability, and understanding of emergency communications.

2.3.8 Be fully conversant in National Traffic System routing and procedures, and have a thorough understanding of the locale and role of all vital governmental and volunteer agencies that could be involved in an emergency.

2.3.9 Encouraged to earn certification in EC-001 and optionally EC-016 of the ARRL Emergency Communications Course.

2.4 Local Level

The local ARES program is coordinated through the local Emergency Coordinator. The ARRL Emergency Coordinator is a key team player in ARES on the local emergency scene. Working with the Section Emergency Coordinator, the DEC, and Official Emergency Stations, the EC prepares for and engages in management of communications needs in disasters. To be appointed as an EC requires a Technician Class or higher Amateur Radio license and ARRL membership. The key responsibilities of the EC are:

2.4.1 Promote and enhance the activities of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) for the benefit of the public as a voluntary, non-commercial communications service.

2.4.2 Manage and coordinate the training, organization, and emergency participation of interested amateurs working in support of the communities, agencies, or functions designated by the Section Emergency Coordinator/Section Manager.

2.4.3 Establish viable working relationships with federal, state, county, city governmental and private agencies in the ARES jurisdictional area which need the services of ARES in emergencies. Determine what agencies are active in your area, evaluate each of their needs, and which ones you are capable of meeting, and then prioritize these agencies and needs. Discuss your planning with your Section Emergency Coordinator and then with your counterparts in each of the agencies. Ensure they are all aware of your ARES group's capabilities and, perhaps more importantly, your limitations.

2.4.4 Develop detailed local operational plans with served agencies and partners in your jurisdiction that set forth precisely what each of your expectations are during a disaster operation. Work jointly to establish protocols for mutual trust and respect. All matters involving recruitment and utilization of ARES volunteers are directed by you, in response to the needs assessed by the agency officials. Technical issues involving message format, security of message transmission, Disaster Welfare Inquiry policies, and others, should be reviewed and expounded upon in your detailed local operations plans.

2.4.5 Establish local communications networks run on a regular basis and periodically test those networks by conducting realistic drills.

2.4.6 Establish an emergency traffic plan, with Welfare traffic, utilizing the National Traffic System as one active component for traffic handling. Establish an operational liaison with local and section nets, particularly for handling Welfare traffic in an emergency situation.

2.4.7 In times of disaster, evaluate the communications needs of the jurisdiction and respond quickly to those needs. The EC will assume authority and responsibility for coordinating emergency response and performance by ARES personnel under his or her jurisdiction.

2.4.8 Work with other non-ARES amateur providers of Amateur Radio emergency communications to establish mutual respect and understanding, and a coordination mechanism for the good of the public and Amateur Radio. The goal is to foster an efficient and effective Amateur Radio response overall.

2.4.9 Work for growth in your ARES program, making it a stronger, more valuable resource and hence able to meet more of the agencies' local needs. There are thousands of new Technicians coming into the Amateur Service that would make ideal additions to your ARES roster. A stronger ARES means a better ability to serve your communities in times of need and a greater sense of pride for Amateur Radio by both amateurs and the public.

2.4.10 Report regularly to the SEC, as required.

2.4.11 ECs are encouraged to complete the ARRL EC-001, Introduction to Emergency Communications training course.

2.4.12 Assistant ECs Assistants can be appointed at the Section (Assistant SEC), District (Assistant DEC), or local (Assistant EC) levels. At the Section and District levels, the appointment is made by the SEC. At the local level, the appointment is made by the EC and ARRL membership is not required. Assistants may serve to oversee a particular function such as reporting, training, or exercises. Assistants may also be appointed to work with specific partner agencies and organizations.

3. Southern Florida Emergency Coordinators

Southern Florida Section Manager
Southern Florida Section Manager
Southern Florida Section Emergency Coordinator
Southern Florida Section Emergency Coordinator

Gold Coast District EC
Gold Coast District EC
Treasure Coast District EC
Treasure Coast District EC
Space Coast District EC
Space Coast District EC
Gulf Coast District EC
Gulf Coast District EC

Monroe	Miami-Dade	Broward	Palm Beach		County ECs
Monroe	Miami-Dade	Broward	Palm Beach		County ECs
Martin		St. Lucie	Indian River	Okeechobee	County ECs
Martin		St. Lucie	Indian River	Okeechobee	County ECs
Brevard	Osceola	County ECs			
Brevard	Osceola	County ECs			

Collier   Lee   Hendry   Glades   County ECs

4. Membership and Training

The amateur who serves as a member of his or her local ARES group is in the front line of service to their community. The two requirements for ARES membership are a valid Amateur Radio license and a willingness to serve. ARES participation at the local level may require specific training. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization, is eligible to apply for membership in ARES. Once the application for ARES membership has been completed it should go to the local ARES EC for approval.

Membership in ARES should be encouraged at every opportunity. Entry level (technician) classes are a rich source of prospective ARES members.

4. Importance of Training

 When ARES members participate in a response to an emergency or disaster, they will be doing things they do not normally do. Often they will need to make on-the-fly decisions, and those decisions are best made when they have adequate information available and are at least a little accustomed to being placed into that situation. It is often said that you perform how you train. An operator asked to be net control in an incident will probably be nervous, forget things, and be quite inefficient if he or she has little or no experience. On the other hand, when an operator has been net control a hundred times, even in an emergency it becomes natural and he/ or she is less stressed and more efficient. Training and skill improvement are key features of the Amateur Radio Service. Amateurs frequently enjoy training, especially when it is relevant. A well thought out program of training and exercises helps keep members interested and engaged. At a minimum, there should be 4 training sessions (drills) per year. One of these sessions can be a SET.

      4.1 General Training Categories

      4.1.1 In Meetings

      The first and perhaps most obvious place to deliver training is in ARES meetings. Most ARES groups hold meetings regularly, and training topics are an obvious subject for the meeting. These will generally require significant preparation by the EC or his AEC, OES or other delegate, but can serve to help make meetings interesting and make members eager to

attend. If your ARES team has regular nets, these can provide an opportunity for members to learn net discipline, traffic handling, and especially the need to keep communications concise. The opportunity for members to learn to be net control should not be overlooked, as this is a skill in high demand should an incident expand beyond a few hours.

4.1.2 Classes

When one thinks of training, the classroom setting immediately comes to mind. But today much training is held online, either individually or in a group, class-like setting. Each has advantages. In a group setting, interaction between students, especially when some of those students come from partner agencies with different backgrounds, can help make the classes interesting. Online training allows for more flexible scheduling and lets each student proceed at his/her own pace.

4.1.3 Tabletop Exercises

A tabletop exercise is a drill in which a scenario is presented and participants discuss potential responses. Tabletops encourage thought and can usually be executed at lower cost than full-scale exercises. However, they can be just as difficult to set up. Exercises/Drills Exercises and drills present a scenario and the participants act out their responses in the field. These are an excellent way to understand your response and identify areas of improvement. While most exercises are government sponsored, participation in public service events like races, runs, walks and the like can give the team an opportunity to operate in the field with the other members of the team, and can be almost as valuable as formal exercises.

4.1.4 Safety

The safety of ARES members is a prime concern. Training on safety topics is likely to be very specific to the particular hazards in your local jurisdiction. Many parts of the section experience severe weather, and SKYWARN training often includes components on staying safe during these events. In some locales, training on hazardous materials or radiological hazards could be important. Additional training in land navigation and wilderness safety may be necessary for ARES groups that assist search and rescue teams. ECs should consider the potential hazards of their area; of course make plans to avoid them, but also a plan of appropriate training for the ARES members.

4.1.5 Operating

To operate efficiently, it is important that all members understand on the air discipline and operating procedures. Programs should frequently practice operation, whether in regular nets, drills, SKYWARN nets, or public service events such as runs and walks. Depending on the skills of the operators, some classroom training might be in order. On the air training nets can be especially useful, but it is important to avoid the appearance of singling out specific individuals on the air.

4.1.6 Technical Topics

Flexibility is one of the main assets we bring to our partner agencies, and we gain that flexibility through our technical knowledge. In most cases this isn't highly technical knowledge, but rather a broad understanding of the available capabilities. 19 Sessions on specific operating modes, especially data modes, can make good topics for ARES meetings. Members should be exposed to issues like setting up go-kits, field antennas, and the like. The possibility of reaching out to partner agencies to get an introduction to their communications

capabilities should not be overlooked.

5. Traffic Handling

The primary purpose of ARES is communication. The passing of information and messages from one point to another, i.e. traffic handling. There are 2 basic types of messages, informal or tactical, and formal.

5.1 Tactical or informal radio messages.

Tactical messages are unstructured messages originated by the radio operator and typically convey status, progress, or situational information. Examples are road closures or obstruction, current location of a vehicle responding to a situation, or a short message from a third party to be relayed to another person. For tactical messages, key elements of the message are implied and usually not stated such as time of the message, and the position of authority of the message originator and recipient These types of messages are used to facilitate many things. Here are some examples:

* Command communications
* Weather status
* Resource needs
* Logistics needs
 * Search and rescue operations
* Damage assessment
* ARESMAT coordination
* Security

5.2 Formal radio messages.

 Formal messages are structured messages containing a prescribed sequence of key message elements. Radio operators expect the elements to be exchanged in a certain sequence and will receive and write the information onto message fo The NIMS ICS 213 is the message form common to emergency management agencies. Each agency in turn may implement specialized message forms to report and exchange operational information important to that agency. The other type of formal message is one intended for the ARRL National Traffic System. This type of message will be on the ARRL Radiogram form.

5.2.1 ICS 213 General Message Form

The standard ICS Form ICS 213 has been used for a number of years for general messaging and is used to exchange most formal radio messages. This form is not restricted in the number of words that can be used in the message. The ICS 213 is described as a general message form. It serves both as a sending document as well as a response document. When used operationally for either exercises or actual emergencies, the document becomes part of the permanent record of the operation.

5.2.2 NTS Messaging Forms

The ARRL Radiogram is used for non disaster related messages not involving a governmental emergency management team. This form should be used for health and welfare traffic and other similar messages that will be sent through the National Traffic System. During an operation, messages may be received into the communications group from a representative of the National Traffic System on one of two forms.

* ARRL Radiogram
* FSD-244 Amateur Radio Disaster Welfare Message

Though both documents are very similar in format and content, the FSD-244 is more specifically dedicated to relating information specifically related to an incident or disaster. If the operator receives a message in either of these formats it should be forwarded on to its intended recipient in the same format it is received unless the operator is instructed otherwise.

5.3 ICS 214 Activity Log

The radio team should maintain an ICS 214 Activity Log at their operator position. When an operator arrives at the EOC and is ready to start a shift, that information should be logged in the ICS 214 log. Similarly, when an operator ends their shift, that information is also logged in the ICS 214. Major internal events, such as the start of the incident, start of the radio operations, or key changes in the readiness or capabilities of the radio team should be logged into the ICS 214. Major external events, such as a key milestone, improvement or worsening of the incident, and availability or loss of electrical power should also be logged. The updates to the ICS 214 log tend to be occasional during the incident. Attaching the current copy to a clipboard will keep it readily locatable and accessible for the team. The ICS 214 form's primary purpose is to capture the record of significant activity during an operational period other than message traffic. If there is no other recording form available, the ICS 214 Activity Log could serve as a means to capture the necessary information concerning the transmittal of point-to-point messaging. This form will list the supervisor as well as the operators of the communication group as assigned for that period and the pertinent information of the operation and will provide a chronological record, by time, of that period's activities.

6. Emergency Nets

The purpose of any net is to provide a means for orderly communication within a group of stations. An "emergency" net is a group of stations who provide communication to one or more served agencies, or to the general public in a communications emergency. An emergency net may be formal or informal, depending on the number of participants and the volume of messages.

6.1 Net Formats

6.1.1 Directed Nets

A directed net has a net control station(NCS) who organizes and controls all activity on the net. Any station wishing to communicate with another station must go through

the NCS and receive permission. This type of net is used when there are a large number of stations and or a large amount of traffic.

6.1.2 Open Nets

The NCS is optional in an open net. Stations may call each other directly. An NCS, when used will exert minimal control over the net. Open nets are most often used when there are just a few stations and little traffic.

6.2 Types of Emergency Nets

Emergency nets have different purposes

6.2.1 Traffic nets

A traffic net handles formal written messages. These messages are in the ARRL Radiogram format. These nets are operated by the National Traffic System (NTS).

6.2.2 Tactical nets

Tactical nets are used for real time coordination of activities related to the emergency. These nets are usually controlled by an NCS, they are fast moving and handle both formal and informal traffic.

6.2.3 Logistics Net

A logistics net is used to acquire resources and or volunteers and to handle assignments. It is a directed net with a NCS.

6.3 Net Rules

6.3.1 The first person to check into a net is the de facto net control station until a regular net controller checks in.

6.3.2 Check into the net with the NCS when you first arrive on the frequency and then don't check back in unless you have a message to pass or are called by the NCS

6.3.3 Notify the NCS if you have to leave the net for any reason, even if it's only for a few minutes.

6.3.4 To break into the net with *emergency* traffic, say "break break" and wait for the NCS to acknowledge you.

6.4 Net Frequencies

6.4.1 VHF/UHF Nets

Most local or countywide nets will be held on local repeaters or predetermined simplex frequencies.

6.4.2 HF Nets

Section wide nets will be held on 80 meters (3940 kHz.) or on the alternate frequency on 40 meters (7240 kHz.)

7. Simulated Emergency Test

The Simulated Emergency Test is means of evaluating emergency communications in the test

area, e.g. county , an ARRL Section or any other geographical area.

7.1 Purpose of SET

7.1.1 To determine strengths and weaknesses, in an exercise environment, of ARES groups at local and section levels.

7.1.2 To provide a public demonstration of Amateur Radio Service capabilities to partner organizations and agencies during times of emergency or disaster.

7.1.3 To help radio amateurs gain experience in communications using standard procedures and a variety of modes under simulated emergency conditions.

7.2 SET Format

The SET can be organized at any level within the ARES organization structure. It can be organized by an ARES group or as part of a larger exercise designed by a partner organization or agency. The exercise should have a defined timeframe and follow standard exercise protocols and practices. The exercise may focus on any event that would potentially require an Amateur Radio response, e.g. hurricane, 911 outage, flood, etc. Participating groups should focus on testing/utilizing a variety of Amateur Radio modes and bands, accurate handling of disaster-related messages (tactical as well as health and welfare), and utilizing the public information officer function of ARES.

7.3 Preparing for SET

Specific skills are required to design an exercise properly. It is not something that everyone knows how to do instinctively. Your SET should be designed by someone who has exercise design training, such as Independent Study course IS-139: Exercise Design.

7.4 During the SET

The "emergency" situation is announced and the emergency net is activated. Stations are dispatched to partner agencies and organizations. Designated stations originate messages on behalf of served agencies. Test messages may be sent simulating requests for supplies. Simulated emergency messages (just like real emergency messages) should be signed by an authorized official. Tactical communications for served agencies is emphasized.

7.5 After the SET

An important post-SET activity is an after-action review to discuss what occurred. All Amateur Radio participants should be invited to the meeting to review good points and weaknesses apparent in the drill. Prepare an after-action report indicating areas needing improvement, areas of strength, and lessons learned. This can serve as input to the next year's SET or to other events the jurisdiction might run. The EC, or his/her designate, should complete the SET report forms and submit them to ARRL headquarters in a timely manner. The after action report should also be submitted with the report form. Submissions can be made via email to SET@arrl.org.

8. Activation

Activation can be implemented on a local, regional, state, or national level depending on the size and scope of the incident. There are 3 levels of activation, level I, level II, and level III.

   8.1 Level III is the lowest level. It is essentially a monitoring or standby phase. This level is to prepare an ARES organization, or part of an ARES organization that they may be needed in the next 24 to 48 hours. Members of the activated group should be prepared to move to their assigned posts within 2 hours of notification. They should have their "Go Kits" prepared, generators, and transportation fueled and ready to go. ARES members should monitor locat emergency net frequencies for further information and instructions. A level III activation may be called by the SEC, EC or AEC.

   8.2 Level II is a partial activation consists of activating certain nets, teams, individuals or a combination of these in a county or district. A partial activation becomes active when the specified posts and nets become operational. Most emergencies can be handled with a level II activation. A level II activation can be initiated by either the DEC or the local EC.

   8.3 Level I is the highest level of activation in an emcomm operation. A level I activation at the section level can only be declared by the SM. When distress traffic is being handled on any emergency net or frequency, the activation level is automatically raised to level I, and will remain on level I until all distress traffic is completed. A district EC can put the district on a level I alert but they must notify the SM or SEC prior to doing so. If this is not possible as soon as possible afterward.

   8.4 Stand Down -- A stand down authorizes the DEC or to begin standing down from the operation. Only the SM or the SEC can authorize a stand down for an entire section or for more than one district. A DEC may authorize a stand down for their district. A stand down does not require an EC to stand down, it merely authorizes him to do so if there is no further need of his net.

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Treasure Coast District -- Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River &Okeechobee Counties
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Space Coast District — Brevard & Osceola Counties
ASM District EC -- Ray Kassis N4LEM n4lem@arrl.net
Gulf Coast District -- Collier, Lee, Hendry & Glades Counties
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