

ARRL ARES Plan 7/1/22

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®) has held to the same precepts virtually since its inception in 1935, encouraging participation by licensed Amateur Radio operators with a sincere interest in Emergency and Public Service Communications. With the advent of additional training requirements imposed upon agencies and organizations assisting them, and the development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) , ARRL was challenged to align the standards of ARES with current needs of our served partner agencies.

ARRL consulted with experienced resources from a broad cross-section of radio amateurs in the U.S. to examine the needs of our served agencies. A vision and mission statement were developed for ARES — one that is versatile, tells why ARES exists, and provides an overview of what ARES does and how it does it.

These updates to the ARES program are being developed to allow the implementation of a policy of Good Practices or Generally Accepted Practices and Continuous Improvement. With these concepts in place, we envision a more flexible ARES program that can adapt to meet new and emerging communication needs as identified by partners and program participants.

ARES® Vision Statement

ARES will be the premier amateur radio emergency communications service to the United States and its territories.

ARES® Mission Statement

ARES Strives to be an effective partner in emergency/disaster response, providing the citizenry and public service/safety partners with communications expertise, situational awareness, and capabilities of professional communicators.

Our Expertise and Capability

Expertise

Amateur Radio operators (“hams”) possess unique skills. While a ham’s license allows the operation of radio equipment on a wide range of frequencies with varying propagation conditions, hams also are capable of setting up field stations and portable antennas and using non-conventional means of getting a message through when other systems are overloaded or have failed.

These skill sets are created and improved by the local ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) group through thorough training — both formal and informal, and often in conjunction with local agencies where the team can meet agency personnel with whom they can expect to be operating during a true emergency. This advance effort is a strong contributor to developing mutual trust and understanding among the key individuals managing any emergency operation and should be exercised at every opportunity.

Skills and Capabilities

ARES groups have actively engaged in the following steps so that they have the ability to perform certain actions and meet their objectives. Further, a goal of the ARES program is to ensure that program participants continue to improve and develop additional capabilities for serving the public directly or in support of the needs of partners.

- Net operations and traffic passing provide experience in on-the-air operating, including net procedures and routines that are easily learned and adopted. Experience resulting from regular net participation ensures that established procedures and routines for net participation become rote practices for participants. The skills involved in copying transmissions subject to severe noise levels or interference come only through the actual experience of operating under severe conditions.
- Effective exercises offer scenarios to practice for hazards and threats. Having an established written policy relating to the most likely emergency scenarios allows ARES participants to understand the procedures for activating for a given situation. Severe weather events may be quite different from a wildfire, for example, requiring contact with different agencies and different skill sets from ARES participants. A well-written emergency communications plan greatly simplifies activation procedures and ensures that smaller items are not inadvertently overlooked.
- Emergency and disaster response provides experience with actual pressures and changing requirements found in such environments. Having the opportunity to participate in emergency or disaster response offers the ARES member valuable lessons and experiences. Therefore, it is important for those involved in the response to participate in the After-Action Reports (AAR) and debriefing process, so that all participants can learn from those who have operated in emergency conditions. Careful attention to details and retention of notes is an important part of completing this important educational task.
- The knowledge, understand and ability to operates various available field resources for communicating, such as VHF, UHF, HF, repeaters, accepted simplex frequencies, and local/regional HF networks as well as integrating messaging networks such as high-speed multimedia (HSMM) networks, the National Traffic System (NTS), and NTS-Digital (NTSD),

along with new technology and data communications, and cross-training with other communications services is all highly valued.

- The ability to work with federal, state, local and tribal officials, participate in neighborhood programs, and cooperate or even be embedded with local CERT, National Weather Service SKYWARN, and similar programs, and assisting with community events, such as rallies, races, marathons, parades, all of which create training opportunities and team building when done so as a training exercise.

ARES® and Its Relationship with Message Traffic

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®) is chartered with providing emergency communications support. This support can take many forms, but it does by its very concept include the transmission of third-party messages for our partner organizations and the communities we serve.

This document provides a high-level perspective on ARES, which may be incorporated into any ARES operation, whether it is providing service in a disaster or at a community public service event. Training in both net operating and message formatting can be found in several well-regarded publications, including The Amateur Radio Public Service Handbook, first edition; The ARRL Operating Manual, eleventh edition; and The ARES Field Resource Manual. Additionally, The National Traffic System's NTS Methods and Practices (http://www.arrl.org/files/file/NTS_MPG2014.pdf); and The NTS Manual (http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Public%20Service/NTS_Manual2015.pdf) are references for net and traffic handling procedures.

It is incumbent upon every Emergency Coordinator (EC) to develop a Standard Operating Guideline for his or her organization that includes clear liaison procedures for working with served partner agencies and regional traffic nets for fast and efficient handling of both tactical and strategic messages. The organization should utilize the Winlink system where appropriate. It should not limit itself to any specific messaging format or system but, instead, develop the operating skills and capacity to accommodate a wide variety of formats to meet ever-changing needs due to propagation, agency requirements, or technology.

Some things to keep in mind:

- ARES, as it is working with its partners, will need to handle messages and send those messages using partner-preferred forms (such as the ICS 213) in lieu of or in addition to NTS Radiograms.
- ARES will need to accept responsibility and be held accountable for timely delivery and tracking of messages which were sent on behalf of partners.
- ARES participants — as their skills (qualifications) improve via training and performing tasks — need to be familiar with, and use, multiple digital communication protocols for messaging.
- ARES groups should invite NTS personnel to work with them as they assist with messaging for their Partners. However, the protocols used by ARES and its partners will necessarily take priority over other alternative systems.

The leadership of the local ARES group should have a clear knowledge of local and regional traffic nets — especially Local, Section, and Region Nets of NTS . Knowing the schedules of these nets may allow rapid access to trained and ready outlets for urgent traffic. Further, knowledge of the organizational structure for these nets, especially the names, call signs, and contact information of the Net Managers, is extremely valuable in the event that a net needs to be activated outside of its normal schedule. Liaison, participation, and traffic handling with these nets are all vitally important to having an effective relationship and the ability to pass important traffic when it needs to happen.

The EC should examine the potential types of emergencies that may affect his or her communities and formulate a basic “Quick-Start” plan for each scenario. This plan should include each served partner agency, expected operating frequencies, how each will be utilized, what liaisons will be required, and how stations will be prioritized and assigned. The Quick-Start document can serve as a standard policy for consistent procedures when an activation occurs.

Qualifications for Membership in ARES

All participants shall have a valid Amateur Radio license issued by the Federal Communications Commission. All participants must have a serious interest in providing volunteer radio communications support in an emergency. All participants shall have an interest in self-improvement and maintaining standards for excellent community service. All participants need to have full membership in ARRL for leadership positions and/or certifications levels 3 and above.

Many of the partner agencies that ARES serves have mandated and structured training programs where all participants receive the same training so that, upon completion of the training , when activated or assigned to serve an agency in the field all such participants are presumed to be qualified to assume any position to which they were assigned.

Changes are being made to ARES to resolve and clarify for our partners the training required of ARES participants.

Multiple levels of training will allow ARES participants to enter the program and advance to higher levels of qualification and service as desired.

- **Level 1** — This is an entry level for those who choose a non-leadership role as well as those new to Amateur Radio or emergency communications. This introductory training is conducted by the local ARES group to meet their needs and those of their served agency or partners. This training may include FEMA ICS training as well as other basic EmComm training. Members should also complete the ARES Position Task Book (PTB) for level 1. This introduces ARES participants to the fundamentals of emergency communications and provides instruction on how participants are to conduct themselves while serving in the field or otherwise activated.
- **Level 2** — To qualify for this level, participants shall have completed the following courses and tasks:
 - ARRL’s EC-001 *Introduction to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications* (a no-cost program)
 - FEMA ICS-100, ICS-200, IS-700, IS-800
 - ARRL’s ARES Position Task Book (PTB) for level 2

Participants are also encouraged to take advantage of training opportunities available through partners to enhance their knowledge and skill set.

Note: Members who have taken the ICS courses more than 5 years ago should take refresher courses as these have been updated over the years.

- **Level 3** — This level of training prepares ARES participants to take on leadership positions such as EC, AEC, ADEC, DEC, ASEC, and SEC, and other designated positions in the ARES program. Participants are required to complete:
 - ARRL's *EC-016, Emergency Communications for Management*. Full ARRL membership is required for completion.
 - FEMA Professional Development Series and/or IS-300 and IS-400
 - ARES Position Task Book (PTB) for level 3.
- **Specialized training** — Members that wish to participate in ARES Mutual Aid Team (ARESMAT) operations or provide onsite support during large scale disasters may be asked to train to a higher level as they may need to be self-supporting "on location" during initial stages of a disaster response.

Completion of all training programs must be verified by the participant's Emergency Coordinator (EC) before the participant advances to the higher level. Those individuals holding leadership positions as the new program is introduced will be allowed one (1) year or such further time period as authorized by the SM to complete the necessary training to meet qualifications for Level 2 and above. Training requirements for ECs, DECs, and their assistants will be verified by their SM or his designee.

All ARES Personnel are strongly encouraged to participate in continuing their education through various local, state, tribal and federal programs such as CISA's Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) offerings. As needed, local ARES organizations may choose to add special training courses to fulfill local requirements and obligations.

Personnel Presentation to the public and served agencies needs to follow these guidelines. ARES members should wear appropriate attire for an activation. Appropriate attire should take into consideration your surroundings you are being assigned. If you are to be assigned to an office type environment, then business professional attire is expected. This could include logo, collar shirts and slacks as well as in some cases a dress shirt and tie. If the assignment is to be outdoors closed toe shoes and appropriate clothing for the conditions are expected which may or may not include hi visible shirts, vests etc. winter weather attire or sun/rain protection.

ARES Staff Positions

An ARES group, which is the local operational component of the ARES program, is guided under the direction of the Emergency Coordinator (EC). It is the EC who is most familiar with the needs of his or her community, familiar with the local hazards and threats, topography, weather expectations, natural resources, and available community resources. It is the EC who maintains contact with the public safety leaders, as well as partners and their leadership.

All ARRL Field appointments are made by the respective Section Manager, who may choose to delegate that authority to the responsible Section Emergency Coordinator. References to the SEC making a field appointment assume appropriate approvals by the Section Manager.

The following job descriptions detail how these ARES positions work together for an effective organization.

Section Emergency Coordinator

The Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) is the assistant to the Section Manager ([SM](#)) for emergency preparedness. The SEC is appointed by the SM to administer all matters pertaining to emergency communications and the [Amateur Radio Emergency Service](#) (ARES®) on a Section-wide basis. There is only one SEC appointed in each Section of the ARRL Field Organization.

Requirements

General license or higher; full ARRL membership, and achievement of ARES Level 3 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as SEC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 3 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- Promote and encourage the development of local ARES groups.
- In consultation with Section Manager, Set policy and protocol for all ARES groups within the Section
- Advise the SM on all Section emergency policy and planning, including the development of a Section emergency communications plan.
- Cooperate and coordinate with the [Section Traffic Manager](#) (STM) so that emergency nets and traffic nets properly route welfare traffic in disasters and emergencies. Cooperate and coordinate with other Section leadership officials.
- 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. Verify that candidates meet training requirements. At the SM's discretion, the SEC may be directly in charge of making (and cancelling) such appointments.
- Submit monthly reports to ARRL Field Organization Headquarters.
- Work with Emergency Coordinators to ensure they submit required reports.
- Promote ARES membership drives, meetings, activities, tests, procedures, etc., at the Section level.
- Provide guidance and support to ECs during a communications emergency to ensure the local ECs have the necessary resources to sustain their mission.
- 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 government, emergency management officials and similar agencies. In states with multiple ARRL Sections, the SECs shall collaborate to develop and maintain an appropriate ARES Emergency

Communications Plan in conjunction with state officials.

- Maintain cooperation with the State Government Liaison.

Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator (ASEC)

The Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator (ASEC) is the assistant to the Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC). He or she is appointed by the Section Manager (SM), usually at the suggestion of the SEC. The ASEC assists the SEC in matters pertaining to emergency communications and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®) on a Section-wide basis. There may be one or more ASECs appointed in each Section of the ARRL Field Organization.

Requirements

General license or higher; full ARRL membership, and achievement of Level 3 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as ASEC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 3 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- May serve as a general assistant to the [Section Emergency Coordinator](#), or as a specialist. That is, the ASEC may assist the Section Emergency Coordinator with general leadership matters as the Section Emergency Coordinator's alternate, or the ASEC may be assigned to handle a specific important function that does not fall within the scope of the duties of the Section Emergency Coordinator's other assistants. An ASEC may act as the SEC in the latter's absence or in emergency response operations to maintain continuity of leadership when 24-hour activity requires multiple shifts.
- At the Section Manager's discretion, the ASEC may be designated as the recommended successor to the incumbent Section Emergency Coordinator in case the Section Emergency Coordinator resigns or is otherwise unable to finish the term of office.
- Should be familiar with the [Official Appointment Description for the ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator](#), which contains the fundamental responsibilities of the SEC.

Must submit monthly reports and any other additional reports as required by the SEC.

District Emergency Coordinator (DEC)

The ARRL District Emergency Coordinator (DEC) is appointed by the [Section Emergency Coordinator \(SEC\)](#). DEC Districts may be defined as geographical regions, areas of specialty, or similar organizational structures.

Requirements

General-class license or higher preferred; full ARRL membership, and achievement of Level 3 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as DEC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 3 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- Coordinate the training, organization, and emergency participation of Emergency Coordinators in the district of jurisdiction as may be defined by the Section Emergency Coordinator.
- Coordinate response efforts between local ARES groups and Amateur Radio networks within the area of jurisdiction.
- Act as backup for local areas without an Emergency Coordinator and assist in maintaining contact with governmental and other agencies within the area of jurisdiction.
- 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.
- Recommend candidates for EC appointments to the SEC.
- Be fully conversant in National Traffic System (NTS) routing and procedures.
- Have a thorough understanding of the locale and role of all vital governmental and volunteer agencies that could be involved in an emergency.
- Ensure local ECs are appointed and trained, as needed, to fill vacancies.
- Establish local standards, in addition to implementing national standards, to meet operational requirements.
- Ensure Emergency Coordinators submit monthly reports or others as directed.
- Submit the DEC monthly report to the SEC.

Assistant District Emergency Coordinator (ADEC)

The ARRL Assistant District Emergency Coordinator (ADEC) is appointed at the option of the Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) to assist in the support of local District Emergency Coordinators (DECs) in a defined district. The ADEC is appointed to work closely with the DEC in all matters pertaining to emergency communications and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®) on a Section-wide basis. There may be one or more ADECs in each Section of the ARRL Field Organization.

Requirements

Technician-class license or higher; full ARRL membership, and achievement of Level 3 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as ADEC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 3 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- May serve as a general assistant to the [District Emergency Coordinator](#) or as a specialist. That is, the ADEC may assist the District Emergency Coordinator with general leadership matters as the District Emergency Coordinator's alternate, or the ADEC may be assigned to handle a specific important function that does not fall within the scope of the duties of the District Emergency Coordinator's other assistants. The designated ADEC will act as the DEC in his or her absence or in emergency response operations to maintain continuity of leadership when 24-hour activity requires multiple shifts.
- Should be familiar with the [Official Appointment Description for the ARRL District Emergency Coordinator](#), which contains the fundamental responsibilities of the DEC.
- Should keep the DEC informed through monthly activity reports.

Emergency Coordinator (EC)

The ARRL Emergency Coordinator is the person responsible for leading the [ARES](#) group at the local level. Working with local community officials, the [Section Emergency Coordinator \(SEC\)](#), and other field appointees, the EC leads his or her local ARES group through the planning, preparedness, and response phases. The EC reports to their District Emergency Coordinator (DEC)

Requirements

Technician-class license or higher; full ARRL membership, and achievement of Level 3 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as EC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 3 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- 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.
- 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 \(SEC\)/Section Manager \(SM\)](#).
- Establish viable working partnerships with federal, state, county, city governmental and/or private agencies in the ARES jurisdictional area that needs the services of ARES in emergencies.
- Identify and work collaboratively with local partners to assess how ARES can assist them with their mission, ensuring partners are aware of the limitations and capabilities of ARES.
- Develop detailed local operational plans, with partner agency officials in the jurisdiction that set forth precisely what expectations are during an ARES activation. Work jointly with partners to establish relationships based on mutual trust and respect. All matters involving recruitment and utilization of ARES participants are directed by the EC, in response to the needs assessed by agency officials. Technical issues involving message format, security of message transmission, disaster welfare inquiry policies, and others should be reviewed and expounded upon in the ARES detailed local operations plans.
- Establish local communications networks that run on a regular basis, and periodically test those networks by conducting realistic drills.
- Work with the SEC and District Emergency Coordinators (DECs) to identify potential local shortcomings and define resources that may need to be drawn from adjacent ARES groups in support of a local emergency or disaster.
- Establish an emergency traffic plan, with welfare traffic inclusive, utilizing the [National Traffic System \(NTS\)](#) 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.
- Work with other Amateur Radio public service groups, organizations or programs to establish relationships of mutual trust and respect, 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.
- Work for growth in the local ARES program, making it a stronger, more valuable resource and hence able to meet more of the agencies' local needs.

- Submit monthly activity reports to DEC and SEC.

Assistant Emergency Coordinator (AEC)

The ARRL Assistant Emergency Coordinator (AEC) is appointed at the option of the Emergency Coordinator ([EC](#)), to assist the EC with his or her local ARES group through the planning, preparedness, and response phases of the ARES mission at the local level.

Requirements

Technician-class license or higher and achievement of Level 2 qualifications. (Must, within the period of 1 year, from the issuance of this document or appointment as AEC, whichever comes later, or such further time period as authorized by the SM, complete all of the requirements for Level 2 qualification.)

Responsibilities

- As defined and assigned by the EC in support of the EC's responsibilities described above.

Summary

Formerly inconsistent ARES training requirements are now organized into a consistent and achievable format. This is a first step towards our long-term goal of being recognized by our served partner agencies as the “gold standard” of volunteer communications support based upon ARES members’ unique Expertise and Capabilities.

This program introduces many changes that were asked for by our partner agencies. Notably, all have been included in the Plan. From the mission statement itself, new ARES Guidelines were created and appear in this document. This Plan will continue to evolve. Changes in technology, along with evolving local, state, federal, and tribal needs will require updates and revisions to accommodate our served partner agencies.

ARRL Headquarters staff will conduct an annual review of this Plan to assure its continued relevance.