

New Hampshire ARES

Expedient Training for Walk-In Emcomm Volunteers

Welcome, and thanks for volunteering. We hope that you have had specific emcomm training, but if not, this handout is designed to teach you some essential basics that will apply to many, but not all, emcomm events. It is not intended to make you an expert. We encourage you to earn ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Level I Certification at some point in the future, and to take part in periodic drills and tests.

Our Relationship with the Agencies We Serve

ARES radio operators are essentially volunteers who agree to act as though they are “unpaid employees” of the public or non-profit agencies we serve. If you think of the relationship in this way, you can avoid a great many misunderstandings and problems.

Put another way, “we work for them”. Agencies make their own decisions - we handle their communications and *any related agency tasks we have agreed to and are assigned*. They are in charge of their operations - we are not. Within the limits of our capabilities, agreements, and the FCC rules, we do what they ask of us.

Your Appearance

You should be as neat and clean as you can be under the circumstances. Avoid any inappropriate clothing, such as novelty t-shirts, funny hats, etc. Think of how you would be expected to dress if you were a regular employee of the served agency, and do your best to come close with the clothes you have with you. NHARES ID clothing may be worn if you own it. (No other uniforms unless they are provided for you by the agency, please.)

Take Care of Yourself

Depending on available resources, ARES net and operations managers may schedule breaks and “down-time” for food, personal needs, and sleep. Each event and location is different. If you have special needs or limitations, be sure to let the person in charge of emcomm volunteers know. Be aware that they may have many conflicting demands and may not be able to meet your needs right away or at all.

Do not let yourself become over-tired. This is a guaranteed way to reduce your effectiveness. Avoid “hero” syndrome – working non-stop triple shifts is not good for you, or for the operation. Tired operators make mistakes and can become a direct or indirect danger to themselves and others. Ask permission to go “off the air” to get rest if you have to.

Take time for rest, food, cleanup, and personal needs. Take any needed medications. If you cannot take a bath, use deodorant if you have it. Do your best to maintain a neat and professional appearance.

Net Operations

Several different types of nets may be in operation. If you are not familiar with how emergency nets work, please ask someone who is trained and experienced for a quick lesson. We will try to cover the basics here.

Net Styles

Formal – Also called a “directed net”. All transmissions and activity on the net are directed by the “net control station” operator (NCS), who acts much like a “traffic cop” for the network. Listen to the net carefully to learn the procedures being used. In most all cases, you will need to ask the NCS for permission to call another station, and list the type and number of messages you have for that location. You may be asked to move to another frequency to pass your messages if you have many, or if the net frequency is busy. Once you have passed the messages, return to the net frequency and notify the NCS.

Informal – Also called a “non-directed” net. There is usually no NCS, or if there is one, he or she only steps in when needed. Informal nets are used mostly in low traffic situations or with only a few stations.

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