

Disaster Communications – General Procedures

Waller County ARES training material used with permission from Christine Smith, N5CAS.

To transmit in the voice mode, always remember to talk across the face of the microphone.

Speak slowly, distinctly, clearly, and do not let your voice trail off at the end of words or sentences.

On FM, hold the transmit button down for at least a second or two before beginning your message.

Know what you are going to say before you push the mike button. We don't want to clutter up the air with "Net Control, uh, this KC, uh five, uh, ZJL and, uh, I think I have a message, uh, for, uh, Miss Smith"

Listen before transmitting.

Chewing gum, eating, and other similar activities tend to clutter up the clarity of your speech. Avoid this.

Remember to talk slowly and clearly in order to get the message across correctly, Accuracy first, speed second.

Avoid angry comments on the air at all costs. Refrain from any obscene statements.

If you are relaying a message for another person, be sure you repeat the message exactly, word-for-word as it is given to you. If it makes no sense, get an explanation before you put it on the air.

Sound alert. If you are tired, get a relief operator.

Forget humor on the air during drills and obviously in real emergencies. The ARES function is serious business and should be treated as such at all times.

Watch certain words. For example, "can't" almost sounds like "can". "Unable" would be a better choice of words. Use "affirmative" instead of "yes". Use "negative" instead of "no". "Roger" is a good word.

Identification is a requirement by the FCC. If the NCS and each of the outlying ARES stations give a complete identification at least once in a ten-minute period during the contact, the use of abbreviated call-sign identification or tactical ID is acceptable.

Always identify your unit at the beginning of each transmission. Identify your unit again when the message exchange is complete, as required by FCC rules.

The word "break" is never used unless there is a real emergency. Otherwise, use your call letters to gain access to the net.

Remember the strongest signal “captures” the receiver on FM. When two or more stations are on the air at the same time, confusion can result. Check to see that you are not overriding someone or blanking out their communications with your signal.

Do not act as a “relay station” unless the NCS, or another radio station, asks for a relay – and you can fulfill the requirement at your station.

When transmitting numbers, always transmit the number sequences as a series of individual numbers. One example: an address is given as a series of “two six eight nine five northwest two three street”. Do not say “Twenty six eighty nine five northwest twenty third street”.

There is no such thing as a “common spelling” in ARES work. Do not improvise a phonetic alphabet. If you don’t know the ITU-recommended phonetics, now is a good time to learn it and use it in your daily operations.

Always acknowledge calls and instructions. If you cannot copy, or respond to the call immediately, then tell the caller to repeat or stand by.

Never acknowledge calls and instructions unless you understand the call or instructions perfectly. If you do not understand, ask for a repeat. Make sure you have the instruction right before acknowledgment.

NCS stations frequently are very busy with work that is not on the air. If you call the NCS and do not get a reply, be patient and call again in a minute or two. If it is an emergency, call more often and so state; otherwise, just space the calls to the NCS until they answer.

ONLY TRANSMIT FACTS. Do not clutter up the air with non-essential information. If your message is a question, deduction, educated guess, or hearsay, identify it as such. Be careful what you say on the air.

Always know where you are located. Always keep a sharp lookout for location identification. If called upon, you need to be able to accurately describe your location at any time. This is particularly important if you are with a search team or other mobile units.

Always keep a monitor on the net frequency. If you must leave the frequency, ask permission from the NCS to change. It is vital the NCS knows the whereabouts of each station in the net, and it is up to you to keep the NCS advised.

Stay off the air unless you are sure you can be of assistance.

Many times radio conditions are poor and words must be over-exaggerated to be understandable. The following list provides pronunciation of numbers in poor conditions:

One – “Wun”	Two – “Too”	Three – “Tharee”
Four – “Fower”	Five – “Fiyuv”	Six – “Siks”
Seven – “Sevven”	Eight – “Ate”	Nine – “Niner”

Zero – “Zearow” (The number “zero” is not to be pronounced as “oh.”)

If you do not understand the whole message given to you or if you missed a word out of the transmission, reply with “Say again.” Do not say “Please repeat” because it sounds too much like “Received” when conditions are poor.

When you have understood the message, acknowledge the receipt with the words “received” or “acknowledged.” Do not use “QSL” since it may be misunderstood.