

PREPARE FOR DEPLOYMENT

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

Being prepared for an emergency communication deployment involves a wide range of considerations, including radio equipment, clothing and personal gear, food and water, information, and specialized training.

The Shuttle accident is a good example of a situation where the needs upon arrival were very different for each person, and preplanning is a necessity in these situations.

This incident is very different in relation to a situation such as the response to the flooding in the Houston area a couple years ago. No two deployments are the same but your basic necessities remain the same.

Ready Kits

The last thing you want to do when a call for assistance comes is think of and pack all the items you might need. An experienced emergency responder should know how important it is to keep a kit of the items they need ready to go at a moment's notice. This is often called a "ready kit" or "jump kit". Without a ready kit, you will almost certainly leave something important at home, or bring items that will not do the job. Here are a few basic questions you will need to answer:

- Which networks will you need to join, and what equipment will you need to do so?
- Will you need to be able to relocate quickly, or can you bring a ton of gear?
- Will you be on foot, or near your vehicle?
- Is your assignment at a fixed location or will you be mobile?
- How long might you be deployed - less than 48 hours, up to 72 hours, or even a week or more?
- Will you be in a building with reliable power and working toilets, or in a tent away from civilization?
- What sort of weather or other conditions might be encountered?
- Where will food and water come from? Are sanitary facilities available?
- Will there be a place to sleep?
- Do you need to plan for a wide variety of possible scenarios, or only a few?

Most people seem to divide ready kits into two categories: one for deployments under 48 hours, and one for up to 72 hours. For deployments longer than 72 hours, many people will just add more of the items that they will use up, such as clothing, food, water, and batteries. Others may add a greater range of communication options and backup equipment as well.

You might want to keep a list with your "ready kit" of items that have a short shelf life that you would not want to have packed at all times. You might want prescriptions, batteries, and other items not pre-packed but have them on a list as a reminder of items to be added will help to keep from forgetting them at the last minute.

The following web site has some good information regarding planning your “ready kit”.
<http://home.comcast.net/~buck0/hamgear.htm>

Ready Kit Idea List

- Something to put it in -- one or more backpacks, suitcases, plastic storage tubs, etc.
- Package individual items in zip lock bags or plastic kitchen containers
- Label ALL your equipment with your name, call sign, etc.

Radios and Accessories

- Handheld VHF or dual-band radio (some people also like to bring a spare)
- Spare rechargeable batteries for handhelds
- Alkaline battery pack for handhelds
- Alkaline batteries
- Speaker mic and earphone for handhelds
- Battery chargers, AC and DC for handhelds
- Mobile VHF or dual-band radio
- HF radio
- Multi-band HF antenna, tuner, heavy parachute cord
- Gain antennas and adapters (roll-up J-Pole, mobile magnetic mount, etc)
- Coaxial feed lines, jumpers
- Ground rod, pipe clamp, and wire
- AC power supplies for VHF/UHF mobile and HF radios, accessories
- Large battery source for VHF/UHF mobile and HF radios, with charger
- All related power, data, audio, and RF cables and adapters
- Small repair kit: hand tools, multi-meter, connectors, adapters, fuses, key parts
- Materials for improvisation: wire, connectors, small parts, insulators, duct tape, etc.
- Photocopies of manuals for all equipment
- Headphones, for noisy areas and privacy

- Specialized gear for packet, ATV or other modes
- Multi-band scanner, weather radio
- Personal cell phone, pager, spare batteries and chargers
- Pencils, legal pads, pencil sharpener

Personal Gear

- Clothing for the season, weather, and length of deployment
- Toilet kit: soap, razor, deodorant, comb, toilet paper
- Foul weather or protective gear, warm coats, hats, etc. as needed
- Sleeping bag, closed-cell foam pad, pillow, ear plugs
- High energy snacks
- Easily prepared dried foods that will store for long periods
- Eating and cooking equipment if needed
- Water containers, filled before departure
- First aid kit, personal medications and prescriptions for up to one week
- Money, including a large quantity of quarters for vending machines, tolls, etc.
- Telephone calling card

Information

- ID cards and other authorizations (A real good idea is to laminate your amateur license, as well as your ARES id card. I also suggest getting your picture on your ARES id card before you laminate it. The lamination will help protect it from the 'elements' and these id's are necessary to have on you at all times)
- Frequency lists and net schedules
- Maps, both street and topographic
- Key phone numbers, email and internet addresses
- Contact information for other members in your group, EC, DEC, SEC, and others
- Copy of emergency plans
- Resource lists: who to call for which kinds of problems

- Log sheets, message forms

Operating Supplies

- Outgoing message forms or sheets to compose messages
- Incoming message forms. (Some operators copy the message onto scratch paper, and then transcribe it cleanly onto the incoming message form. Some groups use one form for both incoming and outgoing messages.)
- Log sheets
- Standard forms used by the served agency
- Letter or legal notepads
- Sticky notes
- Paper clips and rubber bands
- Blank envelopes

Sub-Dividing Your Kits

You may want to divide your ready kit into smaller packages. Here are some ideas:

- Quick deployment kit: hand-held radio kit, personal essentials, in a large daypack
- VHF/UHF, HF kits for fixed locations
- Accessory and tool kit
- Emergency power kit
- Short and long term personal kits in duffel bags
- Field kitchen and food box in plastic storage tubs
- Field shelter kit (tents, tarps, tables, chairs, battery/gas lights) in plastic storage tubs

When you arrive

When the time comes, you need to know where to go, and what to do. Having such information readily available will help you respond more quickly and effectively. It will not always be possible to know these things in advance, particularly if you do not have a specific assignment. Answering the following basic questions may help.

- Which frequency should you check in on initially? Is there a "backup" frequency?
- If a repeater is out of service, which simplex frequency is used for the net?

- Which nets will be activated first?
- Should you report to a pre-determined location or will your assignment be made as needed?

One of the first things after arriving is to become familiar with your location. You should make a note of any fire exits, or escape routes. Depending on the situation this could be invaluable information in time of need.