

NET-120
COMMUNICATION TRAINING REVIEW
Modified from a Waller County ARES training article.

Over the past couple months we have covered topics ranging from basic communications principles to preparing for deployment.

Within the next month there may be an opportunity for us to put our skills we have been learning to the test. Let's review.

To begin, we want to remember when on a repeater to be sure to key up the microphone for a second or two before we start communicating, let's give the repeater itself time to "key up." We always want to listen first, make sure we are not interrupting unless we have emergency traffic that just can't wait, and if so we want to identify the traffic as such so the net control operator understands our situation.

We always want to speak slowly and speak clearly so it will be intelligible to the net control operator. Don't forget if passing messages the person at the other end is trying to write down what you are saying, it doesn't hurt to imagine that you are trying to write it down as you are speaking.

Don't forget to avoid contractions. Let's not say "can't", try using "can not" or "unable". Also something like "affirmative" and "negative" rather than "yes" or "no" will be much clearer.

When you are involved in emergency nets you might be assigned a tactical call sign. Just don't forget the FCC requires you to transmit your legal call sign every ten minutes and at the end of your transmission. "Shelter One" (a possible tactical call sign) makes it much easier for the net control station to determine who you are, but the FCC still wants to know also!

Another thing to remember is when transmitting numbers be sure to speak them individually, "26895" should be spoke as "two six eight nine five" not "twenty six eight ninety five." This makes the message much easier for the other person to write it correctly.

To review, there are different types of net. In a real situation, we might have a "resource net" on one frequency. This net will be your initial contact when responding to a call out. This is where you tell the net control operator that you are responding, where you are, and get instructions such as your tactical call sign and the assignment of where to go. You might be instructed to go to a "staging area" or to a shelter, EOC, etc. When you arrive and are prepared, you should notify this net control operator and you will be given instructions as to what frequency to change to. Then you will be part of what is known as a "tactical net". This is where the real time coordination of activities will be taking place. If you have messages to be relayed, this is the NCO you would notify. If the net is quite busy with much activity, the NCO may advice you and the person you are passing the traffic to if you could do that on another frequency. There may be a 'traffic net' set up, or you might just move to a simplex frequency of your choice or another repeater that both parties can communicate on. This frees up the tactical net for other traffic.

Also, don't forget if you have to leave your station for any length of time to notify the NCO of your intentions. Let's keep them informed of your intentions. We don't want the NCO to waste time trying to call you when you have stepped away from the station.

By all means remember that law enforcement may be at your location, and if you are asked to stop transmitting DO SO IMMEDIATELY. There might be a very good reason. If this happens and you can move to a safe location, then let the NCO know as soon as possible. Also if you are asked to move DO SO IMMEDIATELY.

Go back through the message handling training that we have covered, you might want to create a little "cheat sheet" with some information that might be needed when sending formal messages. It would not hurt to have some notations regarding what the different precedence types are as well as the handling instructions. I know I don't pass enough traffic to remember these codes, and I doubt if you will either when the time comes.

You want to be sure to have a log form, and log all messages with the time sent and to whom sent. This information may be needed at a later date, and you need to have this. Some folks will actually write notations on the message form itself, and then transfer over to the log after. This is really up to your preference, as long as the messages are kept in an orderly fashion and transferred to the log in a timely manner.

Don't forget that normally you will not be the "author" of the message. These should be transmitted exactly as they are given to you, and signed off by an official. The other situation might be messages that you would "author" such as request for supplies, relief operators, etc. In that instance you would want to log these for your record with time delivered and to whom, but would not need an official sign-off.

I hope that everyone has had a little time to think about their "ready kit". I won't go into a lot of detail tonight, but this is something we need to prepare now. If we wait until we get a call it's a little late to try to remember everything needed. We need to at least have the important things ready: spare batteries, message forms, pencils, copy of radio manuals (just the pages that covers things like how to set tone, change offset, etc is really a good idea to have on hand), notepad, our ARES id card, etc. If you forget your snack bars, that's something you can live with and will get over, but we don't want to forget the radios, antennas and batteries! The actual list will be longer, and of course the situation is different if we had to travel out of town. It will help to create a list of things that have a short 'shelf life' that you would need to include at the last minute. This should also include any prescription medications that you take.

There is an interesting article about a Paul Harvey broadcast where he gave the amateur radio operators a really nice 'plug'.

This is a reprint from the CLARC "RAG"

The mention was the second item on "page four" of his March 19 Paul Harvey Noon News and Comment program.

"America's quiet warriors are the legion of ham radio operators, 700,000 of them, who are always at ready for backup duty in emergencies--amateur, unpaid, uncelebrated, civilian radio operators, during and after floods and fires and tornadoes," Harvey said. "After the 9/11 attacks, hams were indispensable in reuniting friends and families. Most recently it was they who expedited the search for debris after the disaster to the space shuttle Columbia, and right now, at this moment, they are involved in homeland security to a greater degree than you would want me to make public."

The commentary's enigmatic and mysterious final sentence--typical of Harvey's habit of leaving his listeners hanging-- apparently refers to the fact that many Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Radio Amateur Emergency Service (RACES) teams have ramped up their alert.