

KNW-169
EMERGENCY DEPLOYMENTS:
IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT TALKING ON THE RADIO
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As ARES team members, we train in communications a lot: in weekly Nets, which we attend, and during events in which we participate.

This training provides us a wealth of valuable skills, which we rely upon as we serve in deployments. Nets let us practice how to program our radios, test how well our equipment can hit the repeaters, how to operate in a directed net, and how to use complex digital modes. Events allow us to learn how to deploy to a location and operate portable or mobile stations. We learn how to communicate in real-time with events going on around us, how to make important observations, and how to properly inform Net Control of a situation like a medical emergency in a marathon.

In addition, our served agencies ask us to obtain formal training in the FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).

We need all of this training to perform well as emergency communicators. **You can't just show up to the scene of a disaster, pick up a microphone, and talk without all of this training and practice!**

One of the most important aspects of our deployments, whether events or actual emergencies, is the planning and documentation process. We will not be successful individually or as a team if we don't plan effectively. And without a good plan, we may be setting our team members up to fail.

Many criticize the Incident Command System as "just a bunch of forms." Nothing could be further from the truth! The forms are an important way to make sure that there is a solid plan underpinning the deployment, that it's fully thought-out, and that it's communicated to members in an effective way. By operating within the plan, each of us becomes a force-multiplier to achieving the goal of the deployment.

In addition, forms collect important information about what happened and when during a deployment, so that leadership can go back and analyze it later and suggest improvements for the next one.

Here are some of the forms we use to plan a deployment, and which you'll see and use when you participate.

The Incident Briefing (ICS 201) provides the Incident Commander and staff with basic information regarding the incident situation and the resources allocated to the incident.

An incident action plan (IAP) documents incident goals, operational period objectives, and the response strategy. Please be sure to read it thoroughly to understand all its details.

The Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205) provides information on all radio frequencies and radio system assignments.

The General Message (ICS 213) is used to send any message or notification to incident personnel that requires hard-copy delivery.

The Activity Log (ICS 214) records details of notable activities at any ICS level, including single resources, equipment, Task Forces, etc. These logs provide basic incident activity documentation, and a reference for any after-action report. **ARES members should always carry an ICS 214 in their go-kits and immediately use it to start a log of your activities during a deployment. Also remember that anything you write down will become a matter of the public record.**

The Communications Log (ICS 309) records the details of message traffic and is used by either an individual or a Net Control Operator (NCO). These logs provide the basic reference from which to extract communications traffic history.

After the incident concludes, you may be sent an **After-Action Report** to gather your thoughts about what worked and what didn't which will be used in future plans.

Practice makes perfect. Participating in events can help you practice using your equipment and communicating in real-time with things going on all around you. And practice in using the ICS Forms will help you understand the plan for the deployment, and your part in it.