

Q - I don't have any emergency radio equipment. Can I still volunteer for ARES duty?

A - Contact your local Emergency Coordinator. There are a number of jobs to do, including operating amateur radio sets that may be already in place at your Emergency Operations Centre.

Q - I am still studying for my amateur radio certificate with Basic Qualification . Can I help?

A - Contact your Emergency Coordinator. There are many support jobs. Also you may have the opportunity to operate under the supervision of a properly qualified radio amateur. This is a fine chance for operating practice.

Q - How can my ARES group and/or amateur radio club gain protection from liability while we are doing emergency exercises or supporting public service events?

A - Your Emergency Coordinator should ascertain exactly what coverage you receive from the municipality you are working with. You may receive coverage under Worker's Compensation as though you were part time employees. Even if that is the case, it is prudent to investigate supplementing that coverage with a RAC affiliated club insurance policy. Information and application on the RAC web site at http://www.rac.ca/cdn_clubs/insurance

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The RAC Field Organization

American Radio Relay League in 1935 organized what is known now as the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). In 1949, ARRL created the National Traffic System (NTS). These two organizations are sponsored throughout Canada by RAC. The emergency-preparedness program of ARES combines with the daily traffic-handling program of the NTS to produce a single strong facility for rendering continuous service to the public. The emergency-preparedness program of ARES is kept up to date by frequent drills and tests. In an emergency, the NTS serves as the vehicle for relay of traffic over medium and long distances while local ARES nets take care of local communications and deliveries. Close liaison is maintained between these two groups at a national and local level.

Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

ARES is composed of licensed radio amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service, when disaster strikes. Every licensed radio amateur, whether or not a member of RAC or any other local or regional organization, is eligible for membership in the Amateur Radio Emergency Service. The only qualification is a sincere desire to serve. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but not a requirement. Emergency service activities in each RAC Section are under the direction of the Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC), who is appointed by the Section Manager (SM). The SEC is responsible for recruiting as well as supporting and coordinating the activities of the Emergency Coordinators in his Section. The radio amateurs in each community within the Section register their facilities with the local Emergency Coordinator (EC), who is also appointed by the Section Manager. In order to provide better support, in areas where there are a large number of EC appointments, the position of District Emergency Coordinator (DEC) is appointed by the SM. Being RAC Field Organization officials, these appointments must be RAC members. However, as noted above, other members of a local ARES organization need not be RAC members.

National Traffic System (NTS)

NTS is the principal facility for medium to long range traffic. In emergencies, NTS is geared to go into continuous operation in accordance with the needs and the extent of the particular emergency. The National Traffic System consists of four levels of traffic nets that operate in an orderly time sequence to effect a definite traffic flow pattern from point of origin to point of destination. Throughout the process, the message is handled only by radio amateurs who are trained and practiced to professional standards in traffic-handling. The routing from end to end is a controlled process so that the message accuracy and integrity is maintained. This is in distinct contrast to the potentially haphazard handling a message may receive if it is sent through uncontrolled amateur radio net routing, where it may be handled by well-meaning but untrained operators. National Traffic System activities in each RAC Section are under the direction of the Section Traffic Manager (STM), who is appointed by the Section Manager (SM). Each NTS net operates under a Net Manager (NM) who also is appointed by the SM. Being RAC Field Organization officials, these appointments must be RAC members.



*Frequently
Asked
Questions
About
ARES*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RAC ARES

Q - I would like to form an ARES emergency radio group. What do I need to get started?

A - Contact the Section Manager for your RAC Section for an application form. The SMS are shown in The Canadian Amateur Magazine listing, and on the RAC web site. Once he is satisfied that you have the ability to properly recruit, organize and manage the group, he, or the Section Emergency Coordinator, will appoint you as an Emergency Coordinator (EC). You will then have access to the ARES training and reference material to get the job done right.

Q - Must all the radio amateurs in my emergency radio group be members of RAC?

A - We encourage all to join RAC so they can benefit from the monthly Public Service and Section News columns, as well as the other TCA features. However there is no requirement that they be RAC members. ARES ECs are leadership appointees in the RAC Field Organization and it is reasonable that they must be RAC members.

Q - What training and reference material will ARES provide?

A - When you are appointed you will receive three major publications:

- The RAC ARES Instructor's Training Manual. You can download this from the RAC web site whenever you are ready for it. It is available in both MS WORD and WORD PERFECT , as well as WORD for MAC formats. If you have nobody local who can print out a downloaded version, contact RAC HQ for a printed copy. You will be expected to pay for the photocopying labour, and postage, and to supply your own three-ring binder. If you ask RAC to provide a copy, remember that this is not a stock item. Allow RAC HQ two weeks to process your request plus another week for mail delivery to you.
- The RAC Emergency Coordinator's Manual. This is a comprehensive reference guide covering all aspects of setting up and managing an emergency communications group. If you are already set up, it makes a good checklist.
- The ARRL Public Service Communications Manual. This is another reference manual covering ARES and NTS.

Q - What does ARES expect of an Emergency Coordinator?

A - You are expected to properly recruit, organize and manage your group. The only other requirement is to submit a brief monthly report on a form which is provided when you are appointed. The information you provide on your progress in getting your group going, the courses you run, and the exercises and public service events you help on, is used to prepare the monthly Section News in TCA. That's it. ARES is here to help you, not to burden you.

Q - Do I need to wait until my organization is complete, before I ask for an EC appointment?

A - No, that is doing things backwards. Contact your RAC Section Manager, (addresses and numbers on this web site) when

you are ready to start so that you can take advantage of the ARES publications and other resources while you are getting underway. Or ask your amateur radio club to "sponsor" your ARES group. That has two benefits - it assures some backing for you, and you have a ready source of volunteer help.

Q - We already have an amateur radio emergency group. What advantage would we gain from joining ARES?

A - Your group doesn't "join ARES". The group leader is appointed as an Emergency Coordinator (EC) in the ARES organization by the RAC Section Manager or SEC. This appointment does not directly affect the others in the group. It does provide the EC with reference manuals on how to set up and manage the group. You can also download the RAC ARES Instructor's Manual , which will help you to do your ongoing training.

Q - What resources can ARES provide that our non-ARES emergency radio group doesn't already have?

A - Most amateur radio emergency groups are organized around the use of VHF FM mobile and battery-powered handheld radios for maximum flexibility in providing local communications. Some even have portable repeaters. What ARES adds, is the National Traffic System (NTS) resources to get your traffic out of the local area. Also, if the emergency becomes one of longer duration, you will be able to draw support from neighbouring ARES groups which have similar training and procedures.

Q - Why do we need NTS ? Can't we feed our emergency-related traffic over any amateur radio net?

A - Yes you can. But the NTS net structure ensures a high level of quality and reliability in message handling. NTS operators are very experienced and proficient as they get daily practice in the formal handling of message traffic. This includes simulated emergency traffic. Furthermore, the NTS is active across Canada and the USA. You can expect your traffic to get through to the destination across the province or across the continent. You can also expect answers back by the same route and with the same reliability. You don't have that assurance when you simply feed your traffic to any well-meaning radio amateur. Even if your immediate contact is proficient, there are plenty of opportunities for Murphy's Law to strike. With NTS you can expect high skill and dedication from the NTS operator, at each step along the way to destination and back.

Q - Who do I contact within the NTS structure to take our outgoing traffic in our next exercise?

A - Setting you up for outgoing traffic is part of the appointment process. Those procedures are established up front, before they are needed. That way, you will not have to improvise when disaster strikes. If you are already set up as an ARES EC, don't forget to advise your Section Manager of your up-coming exercises. During your exercises, generate some simulated emergency messages through your own local ARES group operators and request a reply to each message, so that the ARES and NTS systems gets "exercised" end-to-end.

Q - Will RAC ARES take over if we have a real emergency?

A - No. You will be expected to carry on your responsibilities as Emergency Coordinator. However, if you need assistance, the RAC Field Organization is there to draw on. You decide what help you need. If you have an Assistant EC, make sure that they have the names and numbers of RAC ARES people to call upon, in the event you should be unable to fulfil your duties due to injury or illness.

Q - My local municipality insists that their military-style message forms be used for their message traffic. The ARES message form is the Radiogram. What can I do?

A - Many Canadian ARES groups use the local message form for all local traffic. When they are sending a message outside the local area they use the Radiogram form. There are perhaps dozens of variations on the military-style message form. It is probable that the addressee is using a different message form variant from the sender. The radiogram is a neutral document which contains all the same information - just a different layout. However it does support the standard message sequence that is used throughout North America by the National Traffic System.

Q - I've heard that I must have Basic, Advanced and 12 WPM to become an ARES Emergency Coordinator.

A - You must have an amateur radio certificate with Basic qualification for your EC appointment. If your group confines itself to VHF that is all you will need. Of course, RAC expects that you will always operate within your certificate qualifications, so if you are using HF equipment, then you must have the additional qualifications. One of the major benefits of ARES affiliation is that the National Traffic System operators will take your traffic out of your local area, relieving you of the complication of elaborate and expensive HF equipment and antenna systems, and the obligation of having to recruit only radio amateurs with HF qualifications.

Q - I am interested in volunteering as an amateur operator with my local emergency radio group. Who should I contact?

A - Your local Emergency Coordinator is probably looking for volunteers. Check the listings on this web site for the telephone number of your local EC. Or contact your Section Manager. If there isn't a local group, and you think you have the "right stuff" to set up and manage a group, consider talking to your Section Manager about setting one up.

Q - In addition to my amateur radio certificate, I also have a Radiotelephone Restricted Certificate. Is that useful?

A - Make sure that your Emergency Coordinator knows that you have that credential. It doesn't help in amateur radio operation, but you might serve as a backup operator on non-amateur frequencies to support the other radio systems, if they are short of staff in a real emergency. Whether your services might be used depends on what equipment they are using, and if an extra operator is ever needed.

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