

SECTION 6: ARES ROLES

This section outlines ARES roles and responsibilities.

Once you complete this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the tasks performed by ARES operators and stations playing various operational roles
- Understand the duties of EMO communications officers
- Understand the role played by ARES emergency coordinators
- Understand the duties of communications supervisors
- Describe the duties of other ARES operational roles.

ARES OPERATORS AND STATIONS

ARES operators are radio operators who are familiar with ARES procedures and are included on ARES and provincial EMO callouts.

Net Control Stations

Emergency net controllers serve as net control stations during emergencies or exercises. A net control station will take control of a specific channel (typically a repeater channel), and will maintain order and ensure efficient communications between stations on that channel.

Official Emergency Stations

Stations and associated licensees may be designated as Official Emergency Stations (OES). An OES designation means that the station is fully prepared to provide enhanced capabilities during emergencies.

Telecommunications operators

Telecommunications operators are individual amateur radio operators who participate in ARES nets using either their own handheld or mobile equipment, or equipment at designated Official Emergency Stations.

Telecommunications operators handle radio traffic and message forms in order to send messages from the site that they are supporting, or to receive messages for that site. Telecommunications operators may also be attached to vehicles (for example, a city bus being used for evacuations), or an individual person (for example, *shadowing* a relief coordinator).

Relay stations

Relay stations are located away from supported sites and EOCs, but contribute by relaying traffic from one channel or medium to another. A relay station may be

designated to carry traffic between a local VHF channel and a provincial HF net. A relay station may move traffic between voice and packet channels, or arrange phone patches. In situations where communications between endpoints is hampered by poor propagation, jamming, or other problems, a station able to communicate with both endpoints may be assigned the task of relaying traffic between those endpoints.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS (DCO, PCO)

The Provincial Communications Officer (PCO) directs EMO communications support activities at the provincial level.

Note: In some jurisdictions, a PCO performs a public relations function rather than a telecommunications function.

The District Communications Officer (DCO) manages communications resources at the local level, when tasked by the PCO.

EMERGENCY COORDINATORS FOR ARES

The emergency coordinator (EC) performs a number of tasks, most of them in preparation for emergencies and exercises rather than actually during an emergency. The EC establishes working relationships with various regional agencies that might need communications support. The EC addresses the training, organization and emergency participation of interested amateurs. The EC also creates an emergency communications plan, communications networks, and site operating procedures.

Training for emergency coordinators is addressed in Volume 3 of this training manual.

Assistant emergency coordinators

Assistant emergency coordinators (AEC) perform many of the tasks that an emergency coordinator performs. The AECs assist by offloading responsibilities from the emergency coordinator.

COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISORS

Communications supervisors manage communications requirements during an exercise or emergency. Communications supervisors are often ECs or AECs, but any qualified operator can act as a supervisor. Supervisors have the following responsibilities:

- Monitoring active communications channels and ‘troubleshooting’ any problems that arise
- Managing shift changes of net controllers and operators, in accordance with schedules provided by an EC or AEC
- Responding to ad-hoc communications needs that arise

Training for communications supervisors is addressed in Volume 2 of this training manual.

STATION MANAGERS

A station manager is similar to a site manager, except that the station manager is responsible solely for the communications station at a site, and coordinates with the designated site manager (or site coordinator).

The station manager is responsible for opening a station at the beginning of an exercise or emergency, or when directed by authorities. The station manager stays onsite or visits regularly to ensure that individual operators are available and are rotated, that equipment works properly, and that logistics support (such as electrical, food, comfort and transportation) is provided as required. The station manager is also responsible for closing a station at the end of an exercise or when ordered to do so.

The station manager will normally be required by the EOC, onsite and support agency clients to provide copies of the station log and message traffic handled by the station.

The role of station manager does not have to fall on one person. The role can be handed off from person to person as required with shift changes. The station manager, in most cases, will also serve as a back-up operator or runner.

It is advisable for staff to rotate between positions in a communications centre to reduce fatigue and stress. However, the site manager should always be a qualified ARES operator.

RUNNERS

Runners are responsible for carrying messages between an ARES station and personnel elsewhere onsite (for example, carrying messages between the City Hall ARES station and the Mayor's Office in City Hall). Runners also perform other support tasks as required, ensuring that the telecommunications operators are able to give their full attention to nets and traffic handling. Runners do not have to be licensed amateurs, although telecommunications operators may take breaks by serving as runners periodically.

The runner could even be an evacuee. However, the runner must be trustworthy, and must be thoroughly briefed on the requirements for confidentiality.

At some locations where FRS/GMRS or telephone communications are used to link parts of the site, a runner may assist by passing traffic between end users and the telecommunications operators using FRS/GMRS radios or telephone message handling. For this reason, it is preferred that runners be familiar with message handling, protocols for working with end users, and the use and interpretation of message forms.

MESSAGE CLERKS

Message clerks, like runners, manage message delivery and collection. However, message clerks usually work alongside radio operators at the communications station, typically behind a desk or counter. Message clerks help clients fill in message forms, and ensure that messages are delivered only to those authorized to receive them.

REPEATER MANAGERS

Repeater managers are the owners or technical contacts for specific area repeaters that may be important to emergency communications. A repeater manager is someone who may or may not actually be involved in ARES or in any specific exercise or emergency, but can be 'on-call' to troubleshoot problems during emergencies. A repeater manager is also the point of contact for requesting permission to use a repeater during exercises.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT PRIMES

In some situations, technical support might be required (for example, to restore repeater operation during power outages, or to establish antennas or emergency power at specific locations). Technical support primes are people who volunteer to perform technical support where and when it is needed. Support primes do not have to be licensed amateurs (although in most cases they probably will be certified).