

## SECTION 11: ON-DUTY ETIQUETTE

This section provides some basic guidelines that should be followed during any ARES exercise or emergency.

Once you complete this section, you will be able to discuss the issue of on-duty etiquette.

### WHEN YOU DEPLOY

It is likely that during emergencies and even some exercises you will find yourself dealing with officials or individuals who have not had experience with ARES, and do not understand who you are or why you are onsite. The fact that ARES is a volunteer organization puts you at a disadvantage when working around professional teams during an emergency. Volunteers are often perceived as a liability, and may be seen as unprofessional, untrained and unvalidated. This perception can lead to mis-use or non-use of your services, suspicion of ARES operators who are trying to enter secured areas to reach their posts, and other counterproductive reactions on the part of officials and disaster recovery personnel.

You can take some steps as individuals to mitigate this effect (although you should also learn to expect and accept it). The following common sense do's and don'ts may help:

- Even during the most urgent callout, take five minutes and change into clothing that is appropriate to the situation (for example, business casual for an EOC, shadowing role or onsite post, or hiking boots and hunter orange for a search and rescue situation).
- Remember to check your ready pack or kit to ensure that you have what you'll need. It looks bad if you try to set up onsite and have to return home to get things you've forgotten.
- Remember to take any ID or 'ARES-wear' that has been provided to you, and to wear it when onsite.
- If you feel ill for any reason, inform the EC that you are unavailable for onsite duties. Unless there are no other operators available, it is best for anyone who is under the weather to operate from home, to minimize risks to others and to maximize their own comfort and effectiveness.
- This should be obvious, but **never** consume alcohol or any drugs that will impair your judgement or performance before reporting to duty. A good rule of thumb is that if you would not be allowed to drive, you are not ready to perform an ARES function.
- Don't speed when you drive to your duty station. Obey all traffic laws.
- If you have some sort of flashing tow light or similar gear for your vehicle, don't use it. (In many regions, use of these lights is illegal except under specific conditions.)
- Park legally, if possible.

- Be patient and professional at checkpoints, controlled entrances, or other barriers.
- Don't arrive at your duty station with a coffee in hand, unless the station has already been established and this is a routine shift change.
- Do not eat at your duty station unless there is no alternative.
- When eating at an emergency site, consider others around you. (For example, do not start eating MREs in front of evacuees who are being fed only coffee and energy bars.)
- Keep your workstation as tidy and clean as possible.
- If you are working with other operators or personnel at a station, keep your conversations discrete and be aware that serious, sometimes somber business is being conducted around you.
- Whenever served agency personnel approach you, be polite and helpful, even if the situation becomes exceptional. Do not get angry, emotional or confrontational.
- If you are getting tired, request relief. If it isn't available, try to take a break for five or ten minutes and go off-station. A short walk may help.
- If you need to sleep onsite, try not to do so at the duty station itself. Find a discrete corner, and let officials know where to find you if they need you.
- Do not operate emergency services scanners while onsite.
- Try to blend in as much as possible to the working environment in which you find yourself. Be part of the team, without intruding on the team.

## ON AIR

When you are on the air during an ARES exercise or emergency:

- Maintain a professional demeanor at all times.
- Do not make personal observations or comments, unless specifically requested to do so by a net controller or other authority. (Your role is that of a radio operator, not an appraiser, assessor, surveyor or official.)
- Keep non-essential communications to an absolute minimum.
- Do not ragchew or chatter, even if you are on a secondary or ad-hoc channel.
- Remember that during an emergency, there are likely to be media and even private citizens monitoring your communications.
- Use lowest workable power levels.
- Listen before transmitting.
- Use tactical callsigns when assigned.

- Use only formal (NATO/ITU) phonetics.
- Use frequency and location designators.
- Do not use Q-codes.

## AT AN EOC

If you are on station at an EOC:

- Maintain a professional, serious demeanor.
- Do not move away from the communications station except when taking breaks or carrying traffic.
- If you need to change batteries, or if you must take a break and do not have a replacement operator at the site, contact the net controller and temporarily sign out of the net.
- Stay out of executive and operational areas of the EOC unless invited by officials.
- Keep noise levels to a minimum by turning down volumes or using headphones, and by minimizing any conversation that might disrupt neighbouring workstations or areas of the EOC.
- Keep the communications station as tidy as possible. File all forms and papers so that work areas are clear.
- Do not take photographs or video.
- Leave when your shift ends. (If you are waiting for transport and are no longer assisting at the station, wait outside the EOC if it is safe to do so.)

## WHILE SHADOWING

If you are assigned to an official in a 'shadowing' role:

- Dress appropriately and professionally.
- Stay quiet. Do not participate in conversations or activities except those related to passing traffic to or from the shadow. (You are not the shadow's 'partner' or advisor; you are their telecommunications operator.)
- When passing extended traffic, try to be discrete so that you do not disrupt the shadow.
- Follow any instructions provided by the shadow.
- If you are carrying a cellphone, set the phone to private, vibrate or quiet mode so that its ringer is disabled.

- If possible, use a headset or earphone to prevent radio traffic from being overheard (unless the shadow has asked to hear the traffic).
- Monitor your assigned channel closely in order to maintain ‘situational awareness’.
- Request radio checks only if you are in a fringe area or have reason to believe that you may no longer have coverage.
- Do not tune around or move off your assigned channel.
- Take advantage of your shadow’s comfort breaks (rest, eating, toilet, and other breaks).
- Do not take photographs or video.
- If your shadow indicates that you are no longer needed, leave the shadow but check in with the on-duty EC or AEC before leaving the site.
- If you must leave to meet personal commitments, request a replacement by contacting the on-duty EC or AEC, and wait until the replacement takes over. Introduce the replacement to the shadow to ensure that the shadow understands that a shift change has occurred.

## WHILE DEPLOYED

If you are deployed to a shelter, support station, search site, or other emergency location:

- Dress appropriately. (For example, for a search site, bring weather gear and hiking boots.)
- Bring and wear your ARES identification vest. You need to be easy to find. (See [“Tactical and identification vests” on page 14.18.](#))
- Wear or carry your ARES Photo ID – and, if applicable, any locally issued ID – to identify you as a trained and authorized emergency communications operator.
- Keep yourself neat and tidy. You must look professional if you want to be taken seriously.
- Do not ‘geek out’. Deploy the radio equipment you need, and keep the rest in a bag or out of the way. (Someone bristling with antennas and headsets might look great at a hamfest, but won’t be taken seriously at an evacuee shelter.)
- Do not wander unnecessarily. Find a location that is near the site manager or command function, without being in the way.
- When you arrive onsite, introduce yourself to the site manager or command personnel so that they know you are available, and what your function will be. (Once you have introduced yourself, stay out of the way until you are needed.)

- Put up signage, if possible, identifying your function.

*Note: A large, bilingual RAC ARES banner is available from RAC for less than cost. (One has been supplied to every Section at no cost.)*

- If you are not fully occupied with radio communications tasks, be willing to do tasks that are not radio-related. (For example, you may be asked to ‘work the phones’, use non-ARES radios, participate in a search, provide assistance to evacuees, serve soup, or wash a floor. Unless you are busy on the radio, do it.)

## AROUND THE MEDIA

**Do not make any statements to the media or the public about any emergency.** The Public Information Officer (PIO) for the served agency is the only person authorized to make statements.

Ensure that you understand your group's operational guidelines regarding the media. Typically, you are allowed to provide the media and the public with information about amateur radio, if you have time and they ask, but be sure not to stray from that topic.

Never provide information about the use of modes, frequencies or traffic volumes.

**Never provide information about damage, injuries or fatalities** to the media or the public without explicit instructions from the primary served agency.

Media representatives can be persistent. If challenged, check with your served agency and consider using the following statement:

*ARES is the Amateur Radio Emergency Services. These are volunteer Amateur Radio communicators who are aiding local law enforcement, fire, EMS and other agencies with auxiliary or supplemental communications due to the current overload or difficulties due to high volume of traffic or other unusual conditions. We currently have (XX #) operators in places like the EOC, communications centres, Red Cross shelters and other places where additional communications are required.*