

SECTION 20: MANAGING COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS

This section provides information that is useful to communications supervisors during an ARES operation.

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

- Understand the duties of a communications supervisor
- Describe best practices for communications supervisors.

DUTIES OF A COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR

The communications supervisor performs ongoing management of ARES operations during a deployment. The communications supervisor performs tasks such as:

- selecting frequencies and defining nets
- assigning and scheduling net controllers
- deploying operators to sites and stations
- working with served agencies to identify and satisfy communications requirements
- managing communications and logistical problems as they arise.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISORS

The following best practices may make you a more effective communications supervisor:

- Start a log. Write down date, time and description of any significant activities, events, or observations. This helps you keep track of your responsibilities during your shift and may also help forensically after the operation.
- Do not wait to be called. Even if you are told not to respond, you can still prepare your group and monitor the situation. It is better to ramp up fast and then stand down rather than to wait until being called and working from a catch-up position.
- Use a formal and complete Incident Command approach, including organization, objectives, terminology and operational periods to manage your operations outside the ICS-defined incident area. (Within the incident area, ARES operators will fall under the existing Incident Command structure.)
- Send one person to the EOC or served agency to ensure that communications with the EOC or served agency is available to you. (Do this only if you have established relationships with the organization or served agency.)
- Avoid sending your personnel to useless locations. Use your expertise to make suggestions regarding where amateur communications can be of greatest use.

- During widespread disasters, consider the possibility that ARES operators will be unable to move easily due to blocked roads, traffic congestion or damaged bridges.
- Repeaters may be degraded or down. Be prepared to use both simplex and repeater frequencies, and train in the use of both.
- Once phone service is restored and reasonably reliable, consider standing down your operations as much as possible to ensure that your personnel are able to rest, in case they are needed again.
- Use your communications system to give constant and regular situation reports (sitreps). In the absence of official reports, talk only about your ARES response. Assign one person to read the latest sitreps on the air at least once an hour on operations frequencies and once every 15 minutes on check-in frequencies. Consider posting your sitreps on the Internet as well, if possible.
- Maintain communications with ARES ECs and partner organizations in adjacent areas (ARES groups and organizations with which you have mutual aid agreements) to ensure that they are ready to assist if needed. Update them periodically on your operational status.
- Use personnel who do not have amateur licenses to perform member callouts, logging of net traffic, sitreps, coordination, logistics support or other off-air tasks.

DURING ARES ACTIVATION PHASE

During the initial activation of ARES, you may be tasked by an EC or AEC to act as a Communications Supervisor.

ONGOING MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS

Locations

- Determine locations to be staffed.

Staffing

- Determine staffing requirements at each location.
- Determine appropriate shift lengths.
- Begin initial staffing work-sheet.
- State any special requirements operators may need, (mobiles, HTs, frequencies used, foul weather gear, and other equipment).
- Keep locations advised of staffing progress via appropriate tactical nets.

- Accept changes in staffing requirements and make adjustments to work-sheet and volunteer announcements.
- Ensure that there are extra operators available to cover off personnel attrition.
- When scheduling personnel to serve shifts at stations, provide a period of overlap to ensure that replacement operators are onsite before the current operators are due to go off-shift.

Using non-ARES trained volunteers

You may find that you have untrained amateurs willing to volunteer, or the situation may require that you solicit untrained or unregistered amateurs to augment your trained ARES operators.

If you have a need to solicit untrained or unregistered amateurs:

- Make frequent announcements on the net requesting volunteers for open staffing requirements.

When soliciting untrained or unregistered amateurs or accepting volunteers:

- Obtain call, first name and phone number for each volunteer.
- Consider retasking trained ARES operators to act as communications supervisors or site or station managers.

Nets

- Declare a directed net. Give and ask for major damage and injury reports unless otherwise requested. Set up a resource net if necessary.