

SECTION 21: SCHEDULING AND SELECTING NET CONTROLLERS

This section provides information about selecting net controllers, and scheduling controllers during longer operations.

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

- Describe criteria for selecting net controllers
- Schedule net controllers.

SELECTING NET CONTROLLERS

Choose net controllers based on availability, experience, and interest. When choosing a net controller from the available ARES operators, consider some of the qualities that often make for a good net controller:

- Good voice quality, with a friendly air of authority
- Sense of control and self-assuredness
- Decisiveness and the maturity to make good judgment calls
- Knowledge of band characteristics and area repeaters
- Good basic communications skills and fluent command of the language
- Physical condition that will tolerate high stress for extended periods of time
- A strong team player and organizer
- Good hearing
- Good listening
- Good ear-to-hand copying skills
- Decent (readable) penmanship
- Computer keyboard skills - touch typing
- Willingness to take and carry out direct orders
- Consistently demonstrates above-average operating techniques
- Good sense of humor

Remember the following important guidelines:

- The net controller must have good, reliable coverage of the net area (either on simplex, or through the repeater).

Note: Net control should always be performed by a station that has a strong signal. Do not transfer net control duties to a weak or marginal station. If faced with a choice of a weak station manned by an experienced controller, or a strong station manned by an inexperienced controller, choose the strong station.

- An EC or AEC should not serve as a net controller unless absolutely necessary. (The EC or AECs may be required to coordinate with client management, or perform other mission-critical duties, and should not commit to running a net.)
- The net controller should be able to communicate with liaisons at served agencies, either by telephone, radio, liaison station, courier, or Internet.
- The net control station should have alternative, back-up power and a back-up transceiver.

SCHEDULING NET CONTROLLERS

When scheduling net controllers, remember the following guidelines:

- Provide an overlap of at least 15 minutes at shift changes. This allows the new net controller to get up to speed on net activities before the handoff.
- Schedule net control shifts to run 1-2 hours. Unlike operator shifts, net control shifts often involve almost constant, frenetic activity, and quickly result in exhaustion.
- When net controllers are few, try having net controllers switch off with their backup controllers regularly (for example, once an hour).
- When net controllers are few and you are running operational, tactical and support nets, try to rotate controllers at shift changes to different nets that offer different types and levels of activity.
- Accommodate individuals' natural schedules as much as possible. If you have some controllers who are more comfortable working overnight, be sure to schedule them to work overnight and not during the day.

Backup net controllers

For every net controller, also schedule a backup net controller that can take over in case of equipment failure or other situation at the primary net control station.