Gold Country Region

Disaster Communications Response Plan

Purpose:

Potential disaster risks that can affect the Gold Country Region include wild land fire, flooding, man-made disasters along the major transportation corridors, and tsunami.[1] This plan sets forth the policies and procedures for augmenting disaster communications with amateur radio when the telecommunications infrastructure has been impacted to the extent of being severely weakened or put out of service, or is otherwise normally unavailable.

Objectives

1. Establish basic procedures for requesting assistance from Red Cross ARES partners in the Gold Country Region.
1. Define the command and reporting structure for a disaster response.
2. Establish guidelines for handling message traffic.
3. List a frequency/channel plan to assure the widest possible coverage for the disaster area.
4. Recommend the type of radio equipment that would be needed to support disaster communications.
5. Define skill sets that partner radio operators will need to support Red Cross operations.

References

Published under separate cover:

- ICS205 Region Amateur Radio Repeaters for Disaster Response 03-01-19
- ARC Disaster Message Traffic and flmsg

Requesting ARES Assistance

At the earliest possible time after a regional response to a disaster, the Disaster Program Manager in whose territory the disaster has occurred will contact the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) leadership with a request to supply properly equipped radio operators to Red Cross shelters and other Red Cross service sites as needed.

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[1] Effective January 1, 2020, Gold Country Region will gain Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, and Lake Counties into is area of responsibility. In addition to the disaster risks noted above, the coastal areas will add the risk of tsunami.

Similarly, at the earliest possible time after the Red Cross Sacramento Disaster Operations Center is activated, the communications manager will contact a ARES leadership to request operators to report to the DOC communications station.

Red Cross Disaster Management Structure

The American Red Cross has implemented the Incident Command System (ICS) model for disaster management, all within the guidelines of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As the Red Cross "Concept of Operations," this management system differs from the basic ICS primarily in position titles and the addition of a group for External Relations.

The reader is expected to already be familiar with ICS. In basic ICS, communications falls under the purview of the Logistics Chief (Assistant Director for Logistics in the Red Cross implementation). During the earliest hours/minutes of a disaster, the Disaster Program Manager in the territory of the disaster *is* Logistics as well as Operations, Planning, etc. Logistics "procures" radio personnel resources and hands them off to Operations and the Communications Manager for assignment to a Red Cross service site.

On assignment to a service site (such as a shelter), the radio operator reports to the communications manager at the DOC and works with the site manager.

> **Note:** the radio operator does not report to the ARES EC or AEC. Any reassignments or repositioning of the radio station is done under the direction of the Communications Manager.

Radio Equipment

But for a single Red Cross-owned portable radio station, the Gold Country Region will be dependent on its ARES partners to be self-contained with the appropriate equipment to manage voice and digital disaster message traffic over rf paths.

Guidelines for Handling Message Traffic

When messages must be conveyed over a ham radio path, their nature will be one of the following:

- ❑ Emergency
- ❑ Urgent
- ❑ Priority
- ❑ Routine

Consistent with traditional disaster communications, due to its urgency, emergency traffic should be handled over a voice circuit.

Urgent, Priority, and Routine traffic would be handled over either a voice or digital circuit, *dependent on the length of the message*.

Note: To mitigate the high potential for transcription errors, any traffic with a message length greater than 25 words should be sent via a digital circuit. Similarly, any traffic *less than* 25 words that could be misunderstood (e.g., those with medical terms), should be sent over a digital circuit.

Recipient Message Addressing

Messages shall be addressed to the recipient's *position* email, if known, else to the recipient's Red Cross address, if known. If unknown, inquire via ham radio voice for the recepients email address. Else, address the message to ka6arc@winlink.org. *In all cases for traffic sent using the Winlink client* (discussed below), cc ka6arc@winlink.org.

Message Back-Up Copies

The Comm Center Manager shall make and maintain copies of all radio traffic sent and received by the radio operator.

Pro-Words and Voice Communications

Plain text shall be used in all voice communications. "Q" codes (e.g., "QSL"), "10" codes, or similar procedural codes unique to any non-Red Cross radio service shall not be used. Abbreviations or acronyms shall not be used but for those used by a message originator in their authored traffic. In such cases, acronyms shall be spoken then spelled phonetically. For example: "Expect ERV (Emergency Response Vehicle) within 30 minutes." Refer to the *Plain Text Lexicon* at then end of this Response Plan.

flmsg

The Gold Country Region uses flmsg and custom Red Cross templates. flmsg and these templates are deployed throughout the region on flash drives together with a 5 minute training video. The templates are intended for the use of Red Cross personnel for authoring both general messages on a Red Cross ICS213 and Red Cross templates for specific types of non-emergent messages that must get sent to the DOC as quickly as possible.
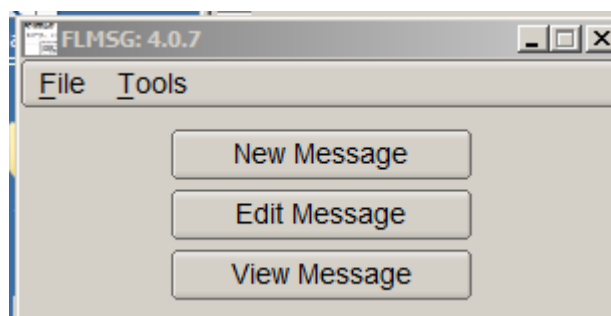
Winlink

Though the message traffic handlers should decide on the best modality and utility to move disaster traffic as a function of radio conditions, *Winlink* is the preferred traffic utility for moving disaster traffic.

Messages intended for particular individuals and sent digitally via Winlink might be addressed and sent to the recipient's email. If the recipient's email address is unknown, it would be sent to ka6arc@winlink.org with the recipient's position noted in the message body. If the latter, the message would be sent to the position title e.g., "Mass Care Lead," "Disaster Health Services Lead," etc., especially if the recipient's name is unknown.

> **Note:** In all cases of digital traffic, coordination between stations shall be via a voice channel to facilitate prompt traffic handling and movement.

Radio Operator Assistance for the Templates

Red Cross personnel might not have immediate access to a computer to compose their message traffic. Radio operators are encouraged to have flmsg and the templates pre-loaded on their computers to be ready to assist message authors to author their messages.

Flmsg and the Red Cross templates are available for download on the Sacramento Valley ARES web site and from the fldigi/flmsg SourceForge web page (https://sourceforge.net/projects/fldigi/files/flmsg/templates/) both individually and in a "zip" library. Instructions for installing and using flmsg and the Red Cross templates are included.

Plain Text Lexicon for Voice Communications

This lexicon is a subset of the lexicon in use by the CDF and is consistent with the Clear Text policy of the Incident Command System.

Word / Phrase	Use for or to …
Affirmative	Yes
Available	Self-explanatory.
Available at residence	To indicate that you are at home and available for an assignment.
Can handle	To indicate that the equipment at hand is sufficient to handle to job.
Contact _____	Relay message to person indicated.
Copy, copies	Acknowledging message received and understood.
Disregard last message.	Self-explanatory.
Emergency Traffic	Gain control of the radio frequency to report an emergency.
Emergency Traffic Only	Used by Net Control or Net Supervisor to restrict all radio transmissions to an emergency in progress or a new incident.
Enroute	Proceeding to or responding to assignment.
ETA	Estimate time of arrival. Can be either a query as "What is your ETA to _____?" or a statement as "My ETA to _____ is _____."
Fire	Use to declare a fire emergency.
Go ahead	Indicates another ARES operator may transmit. E.G., "Go ahead St. John's Shelter."
How do you copy?	Signal report request.
In-service	An ARES operator can handle traffic at his/her assigned position.
Is _____ available for a phone call?	Self-explanatory.
Let me talk to _____	Use to engage traffic with a non-Ham.
Loud and clear	Signal reporting. Good signal strength (including full quieting), good, readable audio.
Negative	No

Word / Phrase	Use for or to …
Out-of-contact	To indicate a radio operator is on assignment but out of radio contact.
Out-of-service	A radio operator at an assigned position cannot communicate due to equipment problems.
Repeat or Say Again	Say your last message again.
Report on conditions	Self-explanatory.
Resume normal traffic	Used by Net Control or Net Supervisor to re-open the net to routine traffic.
Return to _____	Used by Net Control to direct operators back to the location specified.
Stand-by	Cease further transmissions and wait for queries, instructions, and so forth. From Net Control or station with whom you were communicating.
Stop transmitting	Self explanatory.
Uncovered	An position lacking a radio operator.
Unreadable	Signal reporting: received signal is not clear. In most cases, try to add the specific trouble. E.G., "unreadable, background noise."
What is your location?	Self-explanatory.

Contact Information:

For information and or questions regarding this plan, please call or email:

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