

ARRL Northern Florida Section



Section Emergency Communication Plan

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Paul L. Eakin -KJ4G
Northern Florida Section Manager
American Radio Relay League
P.O. Box 625 Panacea, FL 32346

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Part 1 – INTRODUCTION

This Northern Florida ARES Emergency Communications Plan is written for both the local government agency Emergency Manager and the local community amateur radio operator so that they may develop relationships that will best serve the communication needs of their communities in times of emergencies, utilizing the organizational advantages of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®).

The ARRL NFL Section Emergency Communication Plan has two purposes. First to provide professional Emergency Managers with an understanding of who, what, and how amateur radio volunteers can assist in emergency communications function, according to ARRL guidelines and control.

The second is to provide a systematic method for amateur radio operators to voluntarily deliver supplemental radio communication services when requested by local, State and National Emergency Managers. Adherence to this Plan will provide amateur radio operators with a consistent, effective and scalable communications response under the guidance of the ARES® program.

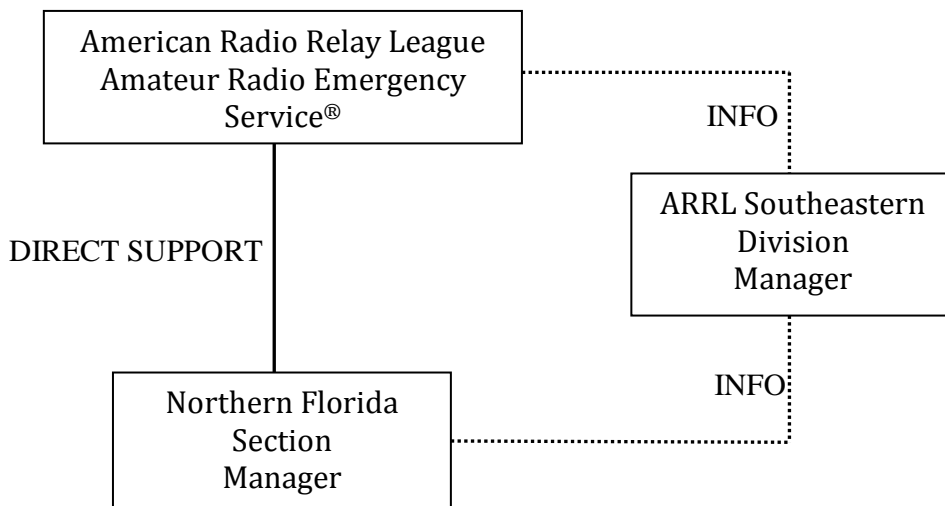
Mission and Relationships

Organization

The American Radio Relay League Inc. (ARRL) is a noncommercial association of radio amateurs organized for the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and experimentation, for the establishment of networks to provide communication in the event of disasters or other emergencies, for the advancement of the radio art and of the public welfare, for the representation of the radio amateur in supportive matters, and for the maintenance of fraternalism and a high standard of conduct. Fifteen geographical divisions of ARRL are arranged into 71 administrative sections, each headed by an elected Section Manager (SM). This plan provides direction for amateur radio operators located in the Northern Florida Section of the Southeastern Division.

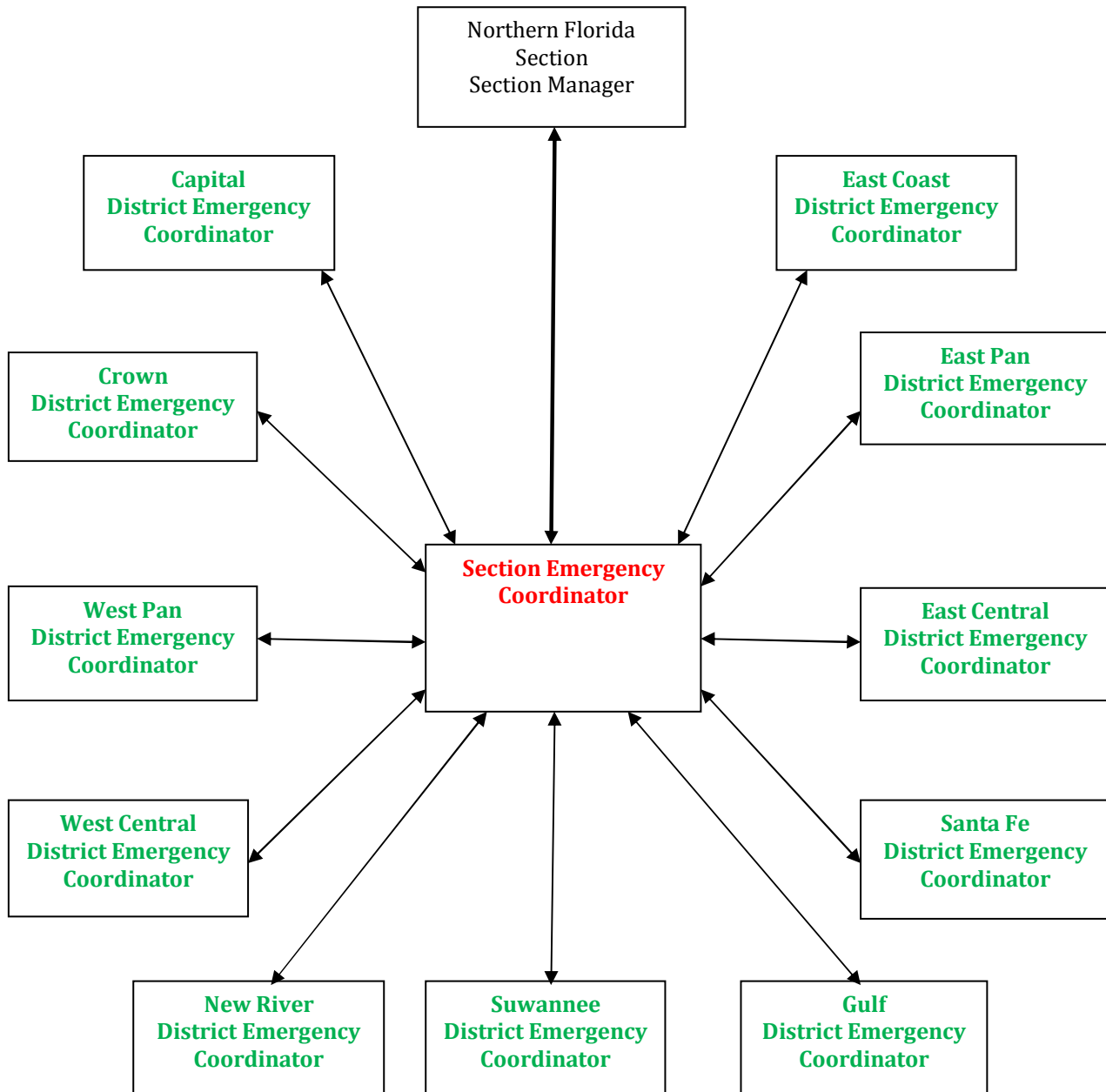
National, Division and Section Levels

The ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®) is that part of the ARRL that utilizes the organization for voluntary emergency communication service. The command structure is as follows.



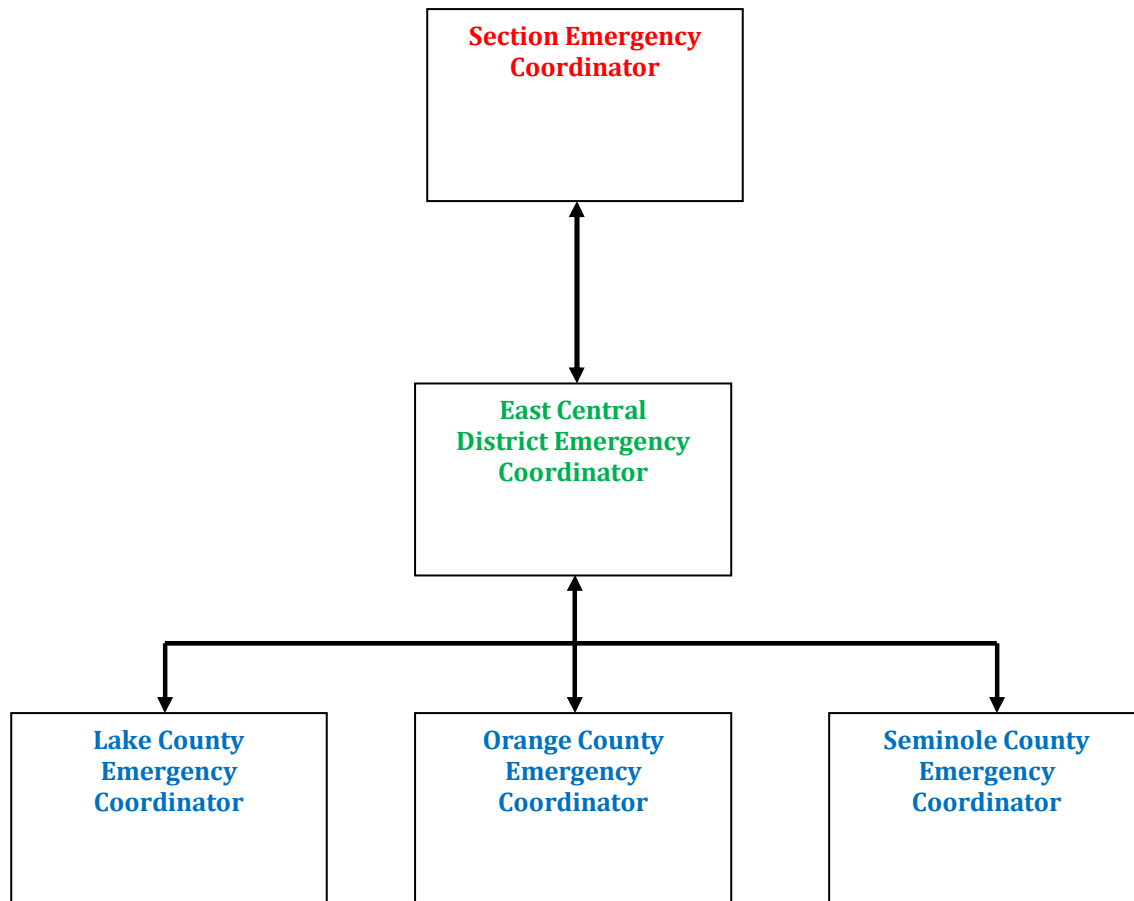
North Florida Section Emergency Coordinator(s)

The ARRL Northern Florida Section Manager utilizes an appointed staff to organize the section and control operations in emergency situations through an organization of districts, each headed by a District Emergency Coordinator (DEC) reporting to a Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC).



District and County Emergency Coordinators

Each District is composed of local counties and ARES[®] groups organized geographically in conjunction with a major city or county that relates to a local government emergency management organization. Each District is headed by a field appointed District Emergency Coordinator (DEC) who is the local contact for all local requests for volunteer emergency communication support. Each District organization is described in Appendix A to this plan. The following chart depicts the East Central District organization as an example.



Amateur Radio Emergency Services - Leadership

Section Manager (SM)

An ARRL Section is the largest administrative unit of the emergency communications organization. Florida has three sections, Northern, Southern, and West Central. The senior ARRL official is the section manager and is charged with the overall responsibility for emergency radio communication activities in the section. The SM will appoint as many assistant officials as deemed necessary to ensure responsiveness and quality of service provided. They serve at the pleasure of the SM. The following describes some of the types of appointments made.

Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC)

The SEC is appointed by the SM and is responsible to the SM for emergency communications operations in the NFL section. At any time the Florida EOC is involved with an emergency requiring amateur radio operators, the SEC or a designate will coordinate deployment using the NFLDB to provide man power and relief. The SEC will immediately assume charge if an emergency involves two (2) or more districts, two (2) or more sections, or the FEOC is involved in the emergency. When two (2) or more sections are involved, the SEC will represent the NFL Section and coordinate activities with the other Section SECs. In the event of the SEC's absence or temporary inability to perform his/her duties, the Section Manager assumes those duties and/or appoints someone to perform them during the SEC's absence or incapacity.

Section Traffic Manager (STM)

The STM, appointed by the SM, is responsible for coordinating National Traffic System (NTS) activities in the section. The STM is often helpful when setting up liaison circuits with other sections or counties for served agencies in Florida, for example, the Florida Division of Emergency Management or Red Cross.

The Northern Florida Emergency Net does not operate within NTS, but circumstances could arise in which it is desirable to exchange traffic with NTS. They could include moving welfare inquiry traffic into Northern Florida during disaster operation or routing outgoing welfare traffic through NTS, including the digital systems, for rapid delivery. In such circumstances the STM coordinates the exchange and keeps the SEC and Emergency Net Manager advised of preferred routes and methods. And he works closely with other NTS officials to establish and maintain routes for whatever inter-sectional traffic is being generated. The STM assists the DEC and ECs in setting up routes for outgoing Welfare traffic.

The STM will be responsible for overseeing the choices of candidates provided by the Capital DEC for the position of FEOC GATEway station near Tallahassee, FL. Abilities, experience, available hours of operation, training, radio equipment and ability to handle traffic in a professional manner are of utmost importance to hold this position.

District Emergency Coordinator (DEC)

The DECs are appointed by the SEC with the approval of the SM. They are responsible for the supervision of ECs in their district. He has major responsibility demanding a major commitment of time, energy and personal initiative. Northern Florida is divided into eleven districts, each comprising of two or more contiguous counties. DECs are responsible to the SEC and SM for executing the Section Plan as it applies to their district. The DEC shall collect the ECs monthly reports, file his report and forward these reports to the SEC by the 5th of the following month.

- DECs shall visit their local clubs and ARES[®] groups at least once every four months.
- DECs shall be members of the NFLDB and will have access to their own and member's information in their venue.
- DECs shall appoint ADEC's as needed for special duties in the district such as hospitals, POD, District training officer or special situations. These are field appointed ARRL positions and require approval from the SEC and SM.
- DECs shall submit their district emergency plans to the SEC no later than October 1st, 2010.
- DECs shall coordinate training programs and assist EC's in training.
- DECs shall check their email at least once a day and forward any email sent by the ARRL or NFL section staff to their membership immediately if requested.
- DECs who cannot perform their duties or will be absent from their venue, advise the SEC which ADEC will be in charge.
- DECs shall immediately advise the SEC when an emergency is larger than his venue or is going to cross venues. The DEC shall immediately call for more resources if needed or going to be needed.
- The Capital DEC will be responsible for recruiting candidates for the position of FEOC GATEway station operators in conjunction with the NFL STM overseeing the program.

Emergency Coordinator (EC)

The ECs are the chief Amateur Radio Emergency Communications officials in their respective counties and are directly responsible to their DEC. The duties of EC require a serious commitment of time and effort by the volunteer who accepts the position. The EC serves at the pleasure of the local DEC, SEC or SM. Each EC should be aware of his/her duties as spelled out on the ARRL website and publications, plus duties assigned by the chain of command. The EC shall submit a report of the previous month to his DEC to be forwarded to the SEC by the 5th of the following month.

- ECs should meet with the local served agency leadership and develop a working relationship. The EC should explain how amateur radio operators can and will assist in providing radio communications when all else fails. Radio communications encompasses all radios from amateur, CB, state, county, ARC and GMRS to get the messages delivered.

- ECs should be humble and only offer a solution to assist the served agencies, being careful not to over sell the resources he has available.
- ECs shall submit their county emergency plans to the SEC no later than October 1st, 2010.
- The EC shall immediately contact the DEC for additional manpower if the communication needs exceed his resources.
- ECs shall be required to appoint assistants to be determined by amateur radio operator's population in that county and or for special needs.
- ECs are required to check their email at least once a day and forward any email sent by the ARRL or NFL Staff to their members if requested.
- ECs shall be members of the NFLDB and will have access to their own and their member's information.
- ECs who cannot perform their duties or have to be absent from their venue, notify the DEC and advise who will be the AEC in charge.
- ECs shall attempt to have local clubs or groups of amateurs to provide a data system such as winlink2k RMS or at least a digipeater to reach an RMS in another county nearby. ECs are also encouraged to have amateur groups place into service an APRS digipeater in each county. Sedan in an option if there are other Sedan stations working nearby.
- The EC may appoint as many AECs as needed. AEC appointments need approval by the local DEC.

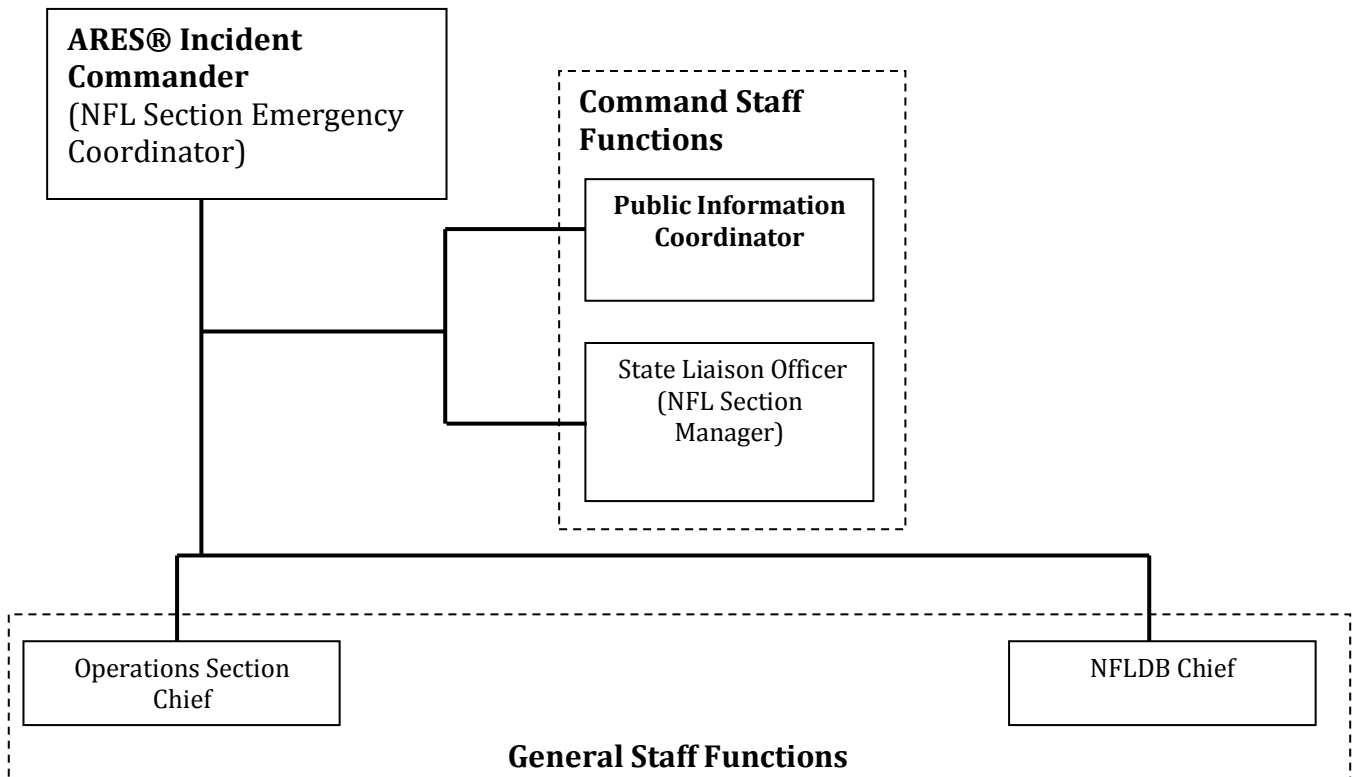
ARRL NFL Section Alignment with NIMS

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security sets the expectation that emergency responders organize according to a national standard making it possible for all participants to work together in all aspects of an incident. Personnel and organizations that have not been trained in this common NIMS framework are from a practical standpoint, not considered capable of being of assistance.

Consequently we are expected to have an Incident Command and Management Organization that governmental emergency managers and first responders in the field can easily recognize and enjoy. In emergency situations, our ARES® organization serves that purpose by having various section officers and appointees assume emergency response duties. Each local ARES® (city or county) should consider adopting an emergency organization structure that conforms to the NIMS standard also.

Incident Command and General Staff Functions

Each incident the ARRL Northern Florida Section ARES® organization responds to requires various functions in order to manage the response and collect and report information to the Emergency Managers who utilize our services. This information is critical to the safety and protection of all voluntary personnel and the funding of the incident response. The NFL Section utilizes its command structure along with General Staff and Command Staff Functions to meet this NIMS requirement. Once again, various Section officers and appointees fulfill these Command and Staff functions by adopting titles that make sense to all or the organizations operating in the National Incident Management System.



DEPLOYMENT SCENARIOS

Local (City or County) Level Response

Each local ARES® unit may answer local requests for emergency communication augmentation received from local government emergency managers or non-government organizations utilizing unit resources according to their own response plan. All responses must be reported through the section chain of command and will become under the management and control of district or section staff if and when the emergency escalates geographically to a scale that breaches local unit service boundaries. Local EC's are strongly encouraged to have their members register into the NFLDB. These confidential rosters of unit members that indicate which members have voluntarily requested to serve in emergency situations, document those member's demonstrated performance capabilities and provide an educational record so that effective response planning can be made. It is understood by everyone, that when the emergency condition arises and help is requested, we will use the NFLDB registered members first, from local, district and section availability. Within the local venue, non-registered members can be utilized.

State Level Response

The ARRL NFL Section will maintain a database (NFLDB) of amateur radio operators who have voluntarily requested to serve at the state level in times of communication emergencies. The database will constitute a formal record of each volunteer's demonstrated radio communication performance capabilities, education courses successfully completed, and stated personal deployment requirements so that assignment of individual operators to emergency deployment missions can be made. When state level requests for emergency communication augmentation are received by the Section, this roster will be the only document from which deployment selections will be made. The NFLDB is a validation process for the requesting agencies to know the qualifications of each deployed volunteer amateur radio operator.

National Level Response

The ARRL NFL Section will maintain a database (NFLDB) of amateur radio operators who have voluntarily requested to serve at the national (Interstate) level in times of communication emergencies. The database will constitute a formal record of each volunteer's demonstrated radio communication performance capabilities, educational courses successfully completed, and stated personal deployment requirements so that assignment of individual operators to emergency deployment missions can be made. When national level requests for emergency communication augmentation are received by the Section, this database will be the only document from which deployment selections will be made. The NFLDB is a validation process for the requesting agencies to know the qualifications of each deployed volunteer amateur radio operator.

Community Support Programs

Neighborhood HamWatch (NHW)

Neighborhood HamWatch is a voluntary program for amateur radio operators who want to provide a helpful service to their neighbors during times of extended power outage. They may be unable in emergency situations to serve in a mobilized capacity. NHW operates independent of ARES® but does communicate with amateur radio stations located in EOCs. These EOC stations are usually ARES® stations. Amateur radio stations located in EOCs in the NFL section should recognize NHW stations as a means of relaying vital information between emergency managers and neighborhoods in the communities they serve. As a rule, NHW stations utilize 2M simplex frequencies to avoid interfering with repeaters that may be needed by ARES® or other emergency operators.

When the power goes out for long periods of time, such as after a major storm, and everybody's batteries wear out and their generators run out of fuel, people are virtually left in the dark and without any way to receive radio or television, or talk to friends and relatives outside the affected area.

It gets lonely and you feel isolated because you can't communicate with anyone and you can't find out what Emergency Managers in local governments are planning or doing to help you. "Communication Isolation" can be worsened by downed trees and power lines which make it very difficult for emergency services to reach your neighborhood. This is a time period that often lasts several days, maybe even weeks. It is a time when Amateur Radio Operators, often called, "Hams" can help. There are three things "Hams" can do in the Neighborhood HamWatch program.

1. Neighborhood Hams can get on their radios and talk to each other on simplex or non-emergency designated repeaters across the city and county and share information about what's going on in their neighborhood. This conversation provides effective therapy to fight against the psychological depression that often accompanies communication isolation. Just talking to each other, and sharing information with their neighbors helps keep people in touch with what's going on and how the community is coping with the emergency.
2. Hams in the neighborhood can also contact local government Emergency Operations Centers that are equipped with Amateur Radio Stations and operators and describe conditions and special needs in the neighborhood to local emergency managers. This information helps officials plan and coordinate a response to current needs and organize the recovery effort with first hand information about community conditions. Emergency Managers can also relay information through Hams to neighborhoods providing vital information about the recovery effort and reassurance that action is being taken to help the citizenry.
3. Hams that are equipped with WINLINK capability can also relay simple, short messages from their neighbors to distant relatives or friends, helping people reassure others that they are OK, survived the storm, and are in the recovery stage. There are two ways they can accomplish this special service, one through an amateur radio nation-wide message relay system called the Amateur Radio National Traffic System, and another more direct and efficient way, by using their Ham Radio to link their computer to the Internet, totally independent of Internet providers who are likely to also be without power.

Part 2 - Operational Guidelines

This section contains the operational procedures for ARES® operations in the Northern Florida Section. These procedures should be the baseline for all ARES® operations in every District and County, in order to assure interoperability and effective mutual-aid for area-wide disaster preparation, assessment, response and recovery. This section of the plan is intended for the Amateur Radio Operator and contains details on the operational practices, procedures and methods for communicating within the ARES® organization of the Northern Florida Section.

Levels of Activation

No Alert is the normal situation for Ham Radio communications. No state of alert or emergency exists. When a disaster strikes or threatens any Northern Florida community, affected ECs and DECAs may declare any of four levels of alert of their organization:

Level III -Monitoring Phase notifies ARES® operators in a specified area (such as a County or District) or functional unit (such as a net) that their services may be needed on short notice in the next 24-48 hours. It is typically issued by the SEC or, occasionally by DEC, or EC. The alert may apply to the entire Section or to specific Districts or Counties. Omission of any area does not prohibit others from taking appropriate precautionary steps. The SEC usually does not issue a follow-up order raising the alert level but leaves that step to the ECs or DECAs in the affected areas.

The declaration of Level III Monitoring Phase signals DECAs to alert ECs, "deployment team" coordinators, Net Managers, and other key emergency communications officials to prepare for short-notice calls. All ARES® personnel in the alerted Districts or Counties should monitor designated net frequencies and keep closely in touch.

ARES® operators who are alerted should prepare to be en route to duty posts within two hours or less of being assigned. Preparations may include updating "ready-kits," arranging to take time off from work, fueling vehicles and power generators, charging batteries, obtaining stocks of expendable batteries and testing emergency-related portable equipment

Nets operating in Level III Monitoring Phase customarily run ad hoc (i.e., they are not directed.) Radio operators and officials should monitor the appropriate frequencies for information and for possible increases in or cancellation of the alert status.

Level II Partial Activation is descriptive of operational status. It is usually issued by DECAs or ECs and designates nets, GATEway activations; jump teams, and such, to perform specific tasks. The alert level becomes Partial Activation in a County or District when specific duty posts are staffed and become operational. A net typically "goes Partial Activated" when a net control operator opens the net.

A DEC may place the District or local nets or other operating units (such as a deployment team or County EOC ARES® staff on Partial Activated alert. Most emergencies, even severe ones, can be handled without ever going beyond Activated.

Level I is the highest possible level of alert in an emergency communications operation. It is useful for maintaining tight control over HF circuits where heavy traffic and large numbers of stations may increase channel load on nets.

When distress traffic is being handled on any emergency net or frequency, the activated level is automatically Level I Operational and remains so until all distress traffic has been cleared.

Full Scale Activation can be declared at the Section level only by the SM.

Full Scale Activation is declared by issuance of a Priority bulletin to be transmitted on all active net frequencies. It applies solely to nets and geographic areas designated in the formal order. A District EC can put the District on Full Scale by declaration, but the SEC or SM must be notified in advance or, if this is not possible, as soon as possible after taking the action.

The Full Scale Activation bulletin specifies the date and time the activation operation is to begin. It should designate the net or nets and/or the geographic area (County or Counties, District or Districts, Section, etc.) to which it will apply. Nets or areas NOT designated in the bulletin will continue at whatever level of alert prevailed before the Full Scale Activation.

Stand Down Phase authorizes DEC's and EC's to begin the stand-down phase of the activation. Stand Down is permissive only; it does not require that operations be shut down in the specified area. It simply advises the designated DEC's and/or EC's that no apparent reasons exists for continuing operation unless they have local requirements. The DEC and EC then may reduce operating hours, restrict operations or close down designated nets as the emergency passes and traffic loads subside.

Only the SEC or SM may declare a Stand Down Phase for a Section net or for a District net when more than one District is involved in the emergency operation.

The DEC can declare a Stand Down Phase in the District net if the emergency operation involves the District and no Section net is in operation.

Any portion of the NFL Section Plan can be activated in support of any incident in the State of Florida and/or whenever the FEOC is activated, and specifically when mid-state relay is necessary to support operators in other ARRL sections requiring relay to/from the FEOC.

Net Operations

In an effort to bridge the gap between the NTS standard ARRL message format and the NIMS FS-213, amateur operators should be very familiar with both forms. While they are similar in purpose, they remain different in structure.

ARES[®] operators should realize that messages they received from Emergency Management and other EOC personnel are going to be in the NIMS FS-213 format. It is critical that they understand not to modify the message, but to relay or deliver it as received.

However, messages received from other sources will probably be in the standard ARRL format. While this format is usually very familiar to ARES[®] personnel, it will most likely be unfamiliar to Emergency Management officials. The ARES[®] operator should place the ARRL-formatted message into the body section

of the NIMS FS-213 before delivering it. Thus the ARRL message remains intact, and the Emergency Management official has a document he understands.

Using these procedures will enable the uninterrupted flow of message traffic, and the messages will be in a format familiar to the users and recipients

HF Net Operations

The Northern Florida Section supports two major HF nets within the Section: The Northern Florida Phone Net and the Northern Florida ARES net. These nets both operate on the same 75 meter frequency, with an alternate on 40 meters.

During normal operation, these nets operate independently under the auspices of the Section Traffic Manager. Northern Florida ARES[®] members are encouraged to join each of these nets during normal operation for training and practice in traffic handling and HF net procedures.

When an incident is declared in the Northern Florida Section, these two nets will combine, and their activation/status falls under the direction of the Section Emergency Coordinator. The combined net name will then become the Northern Florida Emergency Net.

During emergency operation, the two independent net managers will each be responsible for assigning net leadership positions for continuous net operation. The daytime (0730 to 1930 ET) portion of the net will be the responsibility of the net manager of the Northern Florida ARES Net. The nighttime portion of the net (1930 to 0730 ET) will be the responsibility of the Northern Florida Phone Net manager. This schedule will remain in effect from the initial activation of the net until the net is given the order to stand down.

The level of activation of the Northern Florida Emergency Net can range anywhere from a “frequency guard” function to a condition where only emergency traffic is accepted/passed. Operators who have not yet checked into the net are encouraged to *listen first* to determine the status of the net before transmitting,

At such time as the Section Emergency Coordinator determines the net no longer is needed, he will give the order to secure, and the nets will return to their normal day to day operation.

VHF Net Operations

VHF nets should activate per the ARES[®] plan in the County where they operate. If there are any “stand alone” nets (not part of an ARES[®] plan), it is the net manager’s discretion whether or not the net activates.

If such nets do activate, they should have at least one station monitoring activity on the Section HF Emergency Net. This station should be available to take message traffic for the local area that is not directed to the local ARES[®] operation.

NTS Message Handling

Ham Radio messaging takes three basic forms in nearly all operations in which emergency communications support plays a part; (1) Administrative, (2) Formal Traffic, and (3) Record Traffic

Administrative communications support network and incident management purposes. Such communications may be informal between two or more Ham Radio stations or may be in the form of Formal Traffic.

Formal Traffic is formatted in a standard message format and transferred between two ham radio stations over Ham Radio frequencies or using electronic means such as e-mail or FAX.

Record Traffic is Formal Traffic in which the information is sent or received on behalf of a non-ham radio licensed “third party.” Third parties include individuals, EMAs, and served agencies. Operators must obtain the name and 10-digit telephone number of the sender and record these on the message.

A copy (hand written, printed, or retrievable computer file) must be maintained by the originating station, any relaying stations, and the final recipient station for a period of 1 year for all Record Traffic.

All Formal and Record Traffic should be handled and processed using the following criteria:

1. the least taxing of human resources for handling, relaying, and processing
2. automatic error-correcting means
3. the most reliable means for minimum delay in delivery

This clearly indicates the use of e-mail or FAX where available for all Formal and Record traffic.

Message Format

A standard format must be used for Formal and Record traffic throughout the NF Section. Any of the following is acceptable. NIMS ISC forms will be used where required by the supported EMA. (See example in Appendix E)

ARRL Message format
Plain text e-mail
NIMS ICS form(s) (Appendix E)

All traffic shall be formatted with: complete TO address with names, organization, telephone number and any other way to deliver the message, authority by which message was sent with name, phone number, position in sending/requesting organization, return routing information back to sending (radio) organization, signature of sender, call sign, phone number and name of (radio) sending organization.

All third party messages will contain the name in clear text and a telephone number of the message originator. Even if the originator has an amateur call sign, the name and phone number of the originator is still required since there will be mostly non-amateurs responding to or handling the message after it is received at the EOC.

ARRL Message format should be limited to short messages (i.e. 25 words or less in the text) if voice or non error-correcting manual means (i.e. CW or keyboard modes) between two live operators will be employed through the end-to-end routing.

Plain text e-mail should be used where possible, especially where the text is lengthy. Attachments to e-mail may be used with some size restrictions if e-mails are transferred via Ham Radio frequencies.

Message Precedence

The ARRL standard format prescribes four levels of message precedence: Routine, Welfare, Priority and EMERGENCY (equivalent to SOS or MAYDAY.) Net Controls must observe message precedence when dispatching traffic.

Routine - Nearly all of the day-to-day messages handled on Ham Radio networks are assigned the default precedence of Routine ("R"). Routine traffic is generally not handled on any North Florida Emergency Net. The NCS should be alert to messages that may be erroneously assigned "R", containing text indicating a more appropriate precedence should be used.

Welfare - Messages regarding inquiry about (incoming) or information on (outgoing) the health and welfare of citizens within or near the incident area are assigned the precedence of Welfare ("W,") falling between Routine and Priority. Each local ARES group should have a plan to handle (i.e. process) *outgoing* welfare traffic especially for family notification from shelters and other areas where telephone and internet services are disrupted.

Where an e-mail address for an out-going Welfare message is available the use of e-mail over radio is the first method of choice, providing doing so does not distract the ham radio operator from duties specifically in support of the served agency.

Welfare message may be handled on North Florida Emergency nets at the discretion of the NCS unless Priority traffic is pending, or the net is on Level I Full Scale Alert.

Incoming (inquiry) Welfare traffic is not included in the mission statement of a NFEN. Ad hoc nets often spring up specifically to handle welfare inquiries, and NCS should make a brief announcement about every hour that such nets are operating and their frequency.

Priority - During emergency operations, most of the traffic handled on emergency nets will carry Priority ("P") precedence, meaning the text information is relevant to the existing emergency and therefore should be moved toward addressees as rapidly as possible. When the backlog of "P" traffic gets too large, the precedence may be subdivided by using "SEOC Priority" for those messages originating from or addressed to the FDEM which are handled ahead of other "P" messages. GATEways holding such traffic should list it that way with the NCS, but message transmissions in progress will not be interrupted for SEOC Priority traffic.

Emergency The practice of using "BREAK" or "BREAK BREAK" to announce distress traffic is strongly discouraged; it has no universally understood meaning. Always use the international standard "MAYDAY" to announce traffic of life-or-death importance. The standard CW signal is "SOS," sent as a string of elements. EMERGENCY traffic generally would not be handled in Formal or Record Format. Such traffic would be handled in the clear by the most expedient means available. Once the particular

incident has been mitigated, the station originating the EMERGENCY traffic must draft a short incident report and forward it to the DEC.

Third Party Communications and Documentation

It is not uncommon during an incident for Emergency Management personnel to speak directly to each other via amateur radio, bypassing briefly the preferred method of written message exchanges.

There are many Emergency Management personnel who are licensed to operate an amateur radio. In those cases, they need to simply be allowed access to the operating position to conduct their information exchange, providing the frequencies used are within those allowed by their class of license.

In the event that Emergency Management personnel are not licensed, the amateur rules of operation have a provision (97.115) that allow a non-licensed person to utilize amateur radio. The same applies for a licensed Emergency Management person who desires to operate on a frequency not permitted by his class of license. Every amateur operator on duty in an incident should be familiar with this section of Part 97 and understand the mechanics of applying this rule.

In either case, such transmissions should be entered into the operator's event log with the name/call sign of the person making the third party transmission.

Mid-State Relay

The Florida EOC will accept any and all messages from any source operating on any legal amateur frequency. The Florida State Office of Emergency Management prefers for amateur radio, only one contact person, regardless of where in the State an incident might occur. For practical purposes, due to geographic location, this contact person is the Northern Florida Section Manager or his/her designate. Amateur radio operators will be deployed to the FEOC only upon the EOC's request, and these amateurs will be trained by the FEOC, STM and the Capital DEC.

Given the size of the State of Florida and the fact there are three ARRL Sections within the State, there are times when an incident might occur and not impact the Northern Florida Section. The Florida EOC will need to establish amateur communications with the Section where the incident is located, and the Northern Florida Section will need to mobilize to support such communications. MARS traffic will also be handled through the relay stations as long as there is a return route to use.

Such communications on HF may be marginal due to static, weak signals, etc. To remedy this, stations in the Central part of the State (along the I-4 corridor) will be utilized as "MID-STATE RELAY" stations. They will stand by on the chosen HF frequency to assist in communications when the Florida EOC needs direct contact with a station too weak to copy in adverse conditions.

Traffic from/to other than ARES stations such as "MARS," faith based organizations, out of state EMA's and recognized amateur radio organizations will be accepted by the NFL Section traffic nets.

The GATEway Voice Network System

The GATEway Stations are unique to the Northern Florida Section within the State of Florida. They are a corps of operators who maintain constant VHF/UHF contact with the Florida EOC, regardless of where in the State an incident or activation might be. The FEOC prefers all amateur traffic come through the

gateway system, properly formatted and identified but no gateway station should refuse or decline to relay any traffic for the EOC as long as the other conditions are met, e.g., message format, name and phone number of originator, etc. ALL TRAFFIC to/from the EOC is considered a public record and the messages have to be treated as such in compliance with the Florida Public Records act.

These operators are an elite group. They are well-versed in ARRL NTS message handling and net protocol. In addition, they are WINLINK qualified and have digital certification per the training section of the Northern Florida ARES[®] Plan. They demonstrate their ability to handle NTS messages by meeting the requirements for and becoming appointed as ARRL Official Relay Stations.

Their function during any activation is to serve as a contact point from the rest of the State to the FEOC, using whatever mode(s) mandated by the FEOC for that incident.

This group of operators should be selected and overseen by the Capital District DEC with the approval of the NFL STM. Their training should be in accordance with the Northern Florida ARES[®] Plan, and their assignment for each incident should be made by the Capital District DEC after consulting with the incident liaison officer to the FEOC.

The GATEway network is comprised of selected HF voice stations that also have access to local VHF/UHF voice networks. When alerted, typically, each District will have a GATEway Station available on the HF North Florida Emergency Net (NFEN) and on the District VHF voice network.

A GATEway cannot function without VHF links to the County EOC and other local points designated by the EC or DEC. ECs are strongly encouraged to use the County and District VHF nets and avoid using HF at all, if possible, for local communications. This reduces congestion and confusion on the HF Emergency Net and expedites all traffic. It also reduces demands on Counties with scarce personnel better used on other assignments. [NOTE: This paragraph may be the most profound statement in the NFL PLAN Sept 2, 2006. It makes the case for using E-Mail for virtually all non-Distress Traffic. E-mail requires only one operator to enter the messages; no one on the other end to confirm in real time. No manual relays (requiring two people live) are required, no matter conditions or distance. It is the most efficient use of 'scarce' personnel.]

The GATEway System is to be activated by the SM/SEC only when deemed necessary. Most operations will be conducted at the local or county level. When activated the GATEway stations serve the entire District or group of Districts, Section or group of Sections, and the GATEway Network serves the entire State or a group of States.

GATEway stations for the FEOC must be located anywhere within range of the FEOC via VHF/UHF District Net and also must serve the whole ARES[®] system with HF. Capital district FEOC gateway stations shall be versed in Echolink operation, D-Star operation and WinLink2K operations. Ample time to train for these modes will be granted to attain the skills needed. Candidates for this position shall be chosen by the Capital district DEC and also must be approved by the STM. They must be capable of 24-hour operation from a site with good antennas.

The GATEway network facilitates exchange of messages/information between areas within a District and areas outside the district. Thus, typically messages flow between County EOCs and the State EOC using this arrangement. A GATEway Station on HF near Tallahassee provides direct exchange with the SWP and SEOC on vhf.

[NOTE: With WL2K traffic will go e-mail all the way w/o the GATEway Network.]

In a few cases, a DEC may find it necessary to operate the District Net on two different repeaters because of propagation or technical repeater problems. In such cases, GATEways might link the repeaters via voice relay on either HF or VHF. All GATEway operations in each District are managed by the respective DEC through an Assistant DEC (ADEC.)

Selecting GATEway Stations

GATEway stations may be located anywhere within range of the VHF District Net but must serve the whole ARES[®] system. 24-hour operation from a site with good antennas is preferable.

DECs are responsible for the selection and recruitment of GATEway stations. GATEway stations may use voice or digital modes depending on the assignment. HF GATEway stations should provide signals that cover the entire Section and beyond, and the operators must be experienced in network procedures. GATEway stations should be capable of running as much power as required to maintain adequate communications. At least 100 watts, perhaps 500 watts or more, with an adequate antenna may be required. A source of emergency power to run the station is most desirable.

DECs will provide a current listing of qualified GATEway stations to the SEC. DECs may change the designation of GATEway stations at anytime through oral notification to the SEC and notifying the net controls of the active GATEway station. An active GATEway station will notify the net control stations of the designated replacement before leaving the net.

Operational Deployment

Vetting by Local and State Agencies

Volunteers in many areas are being more highly scrutinized these days. This ranges from general or criminal background checks through financial (credit scores, etc.) and personal character references. Many people (not just hams) who have nothing to hide look upon this as a form of invasion of privacy. In most cases however, the maximum degree of vetting for ARES[®] participation is a criminal background check. To qualify for official deployment requires you to provide your Florida Driver's License ID number when registering in the Northern Florida Section Database. Joining the database does not trigger any form of background check. Those who are concerned should realize however, that background checks can be made by the State without permission and that there may be a background check made without an individual's knowledge prior to an actual deployment they agree to perform.

Deployment for emergencies directed by the Northern Florida Section will not be authorized unless the amateur radio operator has voluntarily submitted the necessary information to be officially listed in the Northern Florida Data Base. This is the only way the section can maintain a list of those willing and able to meet the needs of a deployment mission. Once the call for help comes in, it is too late to accomplish the pre-vetting necessary to determine who can commit to a deployment. The database allows us to get ahead of the storm so to speak.

Determining the protection of volunteers who provide service to the state and its political subdivisions is a complex tour involving several Florida statutes. They can be found at the following website.

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0252/ch0252.htm

The Florida General Statute GS 252.41 (2) (c) is the enabling legislation giving emergency managers the authority to do what is necessary. GS 768.1355 is the Florida Volunteer Protection Act and identifies conditions under which protection can be afforded to individual members of nonprofit organizations. And GS 768.12 the Good Samaritan Act pertains mainly to medical personnel but has been held to protect people aiding in medical responses in some situations. Much depends upon the volunteer responding to a specific, documented, call for assistance from emergency management.

The amateur radio operator should be prepared to take full responsibility for personal injury or illness incurred in the performance of volunteer duties, and always act in a manner that is consistent with commonly accepted good practices for amateur radio operations and FCC rules and regulations, in order to justify his/her actions if they should ever need to seek a claim for compensation or request indemnity from liability.

Tools In Our EmComm Toolbox

Analog Modes

FM Voice (VHF / UHF)

FM Voice is used primarily in the VHF and UHF bands for short-distance simplex and community-wide repeater operation. This is the most widely used mode for amateurs in ARES[®] service to local communities. All Amateurs with Technical class licenses or higher are legally able to operate on any of the FM voice frequencies and modes above 50mhz.

SSB Voice (HF)

SSB Voice mode is typically used in the Medium-Wave, Short-Wave frequencies for longer-distance communications without dependence on external connectivity (the internet or repeaters). ARES[®] operations are typically in the 75m and 40m bands, depending on time-of-day and propagation conditions at the time of operation. Amateur General Class licenses are typically required on this mode and on these frequencies

Frequencies used in the North Florida Section are:

- 7254 kHz
- 3950 kHz

Digital Modes

The Northern Florida Section, in keeping with one of the goals of our hobby, highly endorses the advancement of new technologies and modes. It is strongly recommended that all DEC's and EC's in each venue work with local clubs, independent groups and individual amateurs to establish any or all of these available modes to be used for emergency communications when needed in emergent times and for the advancement of the hobby in normal times.

Digital modes are used on all frequencies to transmit data and/or voice using digital formats which have various digital properties such as FEC (Forward Error Correction) and Checksums to insure accurate and complete transmission of data. There are currently three (3) modes of digital transmission which are commonly used throughout the Northern Florida Section:

WinLink 2K

WinLink 2000 (WL2K) is a system that utilizes Packet VHF/UHF and Pactor or Winmor on HF to seamlessly provide email exchange with any email address in the world WITHOUT the need for local internet connectivity. It is encouraged to have a WinLink 2K RMS station in each county or at least a digipeater to reach a neighboring RMS station in another county.

Standard WL2K frequencies used throughout Northern Florida Section may be found on various websites.

APRS®

This mode has been around a long time and is a very inexpensive mode that provides a big bang for the cost. It has great potential for daily events such as parades, bike events and in an emergency. One of the advantages is the reduction of voice traffic that is provided visually. The Northern Florida Section highly recommends DEC's and EC's to work with local clubs, individual groups or an individual amateur to establish a digipeater or I-gate in each venue.

Automatic Position Reporting System (APRS®) is a system which utilizes Packet VHF/UHF and now D-STAR providing GPS positioning data and short texting messages to transmit location information for fixed, mobile and portable stations anywhere in the world. APRS® also allows for data transmission from manual systems (keyboards) as well as automated systems such as weather stations or other data acquisition system which may give additional informational assets to emergency managers.

While APRS® uses the internet, if the local area doesn't have an I-gate available, because of multiple digipeating capabilities, signals can be relayed far enough to reach an I-gate and post the data to the web.

Using this mode will provide an Incident Commander a visual view of the location of his volunteers and a method to text message to each of them.

D-Star

D-Star is an emerging digital transmission mode which is primarily focused on the 2-meter, 70-cm and 23-cm bands and 1296 voice and high speed data. This mode has significant new capabilities that are of interest to ARES® and the emergency management community that we serve. Specifically, the ability to transmit simultaneous voice-and-data without external interfaces is of primary interest, the ability to connect to another area or location such as an EOC or between local command post or venues. This mode has the ability to transmit standardized forms such as the ICS-213 which is a NIMS standard.

As with this hobby, new products will emerge and the mode will advance even further. Most D-Star operation is conducted on D-Star repeaters, DV-Dongles, DVAP's and "HotSpots." 145.670 Mc has become the primary simplex frequency just as 146.520 has been in the past for analog. There are now dedicated reflectors available for use by ARES® amateurs for emergency operations in disaster areas, providing area coverage. Two of the primary web URL's for information about D-Star are www.dsatrusers.org and www.dstarinfo.com.

SEDAN

A statewide digital messaging system which the state is dedicated to keeping viable.

ECHOLINK

A digital VOIP tool used by the FEOC and their callsign is KA4EOC. As a backup, there is a UHF repeater (443.499 +5, PL 131.8 E/D) in Tallahassee supporting Echolink node #3950.

Drills and Training

EMCOMM Training for First Responders

In an established policy with the Florida EOC in Tallahassee, Florida, it is required of the Northern Florida Section to maintain a list of amateurs who have completed the required courses, availability, correct home address, contact information and drivers license number. The NFLDB was created to provide a source for this and other data required for a moments request.

The county governments whom we support are required by FEMA to ensure all participants, employees and volunteers, be trained in the National Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System, in order to receive reimbursement funding for the costs of recovery. Consequently, deployable individuals at the State or Local level must take these training requirements seriously.

The on-line courses listed below are appropriate for ARES[®] members to take to obtain certificates in order to be prepared to participate in modern EMCOMMs supporting Emergency Management Authorities (EMA.) As a minimum, all ARES[®] members should be familiar with ICS 100 and ICS 700. DEC's and EC's must develop and document requirements for ARES[®] members' participation in local and District incidents. Such should be coordinated with the appropriate EMAs. The NFL ARRL Section requires that ARES[®] members in order to meet the requirements of the FEOC who are deploying outside the home ARES[®] District, NFL Section, or outside the State of Florida, must have certification for ICS 100, ICS 200, ICS 700, and ICS 800. Those deploying must also be certified through and a member of the NFLDB. ARES[®] members wishing to be deployed outside the home ARES[®] District with WinLink 2000 E-mail over Ham Radio must be certified through the WL2K Certification process found elsewhere in this plan.

1. ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Courses

Main link – <http://www.arrl.org/online-courses>

Course catalogue – <http://www.arrl.org/online-course-catalog>

- Introduction to Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (EC-001)
- Advanced Emergency Communications (Combined L2 and L3 from before.) Requires SM recommendation and approval.

2. National Incident Management System Courses

Main link – <http://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.asp>

- IS-00100 - Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS 100)
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100A.asp>
- IS-00200 - IS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents (ICS 200)
<http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is200a.asp>

- IS 00700 - National Incident Management System (NIMS) an Introduction (ICS 700)
<http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is700a.asp>
- IS-00800 - A National Response Plan (NRP,) an Introduction (IS 800)
<http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is800b.asp>

Training Hams for Emergency Communications Preparedness

To be effective in this post-9-1-1 and post-Katrina world Ham Radio EMCOMS is being brought into the 21st Century, though often kicking and screaming. Not only does this require more sophisticated technology than the 1990s but also additional training and requirements for providing security. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS,) FEMA, the American Red Cross, the ARRL, and a host of other organizations have proposed requirements for volunteer Hams.

TRAINING -Training is required in two areas: (1) Ham Radio practices, and (2) Interfacing with served agencies and other communicators during incidents.

(1) Radio networking within the home county will be developed by the local ARES® group. These will interface with other networks as outlined in the N. FL Plan. Ham Radio Operating procedures will be developed by the local ARES® group. Training will include net and message traffic handling procedures. Periodic drills at various levels of participation will be planned.

(2) At least minimum training in the basic concepts of the unified National Incident Management System (NIMS) is indicated for even the most casual participation (i.e. second operator at a city EOC, etc.) Operating from the County EOC, Served Agency sites, Shelters, incident command, etc, will likely require additional training in NIMS. Additionally more NIMS training may be required for those deploying outside the home District or the State.

Whatever NIMS courses are required at any level of participation may be taken online for free (except ICS300 and 400). Where there is a sufficient number of local hams (10 or more) arrangements can usually be made for a formal classroom presentation for these courses. ² The basic introduction to NIMS class would take less than two hours in a classroom setting.

Appendix A – ARES[®] Districts

Northern Florida ARRL Section of Districts and Counties

- Capital District – Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty & Wakulla
- Crown District – Baker, Duval, Jacksonville Beaches, Clay, Nassau, Putnam & St Johns
- East Central District- Lake, Orange & Seminole
- East Coast District – Flagler, Volusia
- Panhandle District – Calhoun, Holmes, Jackson & Washington
- Gulf Coast District-Bay, Franklin
- New River District-Baker, Bradford, Columbia & Union
- Suwannee District – Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor
- Santa Fe District-Alachua, Dixie, Gilchrist & Levy
- West Central District – Citrus, Hernando, Marion & Sumter
- West Panhandle District – Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa & Walton

Appendix B - Definitions

“AEC” – Assistant Emergency Coordinator. Appointed by local EC.

“APRS[®]” – Automatic Packet Reporting System – A digital system that transmits and displays data on maps on computer screens. Highly effective as a parallel to voice circuits.

“ARES[®]” – ARES and Amateur Radio Emergency Service are registered servicemarks of the American Radio Relay League, Incorporated, and are used by permission.

“Administrative communications” support network and incident management purposes.

“CEM” – County Emergency Manager or County Emergency Management

“Communications emergency” as defined the FCC occurs when normal communications systems are disrupted in a specified area.

“County” – Any geographical jurisdiction assigned to an EC. A county.

“County Warning Point” – A county public safety site, such as a Sheriff's dispatch office that functions 24 hours a day. It is a principal contact point for the State Warning Point.

“DEC” – District Emergency Coordinator, an ARRL field appointment in charge of activities in a cluster of counties comprising a District.

“DEM” also FDEM – The Florida Division of Emergency Management

“Deployment Team” – A group of experienced Amateur volunteers selected and trained to mobilize on very short notice to operate in an incident area for an unspecified period of time—usually three to seven days.

“Disaster” – An event causing death or serious injury to humans or a major loss of property.

“Distress traffic” – Any traffic relating to an acute, immediate threat to human safety or property; i.e., SOS, MAYDAY, or EMERGENCY traffic.

“District” – Two or more contiguous counties assigned to a DEC.

“EC” – Emergency Coordinator. An ARRL field appointee who supervises emergency planning and operations in a specified geographical area. Reports to the DEC.

“Email” – Electronic messages exchanged over the Internet or local computer network.

“Emergency” – any situation in which human life or property is threatened. The emergency ceases when relief agencies have no further need for our services. (See “Disaster”)

“Emergency Net” – A group of Amateurs using the same frequency and associated side frequencies to support emergency relief measures.

“EOC” – Emergency Operating Center; an emergency logistical and communication headquarters.

“ESF” – Emergency Support Function. Each of the 16 ESF’s is a group of people in an EOC dealing with specific kinds of problems.

“FDEM” – Florida Division of Emergency Management (See DEM).

“FEMA” – Federal Emergency Management Agency “Formal traffic” – is written using a designated message form. It is used when Amateur Radio operators relay information between third parties.

“FCAT” - Forward Command Assistance Team – A forward deployment management team that travels into an incident area where AREC members are affected by a high impact event that produces trauma.

“Formal Traffic” is formatted in a standard message format and transferred between two ham radio stations over Ham Radio frequencies or using electronic means such as e-mail or FAX.

“GATEway Stations” – Fixed stations providing liaison between two nets.

“GPS” – Global Positioning System

“HAZMAT” – Hazardous Materials “Informal communications” – Radio exchanges between two people not requiring verbatim relay to any third party. Classified as non-traffic; not handled on emergency nets.

“Informal communications” – Radio exchanges between two people not requiring verbatim relay to any third party. Classified as non-traffic, not handled on emergency nets.

Level I – Maximum level of activation in the Northern Florida AREC Plan.

Level II – Partial activation.

Level III – Monitoring Phase notice to members to prepare for deployment on very short notice.

“LGL” – Local Government Liaison is an appointment made by the State Government Liaison (SGL) for any specific task. “NFL” – Northern Florida – The Northern Florida Section of the State of Florida.

MARS – Military Affiliate Radio Station (May be Army, Navy or Air Force)

NFLDB – Northern Florida Data Base containing voluntarily submitted information identifying and attesting to the operating capabilities of amateur radio operators willing to assist in emergencies.

“NM” – Net Manager

“NOAA” – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Home agency for the National Weather Service

“NTS” – National Traffic System

“NWS” – National Weather Service

“RACES” – Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service – RACES organizations, where they exist in Florida; operate at the County level under direct control of the County Emergency Management Director.

“Record Traffic” is Formal Traffic in which the information is sent or received on behalf of a non-ham radio licensed “third party.” Third parties include individuals, EMA’s and served agencies.

“Section” – Administrative unit headed by elected Section Manager (SM). Florida has three sections, Northern, Southern, and West Central.

“SEC” – Section Emergency Coordinator – ARRL appointed field position by the SM. Official responsible for all emergency communications activities within a section.

“Secondary Net” – A communications channel associated with the primary emergency net used for traffic handling and other time-consuming net business.

“SEOC” – State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee

“Service Information” – Handling notes attached to a message form.

“Service Message” – Radiogram relating to handling of another message.

“SET” – Simulated Emergency Test. (See page 21)

“SGL” – State Government Liaison is an ARRL field appointment made by the Section Manager. The role is that of interface between amateur radio and all facets of state government.

“Side Frequency” – Secondary Net “SITREP” – Situation Report – message reporting status of emergency related activities.

“SM” – Section Manager

“Stand Down” – Notifying status allowing officials at their discretion to shut down operations when they complete their emergency related duties.

“STM” – Section Traffic Manager

“SWO” – State Watch Office – Communications center at FDEM. Operates 24 hours a day, every day.

“SWPAS” – State Warning Point Amateur Station – An amateur station located at the State Warning Point in the State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee. It is activated by the SEOC Operations Officer when needed. It is staffed by amateurs recruited by the LGL who has that role, and serves the roles given to it by the SEOC Operations Officer. Usually that will include receiving input from the Tallahassee GATEway, including SITREP’s and the SEC’s and transmitting traffic for county Emergency Managers from the SEOC. It will NOT usually include receiving or transmitting messages to individual amateurs unless they are serving County Emergency Managers or SEC’s.

“Tactical Traffic” – Spoken instructions or consultation on the air. No third party communication occurs.

“Tracking Number” or “Constellation Number” – A number issued by the State Emergency Operations Center for each restoration activity.

“Traffic” – Any exchange of information between two or more Amateur Radio stations.

“Traffic Log” – A list of incoming and outgoing traffic at an Amateur station.

Appendix C – SEC

Responsibilities and Accountabilities

- A. There will be one ARRL Field Appointed SEC and at this time, and one Field Appointed Deputy ASEC for the NFL Section. The SEC is responsible to the NFL SM, and is responsible for all emergency communications in the NFL Section. In the event the SEC cannot perform his/her duties, the Deputy ASEC assumes charge until the SEC can resume duty and will actually carry out the coordination of emergency communications response for the Section.
- B. In the event neither official can perform their duties, the NFL SM or his/her designate will assume the duties of the SEC.
- C. The SEC will be responsible for monitoring/participating in the North Florida AREC net and the North Florida Phone net.
- D. The SM, SEC and the Deputy ASEC will be the only officials to have access to the state Constellation system.
- E. The SEC shall coordinate multiple districts, sections training sessions, emergency operations with neighboring districts and sections, and keep the FEOC and the NFL SM advised.
- F. In the event of multiple emergency issues in the section or surrounding sections at the same time, the Deputy ASEC, or a designate or multiple designates will be assigned to assist the FCAT.
- G. In most cases the SM will deploy to the FEOC to assist both the FEOC staff and the NFL Section officials.
- H. The SM, SEC and Deputy SEC will have full access to the NFL DB to perform their assigning of amateur volunteers.

Appendix D – DEC/EC Monthly Report Form

Monthly DEC/EC Report

Jurisdiction: _____

Month: _____

Year _____

AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE

Total number of ARES members: _____ Change since last month: _____ (+, -, or same)

Local Net Name: _____ Total sessions _____

NTS liaison is maintained with the _____ Net

Number of drills, tests and training sessions this month: _____ Person hours _____

Number of public service events this month: _____ Person hours _____

Number of emergency operations this month: _____ Person hours _____

Total number of ARES operations this month: _____ Total Person hours _____

Comments:

Signature: _____ Title: (EC or DEC) _____ Call sign: _____

Please send to your SEC or DEC as appropriate by the 5th of the following month

FSD-212 (1-04)

