

Operations

Net Control Stations

1. Introduction

To provide a basis for carrying out the mission of the Georgia Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®), guidelines must be in place to meet the communications requirements of Served Agencies. This document defines guidelines for Section ARES® Net Control Stations (NCS) and Alternate Network Control Stations (ANCS) to use, following guidelines of the ARRL National Traffic System (NTS).

2. Responsibilities

The Georgia Section ARES® Net Manager is responsible for maintaining this document.

Each NCS and ANCS for Section ARES® nets is responsible for having reviewed and for following the guidelines defined in this document.

All stations involved in Section ARES® nets should be familiar with this document. Knowing the basics will provide an understanding of basic net operation. Every member should be prepared, if required, to serve in the capacity of NCS or ANCS if needed. Typically, the roles will be filled by those “comfortable” in the roles, but situations may arise where other operators are needed to fill NCS responsibilities.

3. Related Publications

NET 1-1 Net Operations

4. Definition of Terms

ANCS Alternate Net Control Station

ARES® Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES® and Amateur Radio Emergency Service® are registered service marks of the American Radio Relay League.)

NCS Net Control Station

NTS National Traffic System

PIO Public Information Officer

Served Agency A public service agency being supported by ARES®.

SIT REP(S) Situation Report(s)

SOG Standard Operating Guide

5. Guideline

5.1. General Guidelines

When required to support emergency situations or during routine training in net operations, all Section ARES® nets will function as directed nets. All nets are to be opened using a suitable preamble from the Appendix of this document. If one is not available, use one close to what is needed and adjust the verbiage as required.

5.2. Net Operation

5.2.1. Appointment of Other Functions

Don't forget to appoint an ANCS. Should your station become inoperable due to equipment problems, loss of power or some other event, the ANCS needs to immediately step in and assume control of the net as soon as it's determined the NCS is not available.

Also, be sure to appoint liaison stations as required by the Operations Plan under which the net is activated and/or as directed by appropriate personnel to respond to the particular situation.

5.2.2. Maintain a Log

Maintain a log of all stations checking into the net. Identify the time you assume net control, the call sign of the ANCS and any liaison stations designated.

Record the calls of each station checking in and their geographic location.

Record traffic passed showing quantity and basic location "from" and "to" information.

Be sure to put a time down on each event. Use local time to preclude confusion if later correlation of information is required.

5.2.3. Take Breaks

The Section ARES® Net Manager will immediately begin to establish a NCS rotation for what may be long duration events. NCS operators get tired. When that happens, you become less efficient and may begin to make mistakes in judgment. When you feel conditions are such that you need a break, turn over operation to the ANCS.

5.2.4. Situation Reporting

During start of nets supporting major events and during the course of an event, it may be necessary to perform roll calls of locations to determine the status of stations, to routinely test connectivity, or to collect other routine information. This type of reporting is referred to as Situation Reporting, or SIT REP for short. SIT REP is performed by conducting a roll call of all stations during which each station will respond, as called by the NCS, with the information requested.

The NCS can use a SIT REP to request the status of any facet of the operation. Examples would be a report of all operators available at the site, the status of establishing various aspects of the installation of communications equipment, the occupancy of open shelters, etc.

A sample preamble for a SIT REP sequence is provided in the Appendices.

5.2.5. Close the Net When Appropriate

As soon as the event is over, begin closing the net. This action will generally be at the direction of the Served Agency.

When releasing participants, log their release as part of the closing process.

5.2.6. Hints and Kinks

The following are taken from various emergency communications training materials, particularly from the ARRL Emergency Communications courses.

- If it is a scheduled net, start on time!
- Use a script when/where possible. If you have time, make notes to yourself to help with the information in the script – before you start the net.
- Be friendly, yet in control – speak slowly and clearly with an even tone, not a monotone. Sound confident, even if you are not. Above all, don't worry. Just give it an honest try.
- Ask SPECIFIC questions, give SPECIFIC instructions! You can make it much harder on yourself with nebulous questions and instructions.
- Have pencil/paper ready and write down ALL calls. It helps to practice with writing down calls when you are not the NCS.
- Read your owner's manual and understand how to use your microphone. The worst sounding NCS is one that cannot be heard or sounds like a train huffing and puffing in the microphone as they speak. From the ARRL Field Resources Manual: Articulate, don't slur. Speak close to your mike, but **talk across it, NOT into it.**
- When there is a double, try to get something unique from one or more of the stations. Then call for clarification from those stations ONLY.
- During check-ins, recognize participants by name whenever possible.
- Acknowledge check-ins and ALL messages.
- Be sure to frequently identify the purpose of the net (let people know what they are checking in to!) and advise all listeners of the subaudible frequency required if applicable.
- Ask for assistance if/when you need it. If this is not a weekly net, delegate responsibilities. You cannot do it all.
- If this is an emergency net, remind listeners to listen and tell them the frequencies of other applicable nets. Someone checking in to say they are listening only slows the net.
- Don't be afraid to say "OOPS" if you get flustered and mumble a bit. Pause, take a deep breath, and go back at it. If you make a mistake, remember this is not Brain Surgery. Do your best to CALMLY recover. Nothing more will ever be asked of anyone.
- DON'T THINK ON THE AIR! If you need a moment to consider what is needed next, say something like "Stand by" and unkey your mic.
- Keep transmissions as short as possible. Resist the tendency to ragchew or ramble.

- Transmit only facts! If there is need to make an educated guess or speculate, make sure it is VERY clear that it is speculation. **First choice is to not speculate at all.**
- If a report comes from an unidentified source, it should not be treated as credible and should be ignored.
- If a station does not identify, ignore the station.
- Avoid becoming the source for general information about the event. If it is an emergency, refer event status questions to the served agency Public Information Officer (PIO).
- When necessary, use standard ITU phonetics. There is no such thing as “common spelling”. Send all numbers as individual numbers, e.g., 334 is three three four, not three hundred thirty four.
- Speak in first person. It is “recognizing w4xxx, ...”, **not** “NCS would like to recognize ...”
- For voice nets, use plain English. “Q” signals are for CW.
- If the net has been quiet for more than ten minutes, check on operator status. This keeps the net running more smoothly and insures you know about equipment failures as soon as possible.

5.3. Post-Event Reporting

After completing an event, each NCS should file a report, via E-mail if possible, with the Section ARES® Net Manager. The information should include frequency(s) used, start time, a listing of the ANCS and any liaison stations, the number of reports/traffic handled, number of stations participating and end time. In addition, list any significant events and problems encountered.

If requested, provide a copy of logs maintained during the course of the event. These may be used during a post mortem conference.

6. Release Information

Stan Edwards. WA4DYD, Assistant Emergency Coordinator, is the author of this document.

The date of publication for this document is January 9, 2005 and is the initial release.

Appendices

Net Preambles

- **Weekly Training Net**
- **Emergency Net**
- **Situation Reports**

Weekly Training Net Preamble

The Georgia Section ARES statewide HF training net meets every Sunday, 2200 UTC on 3975 KHz +/- QRM. Check www.gaares.org for the latest preamble with current roll call stations.

Is this frequency in use? *(pause and listen)*

CQ, CQ, CQ. This is the Georgia Amateur Radio Emergency Service Net. This is a directed net. Please direct all communications through net control. *(pause and listen)*

The purpose of this net is to promote the ARES program in the Georgia Section, to share ideas and information, pass traffic and as a preparedness and training drill for net procedures. *(pause and listen)*

Your Net Control Station is <call sign>. My name is <your name>. I am located in <your location>. *(pause and listen)*

Is there any emergency or priority traffic? *(pause and listen)* **Any routine traffic?** *(if there is traffic listed, pass traffic at this time)*

If you would like to become a member of ARES, please give this information to Net Control when checking in. When checking in please state if you have an announcement or formal traffic for the net or VHF/UHF check-ins. *(pause and listen)*

Are there any stations with announcements? *(pause and listen)*
Acknowledge each station with announcements and have them make their announcements prior to proceeding.

We will now go into our roll call. Calling our Section Officers. Any Section Officers, check in now, please. *(pause and listen)*

Are there any other Section Officers wishing to check in? *(pause and listen)*

Calling our District Emergency Coordinators:

Northwest, Felton, AF4DN, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Northeast, Phil, K4PCF, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Metro Atlanta, Tony, W4ZT, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

Central, John, K4YK, DEC *(pause and listen)*

East Central, Henry, KN4AV, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Southwest, Bob, K4PHE, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Southeast, Jim, N4PJR, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Southeast, Mark, KF4MLT, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

Southeast, Allen, N4ZON, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

Georgia Emergency Management Agency, Bill, KG4FXG, DEC *(pause and listen)*

American Red Cross, Bob, W4RBB, DEC *(pause and listen)*

National Weather Service, Robert, KD4YDC, DEC *(pause and listen)*

National Weather Service, Chris, W1LKE, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

National Weather Service, Dave, KG4PZI, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

National Weather Service, Lynn, KN4YZ, Assistant DEC *(pause and listen)*

Salvation Army, Carl, WB9JSW, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Navy/Marine Corps MARS, Dale, W1BPP, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Air Force MARS, Clyde, WB4BDP, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Army MARS, Mike, K4HBI, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Digital Communications, John, KC4ZGQ, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief, JD, AA4P, DEC *(pause and listen)*

Are there any other DECs wishing to check in? *(pause and listen)*

Any Emergency Operations Center stations wishing to check in, call now. *(pause and listen)*

Acknowledge and thank each EOC for checking in.

All Emergency Coordinators, Assistant ECs, Official Emergency Stations, and ARES members please check in when your prefix is called:

Stations with the "Alpha" prefix please call. *(pause and listen)*

Stations with the "Kilo" prefix please call. *(pause and listen)*

Stations with the "November" prefix please call. *(pause and listen)*

Stations with the "Whiskey" prefix please call. *(pause and listen)*

All stations throughout the alphabet please call now. *(pause and listen)*

Call stations that listed announcements or traffic when checking in.

The net will now accept VHF/UHF check-ins. These check-ins are appreciated and a very important part of the ARES program during an emergency. (Call stations that listed VHF/UHF check-ins and ask for the number; if less than 3 stations, take the callsigns of the stations checking via VHF/UHF; if 4 or more, ask the station to send them to you via email).

If a Section Officer, the SEC or a DEC announced that they have a program, turn the net over to them at this time. Do not ask if anyone has a program.

Any questions or other business before we close the net? (pause and listen)

Any late check-ins? (pause and listen)

This is <call sign> your Net Control Station closing the Georgia Section ARES Net and thanking each one of you for taking time to check-in. Your participation and support is what makes ARES be of benefit to the public in times of disaster.

Best Regards from <call sign>. The frequency is returned to normal use.

Note: Please send a net report to the Net Manager AA4P, JD, at aa4p@moultriega.net or you may send a formal ARRL Radiogram. The following should be listed in the report for each net conducted: Number of formal messages passed; and number of check-ins including the 2 meter ones; and the time the net ended.

Net Control Stations should always be on frequency, be ready to go and have an alternate NCS assigned 15 minutes ahead of net time. If you accept calling the net for a month and have to miss a Sunday, you are responsible for finding an alternate net control. If there is absolutely no way to find an alternate, then contact JD (AA4P) aa4p@moultriega.net

Please send comments and updates to Webmaster: webmaster@gaares.org.net

Revised 10:18 pm Saturday January 8

Emergency Net Preamble

- **Opening Preamble:**

Is this frequency in use? *(pause and listen)*

CQ, CQ, CQ. This is the Georgia Section Amateur Radio Emergency Service Net. This is a directed net. Please direct all communications through net control. *(pause and listen)*

This net is being activated in support of <provide brief reason> for the Georgia Section Amateur Radio Emergency Service. *(pause and listen)*

Your Net Control Station is <call sign>. My name is <your name>. I am located in <your location>. *(pause and listen)*

Is there any emergency or priority traffic? *(pause and listen)*

Before we begin check-ins to identify available personnel, is there anyone on frequency who will serve as Alternate Net Control? Please call <call sign>. *(pause and listen)* (If no response, designate first check-in to act as ANCS if not mobile or in a key assignment category.)

(If applicable) **Is there anyone on frequency who can serve as liaison with <indicate required liaisons>? Please call <call sign>.** *(pause and listen)*

At this time we will take Georgia ARES member check-ins that are serving as liaison stations for local or regional nets. Check in by giving your call sign phonetically, and jurisdiction you are serving as liaison. Please call <call sign>. *(pause and listen)*

At this time we will take Georgia ARES member check-ins that are available for service. Check in by giving your call sign phonetically, and location. Please call <call sign>. *(pause and listen)*

- **Periodic Announcement:**

This is <name>, <call sign phonetically>, Net Control Station. This Georgia Section ARES net has been activated in support of <>. Please review applicable Operation Plans and Standard Operating Guidelines for operational information.

If appropriate: **At this time we will take Georgia ARES member check-ins that are available for service. Check in by giving your call sign phonetically, and location. Please call <call sign>.** *(pause and listen)*

- **Net Closing:**

I'd like to thank everyone who participated in this emergency net. This concludes this emergency activation of the Georgia Section ARES net in support of Georgia Emergency Management. This is <call sign> closing the net at <time> hours. You may secure your stations. The frequency is returned to normal operation.

Situation Report Preamble

CQ, CQ, CQ. This is <call sign>, Net Control. This is a SIT REP roll call:

[Call all locations, one at a time. Record all locations and their responses (or lack thereof). Specific information may be requested at the time stations report, such as call signs of all operators present, etc.]

(If scheduled reporting.) **The next Sit Rep will be at <time of next SIT REP roll call - (on the hour and half-hour or as appropriate)>.**

(if appropriate) **Returning the net to background operation. This is <call sign>, Net Control Station.**

Note:

Situation Reports (Sit Reps) are a means of collecting routine information needed during the event as well as verifying all stations are functioning properly.