

Section 5 – Setting Up and Operating an Emergency Station (draft)

I. INTRODUCTION

This Section provides guidelines for setting up an emergency Amateur Radio station. While there may be different configurations (for example, fixed, portable or mobile), there are several topics addressed below that apply to all.

II. GENERAL TOPICS

A. SAFETY – In all cases, the set-up/installation and the operation of emergency Amateur Radio stations must follow reasonable safety considerations.

1. Physical safety considerations not only ensure a safe working environment; they usually result in a professional image being presented to the agency we are serving. Common sense should prevail.

- Indoor stations should be set up in a room or area that will be out of the way of foot traffic and not be an obstacle to other ongoing functions.
- The layout of the equipment should be arranged to present a neat, uncluttered appearance. This always adds to the professional image that we want to present.
- There must be no tripping hazards. If cords and cables must be on the floor, appropriate safety cones or tape must be used.
- Mobile stations should be parked with consideration for safety such as overhead power lines, inclines, slippery surfaces, etc.
- The physical comfort of the operator(s) is an important safety consideration, especially if the emergency or disaster results in a long mission. Even if the initial response results in a “not so comfortable” situation, the goal should be to provide comfortable chairs, adequate lighting, adequate staffing to allow for breaks, etc. Staff should bring their own 72-hour emergency kits.

2. Electrical safety must always be considered, especially under adverse weather conditions.

- All electrical cables must be in good condition and placed so as not to present a tripping hazard.
- Extension cords and battery cables should be inspected periodically to insure they are safe to use.
- If storage batteries are used as a source of emergency power, all battery cables should be protected with fuses of the proper size at the battery end. Standard power connectors should be used for connecting all equipment to the power source.
- Storage batteries should be the sealed type, if possible. If unsealed batteries have to be used, the necessary supplies need to be on hand to deal with an electrolyte spill. This would include Sodium Bicarbonate, rubber gloves, goggles, paper towels and a supply of water to dilute the spill.
- Insure that all power supplies and radio equipment have adequate ventilation.
- All AC powered equipment should be plugged into a “GFCI” (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) outlet if at all possible.
-

3. **Radiation safety** must also be considered when portable antennas are placed in an occupied area. Even though most of the radios being used will be operated under the 50 watt power limit, VHF and UHF antennas should be placed so that they are at least 10 feet away from occupied areas (be sure to check what is on the other side of the wall.) Antennas for HF radios should always be placed outside.

B. IDENTIFICATION – ARES®/RACES staff must wear official ID while setting up and operating an emergency station.

- State photo ID card issued by the County Department of Emergency Services
- ARES®/RACES photo ID card issued by the local ARES®/RACES Emergency Coordinator
- ARES®/RACES cap and vest – The cap may be worn optionally, but the vest should be worn at all times while on duty.
- Special ID and registration may be required by the agency being served.

C. PERSONAL APPEARANCE – Although personal appearance and hygiene may not always be top priority during a disaster with extreme conditions, every effort should be made to do the best to make oneself as presentable as possible while on duty. Your personal 72-hour emergency kit should contain items to help in this regard.

D. AGENCY PROTOCOL – Most agencies that ARES®/RACES serve have operating protocols in place for emergencies/disasters and related exercises. Minimum training with the agency may also be required.

- American Red Cross – May issue separate Red Cross ID. Will require “sign-in” and “sign-out” at facilities. Will require registration as a Red Cross volunteer for all duties. Requires introductory training for Damage Assessment duties. May require introductory training in shelter operations for duty at shelters.
- Department of Emergency Services/EOC – Access to EOCs is usually controlled and requires State Emergency Worker photo ID and “sign-in” and “sign-out” at the entrance. Staff acting as supervisors for “radio operator teams” may require special ID and prior training.

III. FIXED STATIONS

A. Radio Equipment

B. Antennas

C. Power Supplies

IV. PORTABLE STATIONS

A. Radio Equipment

B. Antennas

C. Power Supplies

V. MOBILE STATIONS

A. Radio Equipment

B. Antennas

C. Power Supplies

VI.

