

Joining an ARES group

By KI5UAJ

My name is Rudy and my training topic for this evening is about joining an ARES group...**WHY?** And what to expect.

My training topic, as redundant to members already here, I hope will serve a purpose by reaching those licensed visitors that may monitor this NET but not do a "check in" with us or aren't yet feeling qualified or are unsure to be a member. Also for those unlicensed at this time but may just be monitoring the frequency. By checking into the NET as a visitor, you are letting us know that we are being heard by persons outside of our training group, we encourage you to "check in" with us. For those of you monitoring but not yet licensed, I encourage you to get that Technicians license and proceed on with training and being involved.

My goal is to explain how you can also become an asset to Lee Counties Amateur Radio Emergency Services or your own counties organization.

Here is my quick story..In February 2022, I started thinking about learning ham radio...an old friend, WB5WTF would become my Elmer. Nine months later, I am a member of this ARES group and hold my Extra Amateur license, a result of mentorship and opportunities provided to me from this group. I didn't even know what ARES was or even RACES was when I began studying.

So, what is this all about?

ARES, or *Amateur Radio Emergency Service*, is a service organization program of the ARRL Amateur Radio Relay League and consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Any licensed amateur can apply for ARES membership, and neither ARRL affiliation nor possession of special equipment is required.

ARES members are trained to assist with emergency communications on behalf of local government (such as the County Sheriff), public service (such as the Red Cross and hospitals), and other relief agencies., when requested. They can serve according to their training level, as indicated by their certifications, which are bestowed by the ARES leadership upon completion of specific training requirements.

ARES membership

ARES typically recruits their members from within a geographical boundary, many of them within a specific county. Any licensed

amateur is eligible for ARES participation and can apply for membership with the local ARES leadership. To apply in Lee County, visit Lee County Amateur Radio Emergency Services at Leecares.org and review the ARES Membership requirements and download the application, and submit the completed form to the local ARES leadership as listed on the page. In my case, I reside in Bastrop County, but there currently is not an active ARES group. I am a member of Leecares.

ARES nets

In Lee County, ARES teams hold a monthly meeting as well as a weekly net. These regular on-air check-ins, as we are doing now, not only inform members of news and upcoming events, but also provide training by presenting a relevant topic of discussion and encouraging members to run the net themselves. If it wasn't for the support, encouragement, and the opportunities to participate in different positions here, I wouldn't be as far along as I am now. The Lee County ARES team holds nets each Monday at 7 pm on this frequency..you will hear this again. Refer to Leecares.org for other frequencies. This NET lets us communicate regularly on a formal and informal basis. Honestly, I look forward to Monday evenings and talking with people that I am friends with here. It's kind of cool to recognize a voice from a county over...and to know their call signs even...all from a small station I call my own...my wife calls it her living room, though.

ARES training

Most ARES teams provide weekly training for their members, by holding nets, gatherings, and simulated emergency exercises. Training topics are often discussed on the regular nets. Communication and equipment handling proficiency are promoted through certification levels, which can be achieved through increasing stages of training. Members are informed of special or unique training opportunities by listening to the nets or attending meetings or through messaging systems. This group isn't a club, it provides services when they are needed, even leading up to an event. We do, however, participate in various public events and display equipment and explain the services. We also participate in state level simulated emergency trainings to evaluate our groups preparedness.

ARES resources

One way to learn of important training opportunities and skillset upgrades is by attending the monthly meeting. In Lee County, these are held on the third Sunday of the month at the Giddings Chamber of Commerce at 183 E. Hempstead St. in Giddings at 1pm. This information will be repeated during this NET.

ARES activation

An ARES team can become *activated* by order of the Public Safety or other emergency personnel in charge, through the ARES leadership. Once activated, ARES members are notified of their assignments and duties, but participation is voluntary. Those who are able and willing to participate in an activation might be asked to provide specific items, such as radio equipment, supporting resources or even themselves as operators, which is generally the case. The ARES leadership then asks the volunteers to show up at a particular command post or Emergency Operations Center for further instructions. You may even provide important weather conditions from your current location as a Skywarn Storm Spotter.

Your assignment

Once you reach a relatively proficient point in your ARES training and certification, you can be assigned an appropriate post, which is typically an EOC, or *Emergency Operations Center*, located in a hospital, city building, or county facility. When disaster strikes, and ARES is activated, you might be asked to attend to your voluntary assignment *if you and your family are safe, and it is safe in your judgment for you to travel there and serve.*

To wrap up training, I am new to all of this and have a lot to learn. I do not have expensive equipment but am able participate as a member of a team that has very important duties during an emergency. All you need is to be licensed as a technician to join the group. Once a member of the ARES group, you have opportunities to learn and to teach. You have opportunities to participate in weekly NETS, possibly as a backup NET control, a trainer or even as NET control.

If you are licensed and want to become a member, please look us up! All you need more is either a UHF or VHF radio or walkie talkie that can contact the repeater. Please check in with us this evening and let us know your listening or if you're still thinking about taking that exam, do it and come join us! It is very important and rewarding.

This is Rudy, KI5UAJ, your training station returning back to NET control..