

## **ARES and RACES**

By KD5BJ

(TDEM RACES, [ecfr.gov](http://ecfr.gov), [USRACES.org](http://USRACES.org))

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) consist of licensed amateur radio operators who are trained to provide radio communications services to civil and government agencies in times of emergency. Their goal is to help protect life and property during an emergency.

Typically ARES and RACES members are one and the same, the difference is in who activates the group and what jurisdiction they have.

### **ARES v RACES purposes**

According to the FCC, ARES is to provide voluntary noncommercial emergency communications to the public. Amateur radio operators are often needed to assist in communications during an emergency.

RACES is a governmental program that is authorized by Part 97 of the FCC rules. Its main purpose is the continuation of government. It is endorsed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Any local, county or state government may organize a RACES group. RACES is activated when the County Judge and the County Office of Emergency Management declares an emergency.

### **ARES v RACES Activation**

ARES is activated by an ARRL official such as the local ARRL Emergency Coordinator (EC) upon request from the local office emergency management before, during and after an emergency by a served agency, here in Lee County by the County Judge or the office of Emergency Management or the Sheriff. Generally, ARES handles all emergency messages, including those between government emergency management officials. ARES never self-deploys, but can activate on its own during severe weather by starting SKYWARN<sup>®</sup> net.

RACES, on the other hand, is activated by a local civil defense official; almost never starts before an emergency and is active only during the emergency and during the immediate aftermath if government emergency management offices need communications support. RACES is normally shut down shortly after the emergency has cleared.

No station may transmit in RACES unless it is an FCC-licensed primary, club, or military recreation station and it is certified by a civil defense organization as registered with that organization

### **What Do Amateur Radio Operators Do in Emergencies?**

Depending on the nature of the emergency, hams volunteer perform a number of functions:

- They "shadow" government and agency officials. Shadows ride along in officials' vehicles, follow them on foot and keep them in touch, typically via VHF/UHF repeater systems.

- They set up and operate base stations at shelters, command posts, emergency operations centers, agency headquarters, hospitals, and the like, providing communications among the various agencies and their officials out in the field (who are being shadowed by a ham).
- They operate in local, regional, and national radio message systems (known as the National Traffic System) which move information in the form of "radiograms" into and out of disaster areas.
- They use voice, data (Winlink, which is email via radio, and other digital methods) and image communications to deliver information about victims, supplies, etc. accurately by radio;
- They use Amateur TV to provide live video imagery to aid in damage assessment and recovery.

RACES members, however, may transmit only messages related to: 1) Impending danger to the public or affecting national defense during emergencies; 2) The immediate safety of individuals, the immediate protection of property, maintenance of law and order, alleviation of human suffering and need, and combating armed attack and sabotage; 3) The dissemination of information to the public from a local civil defense organization or other government or relief organization and; 4) Communications during RACES drills

### **ARES Drills**

ARES isn't bound by the specific time constraints, yet volunteers still must obtain emergency preparedness training.

### **RACES drills**

Depending on the jurisdiction, generally RACES training are limited to one hour per week. With proper authorization, such drills and tests may be conducted for a period not to exceed 72 hours twice a year. The limitation were introduced in 1976 to protect amateur radio operators following some abuses.

ARRL and FEMA both recommend dual membership in ARES and RACES.

### **Application to Lee County ARES and RACES**

For ARES in Lee County, Amateur Radio operators must apply to the Emergency Coordinator, and must undergo criminal background checking with the Sheriff's department. Prospective Lee County RACES members must apply to the County Liaison Officer (CLO) and must re-apply every two years. Criminal back ground checking is mandatory upon application and renewal, and both groups have criminal history disqualifiers.

The Lee County Emergency Coordinator and the Lee County RACES CLO are the same person, yours -truly KD5BJ. Please go to [Leecares.org](http://leecares.org) for more information. You can contact me at [ec@leecares.org](mailto:ec@leecares.org).

You might ask, what does this leave AUXCOMM about which we talked in a previous training?

AUXCOMM is not an organization, but a training standard and consists also in a training by itself.

Most AUXCOMM amateurs are also a part of a local ARES and/or RACES organization who have chosen to obtain additional many hours of training and certification in AUXCOMM, Incident Command System (ICS,) National Response Framework (NRF), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to be able to support the their local and State Operations Center (SOC) or to be deployed as a part of a Communications Unit for an official event. AUXCOMM is embedded on a state-by-state basis into its requirements for establishing professional -like public safety emergency responders. In a few states AUXCOMM training is mandatory, but not in Texas.

This is the end of tonight's training, this is KD5BJ back to net