

Activation, Deployment, and Lee Co. ARES SOP, by KD5BJ

Inspired by Tyler, Collins, Harris counties ARES and ARRL EmComm 001

I recently finished the draft of our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Our SOP are to be read, understood, and integrated with our Emergency Communications Plan. They are our manual on how to respond to an activation by authorities such as our County Judge and office of Emergency Management, unless they delegate. The County Judge and EM are our boss/supervisor and none other. Even if we are housed close to dispatch at the Sheriff's Office, we are activated and respond only to the County Judge or the OEM, which represents the County Judge.

Any member of Lee County ARES who becomes aware that a communication emergency exists, should contact the Lee Co. ARES EC Marida Borrromeo KD5BJ or the designated Acting EC by phone if possible. Then, or otherwise, monitor the NE5DX repeater 147.22, PL tone 114.8, + offset. The NE5DX 147.22 repeater is the primary repeater that will host an assignment net, unless otherwise directed by the E.C.

Once you learn your assignment, you gather the equipment you need and personal go kits to go to the location you are needed at. It can be the EmComm trailer, the EOC, or a school building, a church, or any other designated location. When in route, periodically report your progress, particularly if travel is dangerous. If you leave the vehicle, please have your HT, which needs to be on, with you so, if not found by NC, you will not be declared missing and become part of the problem instead of the solution.

In some cases, you may be asked to proceed to a "staging" area (yes, in limbo!) to wait for an assignment. This could take some time, especially if the situation is very convoluted. Often, the development of the response to the emergency is unclear and it will take some time to develop a uniform response plan for an incident. You should expect the situation to be fluid as each incident is unique and to respond accordingly. Be prepared to wait patiently for a determination to be made and an assignment to be given.

In other cases, such as the immediate aftermath of a tornado or earthquake, you may be forced to make arrangements as you go. Travel may be difficult or impossible, so you may need to do what you can, where you can. NETs will be established using whatever means available.

When you accept a position as an emergency communications volunteer, you do so knowing that you will often need to follow the directions of another person. Cooperation and good teamwork are key elements that result in an efficient and effective emergency communications operation.

As the situation arises, you may have to step into a role of a leader to keep the operation moving forward. These are key principles behind the success of the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is a structured and scalable means of absorbing and organizing people from diverse agencies into a cohesive team of responders. [Expect to work with others. Expect that there are

times you are the follower. Expect that other times, you may be the leader, and then follower again]

Arriving at the Site

If you are assigned to a facility operated by a served agency, introduce yourself to the person in charge as an “emergency communicator” assigned to serve that location. They will be busy, so get right to the point:

1. Identify yourself and explain that you have been assigned to set up a communication station for that location, and by whom.
2. If you are the first operator to arrive, explain that you would like to setup equipment to go on the air and ask where to setup, and, if possible or necessary, suggest a location where to setup (a place suitable for antennas and/or generators, close to power sources or phone lines, a place close to, but isolated from, the Incident Command Post)
3. Ask about possible hazards – be your own safety officer.

If no shelter is available, be ready to operate from your own tent or vehicle. Choose a location that shelters you from rain, wind, hazards and it is conveniently close to the Command post, but not in their way.

Being a Good Guest

In many cases, you will be occupying a space that is normally used by someone else for another purpose. Respect and protect their belongings and equipment in every possible way. For instance, if you are in a school and will be using a teacher’s desk, when you need or must, find a way to remove all the items from its surface to a safe place for the duration of operations. A cardboard box, sealed and placed under the desk usually works well.

Do not use their office supplies or equipment, or enter desk drawers or other storage areas without specific permission from a representative of the building’s owners. Some served agencies will seal all filing cabinets, drawers, and doors to certain rooms with tamper-evident tape upon arrival to protect the host’s property and records.

When setting up, watch-out not to accidentally damage anything. Have painter’s tape to tape things on the wall, not duck-tape, for example. If you damage anything, write so in your ICS 214 activity log, let your supervisor and ultimately, E.C. know, and leave a note with contact information of your supervisor or E.C..

This is the end of training, KD5BJ back to net.