

## **Continuity of Government, Continuity of ARES** by KD5BJ

Continuity of government (COG) is the principle of establishing defined procedures that allow a government to continue its essential operations in case of a catastrophic event such as nuclear war.

Continuity of government was developed by the British government before and during World War II to counter threats, such as that of the Luftwaffe bombing during the Battle of Britain. The need for continuity of government plans gained new urgency with nuclear proliferation.

During and after the Cold War countries developed such plans to avoid (or minimize) confusion and disorder due to a power vacuum in the aftermath of a nuclear attack.

In the US, COG is no longer limited to nuclear emergencies; the Continuity of Operations Plan was activated following the September 11 attacks.

Every day, individuals, organizations, communities and governments provide critical services and perform essential functions upon which citizens depend. Continuity ensures that the whole community has a plan for sustaining these services and functions when routine operations are disrupted. Implementation of continuity principles ensures that organizations, communities, and governments can support individuals during a crisis.

The whole community is made of Individuals and families, communities, NGOs, private sector and critical infrastructure sector, local Government, state, tribes, and federal government.

Our nation's resilience is based on continuity of operations, continuity of government, and enduring Constitutional government programs which allows resilient performance of the National Essential Functions.

These National Essential Functions, or NEF, are in place to preserve our constitutional government, provide visible leadership, defend the Country, maintain foreign relations, protect the homeland, provide emergency response and recovery, maintain a stable economy, and provide critical government services.

The NEFs are the foundation of all continuity programs and capabilities and are the primary focus of the Federal government before, during, and after a catastrophic emergency. The Federal government maintains these functions and services with the support of Whole Community partners.

Continuity of operations ensures an individual organization can continue to perform its essential functions, provide essential services, and deliver core capabilities during a disruption to routine operations.

Continuity of government is a coordinated effort within each of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches to ensure governance and to preserve essential functions and the statutory and constitutional authority of all levels of government across the United States.

Enduring Constitutional government is the result of a cooperative effort among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Continuity of operations happen in all events (fire, flood, hurricane, etc.) while continuity of Government happen in major or catastrophic disasters that could impact the entire nation, state, or jurisdiction, overwhelming the government. RACES belongs to the continuity of Government.

Jurisdictions are encouraged to develop Emergency Action Steps., which are actions that facilitate the ability of government personnel to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies.

These emergency steps should identify emergency assignments, responsibilities, and emergency duty locations. They may also detail procedures for alerting, notifying, locating, and recalling key members of the government in all emergency operation activities.

How does this apply to ARES?

The ARES EC and members should ensure that procedures exist that list and specify the actions that those in leadership positions must be prepared to take in response to emergency conditions. These actions should be coordinated between served agencies and ARES, and also between members and maybe have procedures also involving other amateur radio operators.

ARES members should have available in an emergency action checklist that details their emergency authorities, responsibilities, duties, and duty location, the specific circumstances, and/or sequences of events that require actions or implementation during an emergency. These need to be discussed and agreed upon with the County Judge or his representative, the County Emergency Coordinator.

Some actions that ARES members may want to consider developing Emergency Actions Steps for include:

An emergency notification list that describes how, when, and by whom primary/alternate decision makers will be notified/alerted during emergency conditions;

How to contact or be contacted by a served agency should the regular means of communications be disrupted.

Scripted announcements and periodic (e.g., semiannual) review and update of notifications/alerts list.

Procedures during a state of emergency, that need to be discussed with the EMC:

Receive requests of activation or deployment and information about curfews;  
Make sure that each member has resources needed, from groceries and water, medicine, to equipment all in place, as most probably the government will issue anti-hording regulations, limiting purchasing of what is needed.

Make sure that expectations are clear between ARES and local government. That operators are not expected to be deployed in dangerous circumstances unless, maybe, they volunteer in absolutely necessary situations and are provided security. Having ARES operators becoming part of the problem instead of the solutions helps no one.

This information comes from FEMA's Guide to Continuity of Government. We have addressed the issues stated here in our draft of the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) that was under review by the previous EMC. Maybe it is time we revise it at our next meeting and focus also on the Continuity of ARES should any of us not be available, or should be difficult communicating with the County. And then, ask again our new EMC to help us finalize it with County input.

This is KD5BJ back to net.