

Panola County Amateur Radio Emergency Service

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



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District 10, North Texas Section

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Panola County Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (Panola County ARES®)¹ is a field organization of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and shall consist of FCC licensed amateur radio operators who are trained emergency communicators, and who have voluntarily registered their time, skill, and equipment for public service communications duty.

1.2 Panola County ARES shall provide communication services to the served agencies which are primarily located within Panola County, Texas, upon request. Amateur radio operators residing within or near Panola County are eligible for participation. Under Federal regulations, amateur radio public service communications are furnished without compensation of any kind.

1.3 The Panola County ARES Emergency Plan functions under the direction of the Panola County ARES Emergency Coordinator (EC), District Emergency Coordinator (DEC), and the North Texas Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC). The EC is appointed by the North Texas Section Manager and depends upon the support of amateur radio clubs within the North Texas Section.

1.4 The EC may appoint Assistant Emergency Coordinators (AECs) as needed for ARES to function efficiently.

1.5 Upon activation, the EC or AEC calling for activation will become the ARES Officer In Charge (OIC), or may designate an OIC. The OIC will be the final authority within Panola County ARES for that event.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of this plan is to provide a written guide containing the minimum information that would be needed in an emergency. Each incident is different and flexibility to provide an adequate response to each is a necessity.

2.2 The primary responsibility of the Panola County ARES is to furnish communications in the event of a natural or man made emergency when regular communications fail, become inadequate, or are overloaded.

2.3 All drills, training, and instruction shall be carried out to ensure readiness to respond quickly in providing effective amateur emergency communications whenever an occasion may arise.

2.4 The following agencies, hereby known as Served Agencies, will be served during a communications emergency. Other city, county, or state agencies will be served as requested by the Panola County Office of Emergency Management.

2.4.a Cities of Beckville, Carthage, DeBerry, Gary, Panola, and Tatum.

2.4.b Panola County Office of Emergency Management

2.4.c American Red Cross

2.4.d East Texas Medical Center at Carthage

2.4.e Panola County Sheriff's Department

2.4.f Salvation Army (if established)

2.4.g Texas Division of Emergency Management

2.4.h Federal Emergency Management Agency

2.4.i North South Texas DEC and/or SEC when requested by surrounding counties

2.5 Panola County ARES may provide communications at public events conducted by non-profit organizations in non emergency situations.

2.6 Panola County ARES will support the Panola County Skywarn program when weather conditions warrant. A request from a served agency is not required for Skywarn support.

3. ACTIVATING THE PLAN

3.1 Any member of the Panola County ARES who for any reason suspects a communications emergency exists should contact the EC or AEC, then monitor the primary net frequency of 147.180 (PL 123.0) for activity. Backup frequencies are: 145.390 (PL 123.0), 444.800 (PL 151.4) and 146.500 simplex.

3.2 Panola County ARES members are prohibited from going to the site of any emergency situation unless authorized by the Net Control Station (NCS). The NCS will only authorize such requests if the appropriate served agency requests ARES support. The request, requester's name, title, served agency, and time should be documented in the net log.

3.2 If local telephone service is available, the EC and/or Assistant ECs should be notified by telephone. Other methods may be used if needed to insure notification.

3.3 In any emergency in which Amateur Radio might serve the community, Amateur Radio operators may be alerted by the emergency management coordinator, Red Cross, or state official notifying the EC or AEC. When AECs are notified, they will continually attempt to contact the EC until successful. The EC or AEC who activates ARES will become the OIC. The name, title, and served agency of the requester shall be documented.

4. ARES MOBILIZATION PROCEDURE

4.1 The OIC, or designated OIC, will first notify Panola County ARES members with activation of the telephone tree.

4.2 To insure necessary staffing for the emergency, the OIC will transmit on each VHF and each UHF repeater operated by Panola County Amateur Radio Club, advising all stations of ARES activation.

4.3 Upon the awareness or notification that a communications emergency exists, members of the Panola County ARES will listen to the frequency as directed during activation and will only check in if they have urgent information or the NCS asks for check ins on Panola County ARES Emergency Net. All stations will be requested to maintain radio silence unless they have business with the Net.

4.4 The highest staffing priority in any emergency situation will be given first to those amateur operators who are registered with the Panola County ARES. Second priority will be given to members of other ARES groups. Third priority will be given to amateur radio amateurs who are not associated with any ARES groups. Assignments will be given to minimize travel distance.

5. DUTIES OF NCS AND DEPLOYED STATIONS

5.1 OPENING NETS -- The Panola County ARES Net will be activated by the NCS upon instructions from the OIC. Based upon the facts, stations will be fully advised as to the nature of the emergency. The NCS will establish and announce backup frequencies and a backup NCS as needed. As appropriate, the NCS will periodically announce that a net is in progress, give brief summaries, and other pertinent information.

5.1.a A minimum of one directed net is required, the Operations Net, and it is conducted on the primary repeater frequency (146.180, PL 123.0). If this repeater is not functioning, the net will move to the secondary repeater (145.390, PL 123.0).

5.1.b If necessary, as determined by the incident OIC, additional directed nets may be activated on alternate frequencies (see 3.1) or any available VHF simplex frequencies as follows:

Resource or Logistics Net -- Identify and assign stations and equipment

Administration Net -- Coordinate activities of all other nets

Medical Net -- Coordinate first aid or other medical responders, including ambulances

Traffic Net -- Coordinate movement of formal written messages, including National Traffic System (NTS) liaison if necessary

5.1.c Liaison stations to Texas ARES HF emergency and traffic nets may be required. These nets normally operate as follows:

Primary HF SSB Traffic Net (Texas Traffic Net) 6:30pm daily: 3.873 Mhz

Primary Day Net (7290 Traffic Net) meets twice on 7.290 Mhz

Monday - Saturday 10:00am - noon

Monday - Friday 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Emergency & Tactical Traffic day: 7.285 Mhz night: 3.873 Mhz

Health and Welfare Traffic day: 7.290 Mhz night: 3.935 Mhz

Texas CW Net Daily at 7:00pm and 10:00pm 3.643 Mhz

Texas Slow CW Net Daily at 8:00pm 3.719 Mhz

5.2 CHECK-IN STATIONS -- Stations will be checked in from their mobiles, home stations, and portable stations. After checking in, all stations will stand by on the assigned frequency to await further instructions. The NCS will compile an inventory list of operators and their available equipment for possible deployment.

5.3 Mobile and portable stations will be dispatched as needed either to a "Staging" location, or directly to the incident scene as determined by the OIC. The OIC must notify the NCS which agency official, by name and title, requested ARES activation. This is needed to allow access to restricted areas and other challenges as necessary. The exact location of each deployed station shall be maintained by the NCS.

5.4 Each incident scene will have a designated Amateur Radio Team Leader who will coordinate amateur communications at their respective site. This will usually be the first amateur operator to arrive on the scene.

5.4.a Be prepared to be refused entry to the area. Do not attempt to enter unless specifically approved to do so by the supervisor. Do not present yourself as a Red Cross (or other agency) worker unless you are specifically on that agency's business. Be courteous. If you are denied entry, notify the NCS and wait for further instructions.

5.4.b Upon arrival at the scene, identify yourself to the scene supervisor. Make sure any relief operators are also introduced and ask the supervisor to do the same.

5.4.c Upon entry on the scene, set up your station and get on the air as quickly as possible. Try to locate near the “action” but stay out of other’s way. Be sure to log your operations, recording all messages and other events affecting communications and/or station operation. Check into the Operations Net and other nets as instructed.

5.4.d Do not divulge information nor express opinions to any individual, particularly the media. Refer all questions to the scene’s Public Information Officer (PIO).

5.4.e If any requested action involves unacceptable risk, DO NOT take action. Upon refusal, notify the NCS that you will not be performing the requested action, along with a brief statement of your risk assessment.

6. OPERATIONS

6.1 MESSAGES

6.1.a Formal Messages: Formal messages are those that are written in a standard format. All messages that request material or services which may require payment or replacement must be formal messages.

6.1.b Message Forms: Inter-county Tactical messages must be written utilizing the ARES message form. Messages that will be passed to the National Traffic System must be written in standard ARRL format utilizing the ARRL message form, unless otherwise directed by the served agency. In either case, it is strongly encouraged to restrict messages to 25 words or less, particularly if the message will be relayed multiple times or sent out of the area. Messages over 25 words are much less likely to reach their destination quickly. Operators receiving messages from officials should encourage those officials to produce messages in 25 words or less to ensure prompt and reliable delivery. The served agency representative can create his/her printed message on the message forms provided by the radio operator for that purpose.

Message Precedence: The operator must assign the message an ARRL PRECEDENCE, defined on ARRL CD Form 3. This precedence will be used on all messages. Any operator receiving messages should check the precedence of messages received for EMERGENCY messages. Anyone giving messages to an operator should check the messages and inform the operator if any are marked EMERGENCY. The person passing the messages should be sure the receiving operator acknowledges this precedence.

Requester Name: All FORMAL messages require the PRINTED NAME, TITLE, SERVED AGENCY, and SITE of the requester. All requests to send ARES operators to a location also require the same information to be completed. Said requests should be notated in the Net log.

****ALL MESSAGES RECEIVED WHICH REQUEST MATERIALS OR SERVICES, WHICH MAY LATER REQUIRE PAYMENT OR REPAYMENT OF FUNDS, WILL NOT BE TRANSMITTED UNLESS THE MESSAGE CONTAINS THE PRINTED NAME, TITLE, SERVED AGENCY, SITE OF THE REQUESTER, AND THE**

SIGNATURE OF

THE REQUESTING OFFICIAL.**

6.1.c Emergency Messages: Emergency messages, such as FIRE, POLICE, or LIFE THREATENING situations, do NOT require numbers. These are the highest priority messages and should be treated as such. Call your NCS by giving your tactical call sign and say, “Emergency Traffic”. Example: “Shelter Two with Emergency Traffic.” When accepting such messages for transmission, only the following information is required:

- A. To (Example: Carthage Fire Department)
- B. What (Example: Fire truck needed ASAP)

- C. Why (Example: Structure Fire)
- D. Where (Example: Carthage Civic Center)
- E. Who (Example: Manager, Shelter One)

6.1.d Saving Messages: All operators shall save a copy of all formal messages.

6.2 TRANSMITTING

6.2.a Stations must not transmit unless invited to do so by the Net Control station (NCS).

There are exceptions:

- A. Stations with tactical emergency traffic.
- B. As designated in the standard operating procedure for Amateur Radio.
- C. As required by FCC regulations.

6.2.b Keep transmission short and to the point. All stations, including NCS should leave frequent gaps in their transmissions for emergency traffic. These gaps should be long enough for someone to recognize the gap and announce "emergency traffic".

6.3 COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

6.3.a Operators should use the most efficient method available to transmit their messages. If available and appropriate, use telephone, cell phone, internet, packet, foot, automobile, etc. Passing traffic off the air makes ham radio more readily available to send traffic to and from locations without alternate means of communications.

6.3.b Information of a sensitive nature should utilize alternative methods of communication where practical.

7. DEMOBILIZATION

7.1 The OIC shall be the final authority for demobilization of ARES members following an emergency incident or Net.

7.2 Stations shall keep NCS informed when they have been released from any assignments. They shall report the NAME and TITLE of the person releasing the operator(s) and the name of the SERVED AGENCY to NCS.

7.3 NCS will enter the message details in the Net log.

7.4 Released stations should identify their availability for additional assignments and continue to monitor the assigned frequency.

8. TRAINING, TESTS, AND ALERTS

8.1 An annual emergency test will be conducted, preferably in conjunction with the nationwide Simulated Emergency Test (SET) sponsored by ARRL in October. Additionally, Panola County ARES will participate in drills held by local Served Agencies, which may be at any time of their choosing.

8.2 The Panola County ARES will regularly supply public safety communications in conjunction with local events, to test the effectiveness of its operations.

8.3 A Training Net will be held for Panola County ARES members at 7:30pm each Tuesday on the 146.180 (-, PL123.0) repeater, or other designated frequency, in conjunction with the weekly Panola County Amateur Radio Club Net held each Tuesday at 7:00pm.

8.4 At the discretion of the EC, Panola County ARES will have an unannounced activation at least once per year.

8.5 A Standard Operating Procedure, detailing emergency response procedures and actions in support of this plan, shall be written and updated as needed.

8.6 The Panola County Amateur Radio Emergency Service Emergency Communications Plan and the Standard Operating Procedure shall be reviewed during February of each year to keep these plans current and viable.

9. DEFINITIONS

9.1 Emergency -- Any immediate threat to life or property.

9.2 Incident -- Any communications emergency that occurs without notice.

9.3 Officer In Charge (OIC) – Panola County ARES official responsible for all operations when the organization is activated for an incident or public service event.

9.4 Public Service Event -- A pre-planned activity for a non-profit organization, used to provide training and experience for ARES members. Examples include parades, marathons, festivals, etc.

NOTES:

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