

Public Service

One of the reasons amateur radio exists at all is that ham radio operators are uniquely set up to provide emergency and public-service communications. As a result, many hams consider it an obligation to be prepared to help out when called upon to do so. This includes having the proper equipment and knowing the proper operating procedures.

There are two organizations that provide emergency communications: the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). The thing that both RACES and ARES have in common is that both organizations may provide communications during emergencies. (T2C04) The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is a group of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service. (T2C12)

All of these choices are correct when describing the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) (T2C05):

- A radio service using amateur frequencies for emergency management or civil defense communications
- A radio service using amateur stations for emergency management or civil defense communications
- An emergency service using amateur operators certified by a civil defense organization as being enrolled in that organization

When an emergency occurs, it's common for amateur radio operators to form a network also called a "net" to facilitate emergency communications. The net is led by the net control station (NCS), whose job it is to make sure that messages are passed in an efficient and timely manner.

Stations other than the net control station are said to "check into" the net. An accepted practice for an amateur operator who has checked into an emergency traffic net is to remain on frequency without transmitting until asked to do so by the net control station. (T2C07) There are times when a station may need to get the immediate attention of the net control station. If this is the case, an accepted practice to get the immediate attention of a net control station when reporting an emergency is to begin your transmission by saying "Priority" or "Emergency" followed by your call sign. (T2C06)

The term for messages passed between stations in an emergency net is "traffic," and the process of passing messages to and from amateur radio stations is called "handling traffic." Message traffic may be formal or informal. A characteristic of good emergency traffic handling is passing messages exactly as received. (T2C08) To insure that voice message traffic containing proper names and unusual words are copied correctly by the receiving station, such words and terms should be spelled out using a standard phonetic alphabet. (T2C03)

Formal traffic messages consist of four parts: preamble, address, text, and signature. The preamble in a formal traffic message is the information needed to track the message as it passes through the amateur radio traffic handling system. (T2C10) Part of the preamble is the check. The check is a count of the number of words or word equivalents in the text portion of the message. (T2C11) The address is the name and location of the intended recipient. The text is the message itself, and the signature is the part of the message that identifies the message originator.

An important thing to remember is that FCC rules always apply to the operation of an amateur station. (T2C01) Amateur station control operators are permitted to operate outside the frequency privileges of their license class only if necessary in situations involving the immediate safety of human life or protection of property. (T2C09)

In an emergency situation, amateur radio operators often find themselves using battery power. It is, therefore, important to keep batteries charged and ready to go. One way to recharge a 12-volt lead-acid station battery if the commercial power is out is to connect the battery in parallel with a vehicle's battery and run the engine. (T2C02)

REVIEW QUESTIONS: (12)

T2C04	T2C12	T2C05	T2C07	T2C06	T2C08
T2C03	T2C10	T2C11	T2C01	T2C09	T2C02