



RACES

The 9/11 after action reports from New York City, Pennsylvania and Arlington County, Virginia are a treasure trove of facts learned from the incident. Contained in the reports were numerous recommendations, which were and are a driving force in how the many local, county and state governments across our Nation have realigned their emergency response process. Most noticeably is the rapid expansion of offices of emergency management (OEM).

The Department of Homeland Security requires that non-federal government agencies comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in order to receive federal funding. NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template designed to enable federal, state, and local governments and private sector and nongovernmental organizations to work together effectively and efficiently to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from domestic incidents, including acts of catastrophic terrorism. NIMS established a unified approach to incident management, standard command and management structures, with emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid and resource management.

Significantly, one of the critical OEM support functions is EMCOMM provided by Amateur Radio volunteers.

The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) was crafted long before 9/11 by two federal agencies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Like NIMS, RACES is a process by which local, county or state governments can structure a formal relationship with Amateur Radio volunteers who are trained to provide EMCOMM services during civil emergencies.

RACES is open to qualified Amateur Radio volunteers. Registration is required for RACES participation, and it provides certain legal liability protections. The Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 details these protections. Many states also provide similar volunteer protection. The additional benefits of registration are that RACES members receive support from government agencies that are familiar with operators' abilities, training, skills and limitations. RACES volunteers can thus be reasonably assured of receiving a suitable assignment within the scope of their training and physical capabilities.

In sum, RACES is a concept designed to work in concert with ARES, REACT, SATURN, or CERT operations. Some of the basic requirements are for RACES volunteers are:

- 1) Successful background check
- 2) Basic operator training completed
- 3) Satisfactory equipment inspection by the Radio Officer
- 4) Regular participation in drills, events, and incidents.
- 5) Continuing education – courses and exercises

For more information see www.RACES.net

RACES is yet another way in which Amateur Radio operators serve their communities and country in emergencies.