

The ARRL Ham Aid Program Operational Policies and Guidelines

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A. Introduction

The ARRL Ham Aid Program provides Amateur Radio equipment for loan to hams during times of disaster when on-site equipment has been damaged or compromised in a way that makes it inoperable.

The ARRL is the custodian of Ham Aid equipment. ARRL HQ will coordinate requests for loans of the equipment through its Field Organization. The intent of Ham Aid is to provide emergency communications equipment to groups who are on site to assist communities and residents during times of disaster. Requests for Ham Aid assistance must be made by the ARRL Section Manager or his/her designee, after approval by an officer of the ARRL.

B. Background

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's destruction in the Gulf region, many Amateur Radio manufacturers donated equipment to ARRL in order to create an inventory for ARRL's HamAid program. Ham Aid was created in order to provide equipment for disaster communications within the United States.

The Ham Aid program developed as the result of the response to hurricane Katrina in 2005. Amateur Radio manufacturers donated equipment for the response effort and ARRL agreed to serve as custodian of the equipment. Funds to purchase containers for the equipment were still needed to facilitate deployment and for the purchase of additional accessory items that might be needed.

The CNCS (Corporation for National and Community Service) grant made the program a reality. Twenty-five hard shelled, professional gear cases made by Pelican were purchased. These cases are widely used by Red Cross, amateur radio expeditionary travelers, professional photographers, and many others who carry and ship sensitive equipment. Half of these cases were immediately packed with communications equipment.

Some of these setups are optimized for VHF/UHF use (local/tactical communications). Some were set up for High Frequency (long and medium range) base station operations and include radio, power supply, coaxial feed line, antenna tuner and antenna. The CNCS grant made it possible to purchase many of the accessories that rounded out the amateur stations, including power supplies, thousands of feet of coaxial cable jumpers, electrical hook-up wire to utilize both the switching AC/DC power supplies and car batteries, two VHF repeaters, two HF amplifiers, an email –via-radio system with laptop computer, antennas, and tools.

C. Purpose and Permissible use of Ham Aid Equipment

Ham Aid kits are not intended to comprise an entire amateur station in a ready to go status. Rather, the idea was to provide basic equipment for a long term communications effort and to equip quick response individuals with portable equipment. The end user will be responsible for providing power, shelter, unusual or mode- specific accessories, tools, etc. Large scale disasters may involve HQ operators who could transport Ham Aid equipment to the scene or to a staging area.

Permitted uses include:

- Any disaster or emergency, either underway, or anticipated,
- Selected and approved training and educational missions and
- Selected and approved expositions and demonstrations

D. Chain of Custody and Permissions

All Ham Aid equipment has been identified and assigned an inventory control number and listed on a database at Headquarters. This database record shows the location of every item. Upon deployment the database will be edited by HQ staff to show the new location of the equipment. The database has restricted access and only the Emergency Preparedness Manager and his or her assistant and other selected ARRL HQ personnel are authorized to edit the database.

All Ham Aid equipment is the property of the American Radio Relay League. Each piece of equipment will be permanently marked with the Inventory Control Number using an inscribing tool. Equipment may also be marked with the ARRL Logo in paint so as to be viewed from a distance. HQ staff will create online and paper forms to be used for requesting and consigning equipment and to assign permissions.

Requests for Ham Aid equipment are made to the ARRL HQ Emergency Preparedness Manager or the Emergency Preparedness Assistant. A recommendation for or against deployment will be made and submitted to an ARRL officer for final approval. All such decisions are final and not subject to further review.

Permissions:

1. Deployed equipment must be signed for by an approved recipient.
2. The recipient will be approved and vetted by the Section Manager or his/her designee.
3. The name, call sign, and contact information of the recipient will be provided to the ARRL HQ Emergency Preparedness Manager or his or her assistant before equipment is sent.
4. Upon delivery to the approved recipient, the equipment will be the responsibility of that recipient and no one else. Any liability for misuse, loss, damage or destruction of the equipment, and all responsibility for its legal and proper operation will be that of the designated recipient.
5. Any questions or requests from ARRL HQ regarding deployed equipment will be made to the Section Manager or his designee.

Custody documentation included with every deployment of a Ham Aid Kit will be:

1. Copy of initial request
2. Inventory of contents of Ham Aid kit case.
3. Form acknowledging acceptance by recipient and inventory of Ham Aid Kit and assumption by the approved recipient of the responsibility for the proper care, use, deployment and timely return of the equipment and acceptance of the terms of the loan of the equipment as set forth herein.
4. Return procedure
5. Equipment tracking form for use when equipment is redistributed in the field

E. Pre-Deployment and Dispersion of Inventory

The pre-deployment of Ham Aid equipment must meet specific guidelines, including, but not limited to the following

- It must be for an anticipated event e.g. hurricane, exercise/drill, etc.
- It must be returned to ARRL HQ within one month unless situations warrant the kit remain deployed.
- Local modification of the kit may only be done with prior written ARRL HQ approval
- The request process for pre-deployment will be the same as any other request.
- Permanent pre-deployment of kits will not be allowed.

At the discretion of HQ staff a portion of the Ham Aid inventory may be moved and stored at another location in the United States. The purpose of this is to make deployment of equipment faster and more effective. Certain conditions must be met for inventory to be dispersed to another location.

- An ARES group or ARRL affiliated club will be responsible for the equipment. The group must have the recommendation of the Section Manager and provide a point of contact to ARRL HQ.
- Upon request of ARRL HQ the club or ARES group will carry out deployment of the equipment. Deployment may be within the Section it is stored in or to another Section or area of the country. Deployment instructions will be provided to the club or ARES group.
- The club or ARES group is free to use the equipment as they see fit, but all use must be reported to ARRL HQ.
- No modification of equipment or kits may be made.
- All repairs and maintenance will be handled by ARRL HQ. Dispersed inventory will periodically be returned to ARRL HQ. The club or ARES group in possession of the equipment will be notified when it needs to be returned.
- All dispersed equipment remains the property of the ARRL

F. Deployment outside of the USA

International deployment of Ham Aid inventory will be authorized or prohibited on a case by case basis by an officer of ARRL.

G. Length of Equipment Deployment

1. Disasters and emergencies – as long as needed

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2. Conventions, ham fests, and educational demonstrations – defined date range specific to event.
3. Pre-deployment – No longer than one month unless conditions warrant continued deployment.

H. Distribution and shipping

Once the request for Ham Aid equipment has been received and the request has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate ARRL personnel, the equipment will typically be available to ship within 24 hours.

Shipping methods may vary but will include air freight shipping from Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut to an agreed upon location close to the disaster area. The Authorized recipient must arrange pickup from and return to that delivery location.

Air and land freight and delivery companies shall provide all necessary transportation of equipment as per ARRL established agreements.

I. Liability

Each recipient, for themselves and for any and all authorized or unauthorized users of the equipment, by virtue of the request for and/or the acceptance of the equipment, do unconditionally indemnify and hold ARRL harmless from and against any loss, liability, damages, actions, causes of action or harm to any person as the result of the use or operation of the equipment. Any loss, damage to or destruction of the equipment loaned to the recipient will create a reimbursement obligation on the part of the authorized recipient for the full cost of repair or replacement of the equipment. Any action by ARRL to enforce the provisions of this paragraph shall be brought in the courts of the State of Connecticut and all recipients of equipment consent to personal jurisdiction in the State of Connecticut.

J. Equipment returned to HQ from Deployment

When equipment is returned from deployment HQ personnel will inspect the case and its contents to identify missing or damaged items. All equipment should be cleaned and tested for proper operation and any equipment found to be not working properly or out of specifications so as to be "susceptible to failure" will be repaired or replaced. Each Pelican case and its contents will be checked against its inventory list and made complete and sealed for the next deployment.

K. HQ, inventory, packing, storage, and maintenance

A complete inventory will be taken no less than once per year and prior to and upon return from each deployment. As noted above, any equipment deemed "susceptible to failure" will be removed from inventory and repaired or replaced.

All equipment will be stored at ARRL HQ, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111, and at ARRL's warehouse and kept in a ready status for quick deployment.

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