

CHAPTER 9 - TACTICAL NETS, PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

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CHAPTER 9 - TACTICAL NETS, PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

9.0 TACTICAL NET OPERATIONS, PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

* **BACKGROUND:** Amateur radio has a long standing tradition of providing support in events where the official sponsoring organization can not provide all the communications required for adequate public safety. Competent service rendered by amateurs has proven valuable, and often essential, to public safety in these events by providing rapid alerting of officials when people need help. The FCC protects amateur radio from incursion by commercial and government interests by limiting our support to the public safety issues and those not related to “regular business affairs” of any party.

* **OTHER TACTICAL OPERATIONS:** For the purpose of this manual tactical net operating is connected to public service events, although tactical nets can be run for any purpose. Traffic nets use the formal methods presented in chapter 4, Net Operations; and nets having both traffic handling and social activities generally use the formal methods for the traffic handling parts.

There are many other types of amateur nets that can be run in tactical fashion. Administrative nets for coordinating activities during disasters, social nets, swap nets, technical nets, etc. All such nets may be run in the same pattern as the formal traffic nets, but abbreviated or custom syntax may be substituted.

Experienced net operators will appreciate the basic structure of the “directed net” in all such activities. The role of the NCS is to help conduct the operation in an orderly fashion.

* **MISSION:** The amateur mission in public service events is accomplished by providing communications for officials responsible for the event and public safety. As amateurs, we are not responsible for that safety. We facilitate the mission of officials who are, and can help by providing communications in depth over the full geographical area of the event.

Our mission is to communicate, not administrate, for the responsible officials. We are the telephone or FAX service between officials. Our job is to pass their information and emergency requests back and forth with speed and accuracy.

* **PLANNING AND TEAMWORK:** Working together to provide communications for this type event requires the support of planners, operators and equipment support people. Your ideas on how to do an effective job are valuable and most welcome during planning and operation.

Thorough planning with the officials prior to the event is essential to effective operation and full and proper use of the amateur resources. You should appoint a representative or ask the ARES EC to coordinate with the event officials during planning and operations.

When this kind of service is well planned with the officials, and well conducted by the operators, it provides a very rewarding opportunity to serve the public with our skills.

Even if you are new to this art you will find that your fellow operators, net controls, club officers, ARES members, and/or EC, will work together to help you do a good job in the true Elmer spirit of our service. If we operate effectively we set an example for other amateurs and other officials

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we might someday serve. Outsiders listening to our communications will judge Amateur Radio and our club or group based on what they hear.

* **ARES:** The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARRL field organization), led by the local Emergency Coordinator (EC), often supports these type events. The organizing and response skills, essential to the ARES role in emergencies, makes such groups well qualified to do the job, and working such events gives them valuable practice and experience. Joint operations with ARES, clubs, and individuals, provides benefits for everyone involved.

* **AUTHORITY:** The applicable FCC rules have been clarified regarding support of public service type events. They have been moved from previously issued policy statements into the body of part 97. Note the words emphasizing the role of amateur radio in support of the public rather than the sponsoring organization.

* **"BEST AMATEUR PRACTICES":** Participating operators should be familiar with "best amateur practices" reviewed in the following sections. The examples have been tailored to this type event, relative to those used in formal nets, in order to simplify them for tactical operations.

These operating practices are presented as a guide and not intended to make our operations so formalized as to interfere with the friendly atmosphere characteristic of our service. Calm and confident operators can pass the typical information in these events without every word being scripted in advance.

Using these practices will help maintain control and order and help assure that essential information gets through.

Perhaps a good way to demonstrate the tactical net is to present the operation in the setting of a typical public service event. The following section does that, showing basic syntax that may be used by the NCS and stations. Later sections deal with the questions of verbal versus written traffic and planning for such events, etc.

Call signs shown are intended to be generic for example purposes only and not related to the holders of those call signs in any way.

9.1 TACTICAL NET PRACTICES, EVENT EXAMPLE

For the following examples and procedures, assume a public service event is to be held with a large public participation, such as a walk-a-thon. The officials have provided medical stations along the course with medical staffs to assist the public with problems. Amateurs are stationed at each medical station and at a key location where contact is maintained with public safety officials and the event officials (a fixed location in this example, but often event officials move about and require a shadow operator to follow along to maintain contact).

9.1.1 EXAMPLE EVENT STATION ASSIGNMENTS

The amateur stations are to use two meter portable or mobile equipment, a local repeater, and tactical call signs:

MED1: (The station at the public safety and event command post.)

MED2, MED3, MED4, MED5, MED6: The stations on the course.

NCS: The net control station.

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The NCS is at a central location free of the responsibility of serving anyone but the net business. The NCS is able to communicate with the stations directly on simplex as well as through the repeater system in use. Additional “home” stations may be used for simplex relay where the geography demands. A second operator at the NCS station is often helpful to handle off air jobs.

Although simplex operation is possible here, and conserves spectrum use, the choice is yours based upon many other considerations such as HT and home station coverage, etc.

A net station with a public safety agency mobile or field command post is an important provision for expediting emergency calls to public safety organizations. A home station standing by to make telephone calls to public safety agencies is also a wise precaution. This station may also back up the NCS and help relay when needed. Both are often used, the field command post usually being primary since they are usually in direct contact with police and fire resources on the course as well as with dispatch centers.

Any number of variations of this format is possible. Each event will present a different configuration problem to be matched with communications providers.

A rehearsal with a roving communicator to test the course for difficult communications areas is advisable. See the later section on event planning.

9.1.2 DIRECTED NET PROCEDURES

An amateur radio "directed" net is one in which all communications are supervised by the net control station (NCS). The NCS is responsible for communications on net frequency, sending stations off frequency, and assuring that all traffic is handled in an orderly fashion with appropriate priorities.

Stations check into the net, maintain a close listening watch for NCS instructions, and check out only with permission from the NCS. If a station can not listen carefully to the net for a period of time, it should check out and check back in when it is again able.

The NCS maintains a log of all stations checked into the net and keeps track of stations sent off frequency for passing traffic or for conversation.

Stations should not interrupt net “transactions”, i.e., the exchanges between other stations and/or NCS until those stations have completed their exchanges... except in an emergency.

Stations use their full call sign when first checking into the net. Tactical call signs may be used thereafter providing that full call signs are given by net stations at the end of transactions.

The proword “over” is not required at the end of NCS calls or the “no traffic” check-in type transmissions. They are considered self completing. “Over” is generally used for transmissions of uncertain length, such as traffic lists, comments and explanations, or when repeater delay lines remove squelch tails which obscures releases of the PTT switch.

The use of “this is... (pause with PTT release)... (call sign)...” by calling net stations may be used to avoid “doubling” with other stations.

Optional items are shown in brackets, []. Variable items to be filled in by the transmitting station are shown in parentheses, ().

9.1.3 CHECKING IN, WITHOUT TRAFFIC

* The OPEN call. NCS asks for stations to check in with the OPEN call, recognizing the possibility of multiple responders, using the two step listing method:

NCS THIS IS N3FFB NET CONTROL STATIONS WISHING TO CHECK IN
YOUR CALLS PLEASE

MED4 W3XYZ MED 4 NO TRAFFIC

NCS W3XYZ MED4 ROGER...OTHERS?

* The NCS may also check stations in using a roll call method based upon the list of manned sites or participating stations.

* Stations use their full call sign when first checking in.

9.1.4 CHECKING IN WITH TRAFFIC

* The OPEN call. NCS asks for stations to check in with the OPEN call, recognizing the possibility of multiple responders, using the two step listing method:

NCS ADDITIONAL STATIONS?

MED4 W3XYZ MED 4 WITH TRAFFIC

NCS MED 4 PLEASE LIST

MED4 THIS IS MED 4 TRAFFIC MED 3 ONE OVER; (implying a formal message); or

THIS IS MED 4 TRAFFIC WORDS MED 2 OVER; (informal words)

NCS W3XYZ MED 4 PLEASE STAND BY...; (or may dispatch stations);
(... THIS IS N3FFB NET CONTROL... added at ID time.)

* The NCS may also check stations in using a roll call method based upon the list of manned sites or participating stations. In the roll call case the two step method is not used. The single station responder simply responds with its call sign and either no traffic or lists its traffic.

NCS MED 4; in the roll call sequence;

MED4 THIS IS W3XYZ MED 4 NO TRAFFIC; or

MED4 THIS IS W3XYZ MED 4 TRAFFIC WORDS MED 1 OVER

NCS W3XYZ STAND BY; (or may dispatch the business).

* Stations use their full call sign when first checking into the net.

* Note that formal radiograms are not often used on such event tactical nets, except for official to official traffic when formal written record is mandatory. Written records of emergency requests are often written out on short form incident reports, but still contain the essential information required and are retained for officials to review after the event.

Stations with full format radiograms should advise the NCS of same during busy tactical nets, and request dispatch to simplex or off the net. The "... TRAFFIC MED 3 ONE" listing above would cover such cases. Other traffic is often simply listed as "WORDS", even if an incident report is written. Policy in such matters is decided during event planning with officials.

9.1.5 LISTING ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

* At a convenient break in net activity later, following other net transactions:

MED4 MED 4; to request acknowledgment

NCS MED 4; acknowledgment

MED4 MED 4 TRAFFIC MED 1 ONE OVER; or
MED 4 WORDS MED 2 OVER; or
MED 4 WORDS MED 2 AND MED 3 TOGETHER OVER; or
MED 4 HAS PRIORITY TRAFFIC FOR MED 1 OVER; etc.

NCS ROGER STAND BY; or may dispatch the business.

* The NCS will arrange for passing the traffic as net priorities allow.

MED4 MED 4 NEED TO BE OUT OF THE NET FOR A FEW MINUTES OVER

NCS MED 4 EXCUSED

MED4 MED 4 W4XX (note end of transaction ID)

9.1.6 EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

When EMERGENCY traffic is listed, the net is interrupted and the EMERGENCY traffic is handled immediately.

MED2 EMERGENCY, THIS IS MED 2 OVER

NCS STATIONS STAND BY, MED 2 GO AHEAD

MED2 MED 2 HAS EMERGENCY TRAFFIC FOR MED 1 OVER

NCS EMERGENCY MED 1 CALL MED 2

MED1 MED 2 THIS IS MED 1 READY TO COPY

MED2 THIS IS MED 2 BREAK NEED BALTIMORE CITY AMBO AT MED 2
FOR 40 YEAR OLD MALE SUBJECT WITH BROKEN ARM SUBJECT
CONSCIOUS AND BREATHING SIMPLE FRACTURE BREAK MED
OFFICER JONES END NO MORE OVER

MED1 ROGER MED 1 W1XX

MED2 THANK YOU MED 2 W2XX

* Note that the proword BREAK may be used in such tactical message traffic as a separator between comments and the actual content. This type message is likely to be written on an incident report of some sort, thus clarity and sending at copy speed is warranted.

* Note that a follow up message from MED 1 to MED 2 would be typical to confirm the dispatch of the ambo.

* **AUTHORITY, EMERGENCY** messages of this type are to be originated by the medical officials assigned to this event if possible. If none is available, and you encounter an emergency situation, notify the NCS to expedite the required response with officials. Event officials or medical personnel should make decisions regarding medical emergencies if at all possible. Often the officials in charge will request that no calls for emergency transport be made without the approval of the responsible event leadership or medical staff.

* **CONFIRMATION:** The station delivering the message should originate a priority message back to the official or station originating the request with information that an emergency response is in route, if possible, or at least that notification has been made. The station on scene should make note to check for such a response within a reasonable time, although it is difficult in some

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events to get feedback from busy public safety officials regarding the dispatch of the emergency response. As amateurs, however, we can inform the station on scene that the call was passed to those officials.

* **DOCUMENTATION:** The station delivering an emergency message to public safety officials should do so in writing when possible. This may be done after the first verbal transmission to expedite the call (submit the written follow-up marked “handled”).

All emergency calls should be logged by the sending station, receiving station, and NCS. Emergency message info should be held for the medical supervisor and/or event officials to be presented on demand. It is often necessary for those officials to report all the circumstances and response information for liability reasons and others.

* **FORMS:** Forms may be prepared and distributed to all operators prior to the event. It is very helpful to Police/Fire officials to be given emergency calls written out on a form. They are usually very busy, and remembering what someone has yelled into their command post begs for error and omission. Giving them the courtesy of a written message lets them know you understand, and demonstrates your group’s professionalism.

INCIDENT REPORT FORMS are often used to receive and pass the messages to the officials at the command point(s). These forms may be customized for the event, or a generic type form may be used for public service and ARES operations.

* **PRIVACY:** Names of injured persons should not be broadcast over the air unless absolutely required for their safety. Respect and protect the subject’s privacy.

9.1.7 TACTICAL DISPATCHING, ON AND OFF NET FREQUENCY

This dispatching is very similar to that used on formal traffic nets. Note that the first station addressed in the dispatch command acknowledges or calls first. The receiving station initiates the frequency check and calls the transmitting station off frequency. This understanding avoids confusing simultaneous transmissions possible on repeaters.

* **ON NET FREQUENCY:**

MED4 MED 4

NCS MED 4

MED4 MED 4 WORDS MED 5 OVER

NCS MED 5 CALL MED 4; (“HERE” implied); or
MED 5 MED 4 HERE WORDS; (paralleling traffic net dispatches).

* **THE EXCHANGE:**

MED5 MED 4 THIS IS MED 5

MED4 MED 5... (MED4 sends his words) OVER

MED5 ROGER MED 5 W5XX

MED4 THANK YOU MED 4 W4XX

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The formal radiogram would be listed as message traffic and passed according to normal exchange and voicing rules as shown in chapter 2. The dispatch would be:

* ON NET FREQUENCY:

NCS MED 5 MED 4 HERE MED 5 ONE; and so on with the full call signs at the end of the transaction.

MED 5 READY TO COPY

MED 4 (sends his traffic)

* OFF NET FREQUENCY:

MED4 MED 4

NCS MED 4

MED4 MED 4 WORDS MED 5 OVER; or
MED 4 TRAFFIC MED 5 ONE OVER

NCS MED 5 MED 4 (frequency) MED 5 WORDS; or
MED 5 MED 4 (frequency) MED 5 ONE; for the radiogram, where (frequency) could be another repeater, simplex, etc.

MED5 MED 5 GOING; or W5XX GOING; or (suffix) GOING;

MED4 MED 4 GOING; or W4XX GOING; or (suffix) GOING

Off frequency the receiving station checks the frequency is clear, calls the sending station, and, after the traffic is passed, both stations sign their full amateur call signs before returning to net.

9.1.8 RETURNING TO NET, JOB COMPLETED

Stations returning to net after a successful exchange after being sent off frequency by the NCS, following any net transactions:

MED5 MED 5 BACK (returning, job completed)

NCS MED 5 (acknowledgment of return)

MED4 MED 4 BACK (returning, job completed)

NCS MED 4 (acknowledgment of return)

9.1.9 REPORTING BACK TO NET, JOB NOT COMPLETED

Stations returning after failure to make contact or complete their exchange, following any net transactions:

MED5 MED 5 BACK NO JOY; or MED 5 BACK NO MED 4

NCS MED 5 ROGER STAND BY

MED4 MED 4 BACK NO JOY; or MED 4 BACK NO MED 5

NCS MED 4 ROGER; or

The NCS may immediately dispatch the business on the net

NCS MED 5 MED 4 HERE WORDS; or

MED 5 MED 4 HERE MED 5 ONE; for the radiogram; or

The NCS may ask for advice, assign an alternative frequency, or arrange a relay for the communications

Often missed contact is due to dispatches to repeaters that are, or become, busy. It is helpful for the NCS to be able to monitor repeaters before dispatching. If the dispatch was to a simplex frequency the transmitting station should notify the NCS that the calling receiving station could not be heard. Relays may then be quickly arranged, possibly through a "home" station.

9.1.10 REPORTING BACK TO NET WITH ADDITIONAL REQUESTS

If returning stations have additional business with the net, they check back in as in:

MED5 MED 5 BACK WITH TRAFFIC OVER

NCS MED 5 PLEASE LIST

MED5 MED 5 TRAFFIC MED 1 ONE PRIORITY OVER

NCS ROGER STAND BY; or

MED 1 MED 5 HERE MED 1 PRIORITY (immediate dispatch)

Stations pass traffic and identify as above in the section on Tactical Dispatching, On and Off Net Frequency, On Net Frequency, The Exchange.

9.1.11 STATIONS REQUESTING TO BE EXCUSED

It is expected that all stations checked into the net will remain on the net monitoring the NCS unless specifically excused.

*** EXCUSING FROM THE NET**

MED4 MED 4

NCS MED 4

MED4 REQUEST TO BE EXCUSED

NCS W4XX [THANKS 73] YOU ARE EXCUSED

MED4 [MED 4] W4XX (although optional, the use of the tactical call sign when signing out associates that call sign with the amateur licensee for monitoring purposes. If stations use their full call signs at the conclusion of net transactions the ID rules can be met throughout the net. The tactical call sign use then is little different than the use of suffixes in directed traffic nets.

*** TEMPORARY EXCUSING**

MED4 MED 4

NCS MED 4

MED4 MED 4 REQUEST TO LEAVE THE NET FOR (...) MINUTES OVER

NCS MED 4 YOU ARE EXCUSED

MED4 [MED 4] W4XX

W4XX would return with "NO TRAFFIC", or sometimes simply "W4XX MED 4 BACK" to check back in implying no traffic, or would add "WITH TRAFFIC" if returning with additional business for the net.

9.1.12 NCS EXCUSING STATIONS

In public service events it is typical that the event officials will be consulted prior to excusing stations covering sites or tasks for the event. Other station serving at home or for strictly amateur radio purposes may be excused by the amateur incident commander. See the next section.

When net business is concluded the NCS will call the stations remaining in the net and excuse them individually. In service situations typical of these events, it is better to be sure each station is checked out at the proper time than to assume that all operators will hear the net close.

*** EXCUSING STATIONS INDIVIDUALLY**

NCS MED 3 THANK YOU 73 YOU ARE EXCUSED

MED3 [MED 3] 73 W3XX (although optional, the use of the tactical call sign when signing out associates that call sign with the amateur licensee for monitoring purposes. If stations use their full call signs at the conclusion of net transactions the ID rules can be met throughout the net. The tactical call sign use then is little different than the use of suffixes in directed traffic nets.

9.2 AUTHORITY FOR CLOSING STATIONS

Stations participating in the event should secure permission from the event officials before closing operations. This is normally done, or coordinated, by the net control station, and each station in the net is excused as the officials approve.

9.3 IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

The FCC rules for station identification are as follows (in applicable part as amended):

(From FCC 89-180, The Amateur Radio Service.)

97.119 Station Identification.

(a) Each amateur station, except a space station or telecommand station, must transmit its assigned call sign on its transmitting channel at the end of each communication, and at least every 10 minutes during a communication, for the purpose of clearly making the source of the transmissions from the station known to those receiving the transmissions. No station may transmit unidentified communications or signals, or transmit as the station call sign, any call sign not authorized to the station.

Note that a "communication" in the rule means an exchange, or series of exchanges, between stations, and not each single transmission. When stations address the NCS with their tactical call sign, or the NCS calls stations with tactical call signs, these administrative exchanges set up a transaction between two stations. Stations ID with their full call signs at the end of those transactions on net or off frequency. (There is no need to use tactical calls off net.) This applies to words between stations, passing of formal traffic, etc. The syntax shown here is typical of that used on the "directed" traffic net specifically to provide for this ID arrangement.

Stations use their full call sign when first checking into the net. Tactical call signs may be used thereafter for asking permission to transmit, or by the NCS to address stations.

The tactical call signs in the examples are usually used for clarity and to help the net control keep an accurate record of requests and stations based on function.

A roll call at intervals for ID purposes is not required if ID is done as shown.

The net control should identify within the 10 minute limits, and should state the purpose of the net, pausing for additional check-ins as often as possible.

Avoid over-identification which wastes net time. You do not have to periodically identify if you are in a net and make no transmissions. Identify with full call sign when you check in, when you exchange traffic or words during the net or off frequency, and when you check out.

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It is customary that the tactical call sign and the station's call sign both be given in the transaction ending ID on the net to associate the two clearly. Example:

NCS MED 1 CALL MED 2 (dispatching pending business)

MED1 MED 2 MED 1

MED2 MED 2

MED1 NEED MORE WATER AT THIS MED STATION PLEASE HAVE THE TRUCK STOP HERE NEXT

MED2 [MED 2] ROGER W2XX

MED1 THANKS [MED 1] W1XX

* Obviously the dispatch set up the identification using the tactical calls, therefore it is not mandatory to use both calls to meet the legal ID requirement. The amateur call sign should be last in the sequence if both are used..

9.4 REPEATER DELAYS

Remember that there may be a delay in repeater transmitter response time. Operate your push-to-talk switch and then PAUSE a second or two to allow the repeater to activate before talking. Failure to do so will cause the first part of your transmission to be cut off.

The use of "this is... (pause with PTT release)... (call sign)..." by net stations may be used to avoid "doubling" with other stations, again keeping the delay in mind for both parts.

9.5 TRANSMISSION SPEED, VOICING RULES

When sending a message or listing traffic, remember that the station on the other end trying to write it down is probably not a shorthand expert. Send slowly and clearly...it takes less time to do it right the first time than having to repeat. Experienced traffic handlers say a portion of text, pause while spelling it to themselves, and then continue as they visualize the receiving station has finished writing.

Public safety dispatchers infrequently use phonetics or spelling for much of the traffic passed, but they do use phonetics or spelling for critical groups such as letters in tag numbers. For street names, etc., remember that even though they may have a computer aided dispatching computer system backing them up to catch errors, amateurs should strive to get incident addresses passed accurately.

Use the voicing rules presented in chapter 2 to optimize the accuracy of groups or names you must have copied correctly. Letter spelling may be used for critical words. Phonetics are not that often required on FM voice operations, but their use for abbreviations, initials, mixed groups, and proper names, etc., will prevent common mistakes. Use the appropriate introductory words for initials, figures, mixed groups, amateur calls, etc. In other words, using the proven techniques of traffic handling can and will help maintain the accuracy needed and avoid the errors of speech perception.

No matter how urgent the message, or how excited the operator might be, if the receiving station has to write down the request, it will get written only as fast as he can write it. If he is rushed, he may get it wrong, or not be able to read it a few minutes later. Contrary to the emotions of the moment, the fact is that the more urgent the message, the more slowly and carefully the message should be sent.

*** SOMEONE'S LIFE MAY DEPEND ON YOUR ACCURACY IN COMMUNICATING.**

9.6 WRITTEN TRAFFIC vs. VERBAL TRAFFIC

This is a controversial subject. There are those who insist that written traffic has no place in tactical event net operations---that verbal communicating is perfectly satisfactory in all cases, and that written messages are for those "traffic handlers" among us. There are others who argue that ALL third party traffic must be written out.

Perhaps the best approach is to accept that a mix of the two is probably wise. These events can present situations where all forms of communicating are appropriate at different times. An important part of deciding which to use might consider the number of hands your message must pass through to get to the delivery point, and how busy the addressee's are likely to be.

In many cases the message should be written out for the official's benefit, and in other cases for the benefit of the handling amateurs. In the later case, for example, a complex message for an event coordinator might best be written out and passed to the shadow operator formally for verbal delivery when the official has a moment to listen. The opposite might be true for a message to a public safety official.

Giving the Police or Fire officials written incident forms will be well received. Many of these can be written out from verbal transmission, but some may be more complex. In such cases, the skills of the "traffic handler" are prerequisite for getting a complex message passed and delivered accurately.

Permitting officials to talk over your radio is the opposite extreme, and can be very helpful.

Using verbal communications to direct logistics for participating amateurs is the norm. ARRL formatted messages in these events is a rare exception to the norm.

Incident Report Forms may be created for the presentation of any written messages to officials when necessary. Such traffic may be voiced in the same fashion as the standard format less the preamble and so forth, but some form of addressee and signing authority is typical. The words "TO" and "FROM" may be used to introduce such parts. The "BREAK" may be used to introduce and end the text as is customary. A date/time group after the signature may be used to "time stamp" the message if desired.

Generally speaking, verbal communications often suffice when the officials are listening to our radios, or are standing next to our operators. When they are busy or distracted, common sense dictates when a written note would be the right way to pass information to them. The transmission on the air could be either verbal or written traffic.

It is generally accepted that amateurs supporting such events are not, simply by participating, responsible for running or supervising the event itself. Certainly amateurs should not engage in yelling at each other demanding that event matters be resolved. The officials should interact among themselves to resolve event issues, using us as communicators to gather information and issue commands. We should coach them in the methods of creating clear messages and requests, and should make them aware of the limits of our service, the lack of radio privacy, and

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appropriate message content. Often we must translate the hurried request ourselves into a verbal or formal message that makes sense. The station interfacing with the official should be careful doing any such translating.

“We communicate. We do not administrate.” At least we avoid the later unless we wish to take full responsibility and accept liability for our decisions and communications.

What you do off the air is your business, but you still represent the amateur community. What you do on the air is subject to regulation and exposed to wide listening.

Amateur Radio generally is present to help assure the safe conduct of these events. We serve the participating public.

9.7 PLANNING, PREPARATION, and EXECUTION CHECKLIST

Proper planning and preparation for these type events can not be overemphasized. The following checklist may contain a few items that could be helpful:

- 1) Meet with the event and public safety officials well in advance of the event. Help them to understand what amateur radio can do for them, what it is not permitted to do, and how to structure their plans to allow for the effective use of your resources. These officials will probably have to make extensive plans for their own people, and you want to have your part in the operations well known in those plans.
- 2) Investigate the liability questions for amateurs exposed to risk in the event. Consider the liabilities that might extend to the operators and the event organizers resulting from communications problems.
- 3) Document the course, positions and responsibilities of officials, public safety provisions, and strategies required to perform the event. Document exactly to whom each type emergency or regular message is to be sent, and where those parties will be at all times, fixed or roving. Stay in close touch with the planners until event time. Adapt to last minute changes.
- 4) Use the official plans and course information to create a manning and radio operations plan.
- 5) Plan for sustaining communications with officials who are able to answer questions arising during the event.
- 6) Review the radio environment. Drive the course (for a day event, drive daytime in the higher solar noise; for a weekday event, drive a weekday in the higher commercial noise environment). Check the availability of your favorite hilltop to facilitate communications on the weekday or weekend as appropriate. Check if rain or snow might be a path problem. Check coverage for the type radios you will specify to be used during the event. Check out the intermod. Check out local desensing caused by close stations. Two 2 meter stations can not usually operate at full capability closer than a few hundred feet or more depending on power levels. Some HT's are notoriously bad in this regard. Evaluate what equipment and antennas to specify for the operators. You may discover problems you never thought possible. The day of the event is no time for surprises.

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- 7) Plan for backing up the primary radio coverage and net control. Assign an alternate net control. Look at direct simplex paths between all stations, if possible, to cover for loss of repeaters, NCS, or home stations. Consider using home stations for relay or phone calls, alternate repeaters (with permission), and other bands for backup. Check out your choices and make sure they work.
- 8) Solicit your required manpower. Be sure to allow plenty of time so that fellow amateurs may adjust or reserve their time for the event. Line up extra manpower to cover for last minute cancellations and no-shows. Plan for any required training. Help newcomers learn and gain confidence in what they will do during the event (or team them up with veteran operators).
- 9) Document and distribute the operation plan. Include maps and other aids to present the entire event situation as best you can. It is better to share all the info than to limit info to specific jobs. Include info on what, where, when, how... and how long. List needed equipment, antennas, personal supplies, clothing, food, fixed-portable-mobile-power requirements, etc., that exist for each operator or job. Specify the name, location, and time for meeting with officials for each assignment. Arrange for parking as required.
- 10) Meet with the officials and review your final plans with them before the event. Things have a way of changing without you learning about them. This is the time to make final adjustments. The officials will be encouraged to know that your part of the event is ready to go.
- 11) Arrange for media coverage and publicity if appropriate. Invite your ARES, RACES and NTS operators to participate, of course.
- 12) Arrange for the repeater(s) control operator(s) to be available to respond to equipment or other problems during the event.
- 13) Practice with your operators, as required, to prepare for the event. Help them check out their equipment to be certain it will do the job.
- 14) Run the event. Have experienced stations monitor and possibly record the operation for later review. Keep good NCS records and log emergency traffic.
- 15) When the event is over, review the event with fellow participants. Get their assessment of the amateur radio and the official's performance.
- 16) Review the event with the served officials. Document improvements to be included in future events.
- 17) Share the experience information with other groups, ARES leadership, and prospective "customers". Report the activity to the SEC and SM for the monthly review of Section public service.
- 18) Follow up on media and other coverage of the amateur effort. Stories about amateur radio activity usually require consultant support.
