

ARES of Portage County

Public Service Communications – Basic Skills

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Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)



The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Every licensed amateur, regardless of membership in ARRL or any other local or national organization, is eligible for membership in the ARES. The only qualification, other than possession of an Amateur Radio license, is a sincere desire to serve. Because ARES is an amateur service, only amateurs are eligible for membership. The possession of emergency-powered equipment is desirable, but is not a requirement for membership.

Field Organization

There are four levels of ARES organization--national, section, district and local. National emergency coordination at ARRL Headquarters is under the supervision of the ARRL Field and Educational Services Manager, who is responsible for advising all ARES officials regarding their problems, maintaining contact with federal government and other national officials concerned with amateur emergency communications potential, and in general with carrying out the League's policies regarding emergency communications.

Section Level

At the section level, the Section Emergency Coordinator is appointed by the Section Manager (who is elected by the ARRL members in his or her section) and works under his/her supervision. In most sections, the SM delegates to the SEC the administration of the section emergency plan and the authority to appoint District and local ECs. Some of the ARRL sections with capable SECs are well-organized. A few have scarcely any organization at all. It depends almost entirely on who the section members have put into office as SM and whom he/she has appointed as SEC.

District Level

In the large sections, the local groups could proliferate to the point where simply keeping track of them would be more than a full-time chore, not to mention the idea of trying to coordinate them in an actual emergency. To this end, SECs have the option of grouping their EC jurisdictions into logical units or "districts" and appointing a District EC to coordinate the activities of the local ECs in the district. In some cases, the districts may conform to the boundaries of governmental planning or emergency-operations districts, while in others they are simply based on repeater coverage or geographical boundaries.

Local Level

It is at the local level where most of the real emergency organizing gets accomplished, because this is the level at which most emergencies occur and the level at which ARES leaders make direct contact with the ARES member-volunteers and with officials of the agencies to be served.

The local EC is therefore the key contact in the ARES. The EC is appointed by the SEC, usually on the recommendation of the DEC. Depending on how the SEC has set up the section for administrative purposes, the EC may have jurisdiction over a small community or a large city, an entire county or even a group of counties. Whatever jurisdiction is assigned, the EC is in charge of all ARES activities in his area, not just one interest group, one agency, one club or one band.

(All of the above courtesy of the ARRL Public Service Communications Manual)

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Public Service Communications

FCC Rules and Regulations, Part 97.1 –

“The rules and regulations in this Part are designed to provide an amateur radio service having a fundamental purpose as expressed in the following principles:

*(a) **Recognition and enhancement of the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communication service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications.**”*

For the purposes of this training, we will limit “public service communications” to those non-emergency, pre-planned events that occur on a regular basis. They can include all the events whose names end in “athon” such as marathons, triathlons, biathlons, walkathons, etc., as well as parades, Soap Box Derby races, and so on.

Another term for these is “special events” and they are defined in the ARRL’s “Special Events Communications Manual” as:

“...a term coined by radio amateurs that refers to activities where the public is in attendance as observers and/or participants. They include sporting events such as marathons, bikeathons, and boat races; fund-raisers such as walkathons; celebrations such as parades; and exhibits at fairs, malls and museums. These are all affairs of a preplanned, non-emergency nature.”

By the way, that Special Events manual can be downloaded from the American Radio Relay League at <http://tinyurl.com/3cqdhdh>. It is a handy reference source. In addition, the

League's "Public Service Communications Manual" can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/public-service-communications-manual>.

Also, take a look at their Field Resources Manual, which can be downloaded from <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/ARESFieldResourcesManual.pdf>.

You might also note that for applications of the Incident Command System a similar distinction is drawn between "incidents" which are unplanned occurrences and "events" which are scheduled and planned generally well in advance.

Additional Notes -

- No matter what type of event it may be, always remember that we are the representatives of the amateur radio service. We put a "face" on the hobby. How we look and act is critical. We are unpaid volunteers but we should dress and perform as communications professionals. You only get one chance to make a first impression for both yourself and the other members of the ham radio community.
- Not all amateur radio public service communication efforts are coordinated by local ARES units. Many times a group of hams who are unaffiliated with ARES may work together with event organizers to put together a communication system for the event.
- All of the skills that you learn and develop while participating in these public service events can be of value if you also assist in emergency communications. You can learn more about emcomm by participating in ARES or by joining other communication services such as RACES of Portage County or the Military Auxiliary Communications Service (MARS).
- Always remember, this is a hobby. Enjoy yourself and have some fun.

Served Agencies/Entities

Event sponsors can range from governmental bodies such as departments of parks and recreation to small local groups or charities or even the local chapters of large national organizations such as the American Diabetes Association. You will probably find that a majority of these events are fundraisers for the sponsors.

It is worth noting that there may be some situations where the event sponsor is actually a for profit company that runs the event with a largely charitable purpose. A good local example of this is the Cleveland Marathon. Despite the fact that the sponsoring organization is not a non-profit group, amateur radio can still assist with these events both because of their charitable or public purpose as well as the fact that there is no readily available commercial communications system that could be used.

We need to be sure that when we develop a working relationship with event sponsors who are unfamiliar with amateur radio that we do a good job of educating them about the role and capabilities of ham radio volunteers. We also need to be sure that we do an even better job of listening to them as they describe their event and what they perceive to be their likely communication needs. Once we understand what they are trying to accomplish and what their general expectations may be for amateur radio assistance, we can ask the right questions and make the best suggestions for what type of communications plan may work best for them.

As is noted in the “Special Events Communications Manual”:

“Specifically, we must be accepted by event sponsors and once accepted, our continued ability to contribute in times of disaster is based on the efficiency and effectiveness of our performance. While acceptance, image, efficiency and effectiveness are all important to the ongoing working relationships between amateurs and event officials, it is the initial acceptance that is often difficult to achieve.

Event sponsors, police and fire officials tend to be very cautious and skeptical concerning those who are not members of the public safety professions. This posture is based primarily on experiences in which well intended but somewhat overzealous volunteers have complicated, and in some cases jeopardized, efforts in emergencies. The amateur operator or other volunteer who wishes to be of assistance must be aware of this perception.”

We are volunteering to assist them in their event. If we have helpful suggestions about the design of the event and the sponsors are open to them, we might find that they are well received and implemented. But if not, then we need to get past the idea that the sponsors didn't take our advice and remember that it is their event. Unless their plan involves something that places our volunteers at some undue risk, we provide the communications, they design the event.

It takes time to build relationships. They are the key to successful partnerships. Those relationships are never enhanced if we either fail to understand what is being expected of us or oversell what we can do. In either event we are bound to disappoint the people we are trying to help and we could destroy a working relationship before it even has a chance to develop.

Types of Events:

As noted above, there can be quite a range of events, from small, relatively short ones to those that are all day long, extend over a wide area, and require dozens of communications volunteers.

The basic concepts are the same no matter the event. Communications are usually over a directed net and team members are placed at critical locations on the event site or route where it is most likely that information will have to be relayed to or from. But how all this happens in a constructive, efficient manner that meets the needs of the client agency can vary widely.

As mentioned above, a dialogue with the event organizers is crucial to understanding what their communication needs may be. They may be brand new at what they are doing and never had to consider how event staff will stay in touch with other. Or in this day and age they may assume (rightly so in some circumstances) that they can satisfy their communication needs with commercial services, particularly cell phones. Don't be too quick to disparage cell phone usage. These folks are accustomed to using cell phones and can manage a lot of person to person contacts with them. They need to understand how the phones may still come up short and how amateur radio can augment them.

That is where our educational role comes in. It can be handled candidly by acknowledging the usefulness of the phone system but diplomatically pointing out how, for instance, that it is inadequate for handling a distributed communications system that needs to direct information to a number of staff simultaneously. We can explain how once that person is tied up on his phone she may be isolated from other communications.

Again, this is just part of the process of identifying needs so an appropriate communications plan is developed. But there is more to that process and a lot will depend on the type of event.

The communications for a 5K race (three miles) on a one and half mile out and back course can potentially be managed by as few as three or four volunteers, probably using simplex. On the other hand, a marathon (26.2 miles) on a loop route that traverses varying terrains will need substantially more communication team members with a net on a repeater.

So each event needs to be assessed for its particular needs and characteristics that will establish the parameters for the communications plan. These could include:

- Duration (time) of the event
- Number of participants
- Length (distance) of the event
- Route conditions, especially on public roads
- Terrain and elevation variations
- Expected weather conditions
- Traffic (information) needs of the organizers, e.g., voice and data

Something to keep in mind is that, in a lot of ways, the communications system for a large event is generally just a scaled up version of the plan for a smaller event. Also, don't be intimidated by the size of the event. In all likelihood, your role as a marathon volunteer will be little or no different than it would be for a 5K.

Communication Plans

There is no one surefire way to develop a communications (comms) plan for an event. In fact, you will find that the format and content of comms plans will vary depending upon the particular approach taken by the communications coordinator. In substance, the plans will have a lot in common though there may be a lot of difference in the details.

The comms plan is, essentially, the operational plan for the communications team. A good way to draft one is to first list the team's goal(s) for the event, then your objectives (specific, measurable, realistic methods to meet your goal) and then devise the strategies (general plans) and tactics (specific methods) that will be used to accomplish them.

Here is a general example of that type of communications plan:

Goal: To provide effective wide-area communications in support of the marathon which provide real-time information to race officials and facilitate the safe operation of the event.

Objectives:

- All volunteers will report to their assigned locations no later than their designated report time and the operations net will be running by 0630 hours and continue operations until the last participant has finished the course or as otherwise directed by the race director.
- Maintain net discipline consistent with professional communications practices.
- Forward all tactical traffic to third party recipients within two minutes of receipt.

Strategies:

- Information regarding assignments and the distribution of race-related materials will be handed out prior to the event.
- Communications volunteers will be located on the route in the vicinity of water stops or other critical locations; assigned to assist race officials; deployed with the pace vehicle, SAG vehicle(s), and the medical unit.
- Voice communications will be conducted on a repeater that has good transmit and receive coverage over the entire race course.

Tactics:

- The operations net will be conducted on the [repeater freq. and PL] and if the repeater should fail, primary communications will be on 146.880 simplex
- All volunteers shall deploy with appropriate communications gear (HT, mobile radio, backup batteries, etc.)
- In the event of simplex operations, all stations will be prepared to monitor and relay traffic from other stations to the NCS.
- Tactical call signs shall be used as assigned.
- On-air communications shall be kept to the minimum required to convey all necessary information.
- Good net discipline will be maintained.

A plan like this makes it clear to all volunteers as to what is expected from the operation and how it will be accomplished.

Pre-event Briefing

An excellent tool for making sure that all team members are on the same page is to hold a briefing a few days before the actual event. Team leaders can review and explain the communications plan and answer volunteers' questions about it. It is a real benefit for all involved to clear the air on all comms plans issues before the actual event.

Additionally, the briefing provides an opportunity for the team members to meet each other and put a face with a call sign. This familiarity adds to team cohesion.

Net Operations

Depending on the scope and scale of the event there could be more than one net. For instance, a primary operational or tactical net would be where most of the informal traffic is heard. There could be a separate (i.e., on another frequency) command net for unit leaders and data or voice traffic nets to send and receive formal traffic.

The typical operational net will be a **directed net** meaning that all calls and traffic go through the Net Control Station (NCS). Think of the NCS as the traffic cop who keeps traffic flowing and prevents crashes from occurring. Without an NCS there would be chaos on the air.

Net Traffic

“Traffic” is the catch-all reference for the information conveyed over a net and it can be **informal** or **formal**.

Informal traffic, also often referred to as **tactical** traffic, will be most of what you hear on the net. It is the quick and concise relaying of ongoing updates and information about the event or operational exchanges between the NCS and deployed volunteers. Oftentimes it might be information for event staff who are co-located with the comms volunteer.

Formal traffic is specific information that needs to be forwarded to someone who is usually outside of the immediate area where the comms volunteer is located. The message is reduced to writing both to ensure its accuracy when it is delivered and to create a literal paper trail.

The most important step you can take as a comms volunteer is to find out what information you are expected to be moving as traffic on the net. This should be covered in a pre-event briefing but, if not, make sure that you ask the communications coordinator or the NCS to be sure. In most races it could be nothing more than advising the NCS when the first and last participants pass your site. But other details may be required like descriptions, bib numbers, etc. Familiarize yourself with those and be aware of any other information you should be passing along to the NCS.

Net Protocol

Remember that old adage about listening before transmitting? Well it applies during event nets, too.

As a general rule you should always be monitoring the net because the NCS may be trying to contact you. But you also want to be aware of the information that is being passed on the net because it may have some relevance to you or the event staff you are working with. Sometimes it may even give you a heads up as to information that may also be requested from you or the event staff you are working with. If you are a new volunteer or simply new to this event, listening will also give you a feel for how the NCS is running the net and what he or she expects from volunteers in the field.

More importantly, should you need to call the NCS you want to be sure that you are not interrupting some other exchange that might already be in progress. If that happens, you will likely get a quick “STANDBY” from the NCS.

If the net is already occupied with another matter, just because you have information to report, such as a runner that passed your location, doesn't mean that you have to pass it now, particularly if the current net situation is of a higher priority. Note the time and when there is an appropriate break or pause in the net proceedings call the NCS and pass the information and the time that it occurred.

In all event nets, if a station announces EMERGENCY or PRIORITY traffic all other stations should standby until the NCS has dealt with the matter. The NCS will advise when it is permissible to resume regular net operations.

Make sure that you know whether you are to report injury or damage incidents directly to the NCS or if you are to make a direct call to the safety forces dispatch or 911 and then notify the NCS of the incident. Either way it is always a good idea after the report has been made to take a few minutes and make some notes of what transpired, particularly if you witnessed it, in case any additional report is needed later.

Net Practices/Net Discipline

Along the lines of what is stated above, good net practices and net discipline will include:

- The transmit button on your radio may be referred to as the Push To Talk (PTT) but that doesn't mean you should press it and immediately begin speaking which will cause you to clip off some of your transmit audio, especially if you are working through a repeater.

Press, pause a second or two, and then talk. Get in the habit of doing this on a daily basis.

- Think before you speak. Always a good idea but especially important in an event net. There are only sixty seconds in each minute of air time and if you use them up hemming and hawing and trying to express a thought you will be denying access to the frequency by someone who may have something more important to say and is prepared to say it.
- In other words, be as brief and succinct as possible. Use as few words as necessary to accurately convey the necessary information. Listen to hams who are good at doing this and try to emulate them.
- In the same vein, familiarize yourself with procedural words, also called pro-words, such as AFFIRMATIVE, NEGATIVE, ROGER, SAY AGAIN, DISREGARD, I SPELL, CORRECTION, OVER, OUT, and so on, and use them appropriately.
- Practice using the ITU phonetics so that if you have to spell something out you are not fumbling to think of the proper phonetic.
- Should you have to leave the net (yes, there are some personal needs that may require this), request permission from the NCS and then report back in when you return.
- If you do not have traffic for the net, stay off the air. Yes it may be quiet and even boring for you but that is what happens at some events. If the NCS has traffic for you, he or she will be calling.
- Use **tactical calls** (e.g., WATER STOP ONE) as assigned, remembering to also comply with FCC requirements for station identification.

Equipment and Supplies

What you need to take with you to your assigned event location is entirely dependent on the nature of your assignment and the length of time that you will be in the field. The best thing that you can do in order to ensure your preparedness is to have the equipment that you will generally need for an event organized into a go-kit. Even better, keep a checklist inventory with your go-kit so that you can quickly inventory it and make sure that it is fully stocked before you head out.

A search of the internet will direct you to any number of sources for suggested go-kit inventories. A sample short term go-kit list is attached at the end of these materials. All the lists share common ingredients and then vary depending largely on the personal preference of the person or who created the list or mission-specific requirements for organizations that have created their own lists.

The lists are fairly self-explanatory and don't need to be rewritten here. What is important is that you have a list of your own and actually use it. You will find that each time you go out for an event you will discover that there was something that you needed but failed to bring (or stuff that you brought that you didn't really need.) Update your list and go-kit accordingly.

Most events are relatively short term, i.e., two to seven or so hours, so when it comes to personal supplies, especially food and water/beverages, there is only so much that you need to worry about taking. Don't plan on relying for event sponsors to have these for you. Your goal should be to never be a burden on those that we are assisting and even if they are glad to give you some provisions that is no reason to not bring your own.

Your clothing should be considered as part of your equipment. Wear and bring with you clothing that is appropriate for the anticipated weather conditions (check the forecast) and it should be clothing that is clean and has a professional look about it. Don't dress like you are going to a hamfest.

Radios

No matter what radio(s) you are using for the event, make sure that you know how to use it. Even the "simplest" HT can be a nightmare to program. Spend time with the radio. Practice using the programming functions. Then practice some more. If your go-kit radio is one that you use only infrequently it is even more important that you take this time to practice with it.

Don't forget to program your radio with the frequencies, PL tones, etc., listed in the communications plan before you leave home. And then check to make sure that the radio is working properly. Carry the radio manual with you or get a cheat sheet such as a Nifty-Ham guide for the rig and don't be too proud to use it. Make sure that if the radio sends beeps or tones for special features that you know how to disable them.

If you will be using accessory devices such as a soundcard interface with the radio, make sure that you know how to connect it to the radio and computer and that you are familiar with the software.

Maybe one of the most important buttons on your radio is the one with the LOCK function. Know how to use it. It is so easy to inadvertently bump the tuning knob or unwittingly press a button and the next thing you know you are off frequency. And don't forget to look at that HT occasionally to make sure that it is set where you left it and that the battery has not gone dead. There may be a good reason why the net sounds so quiet.

A short list of things that you should be sure to bring:

- Always have some form of ID that identifies you as an amateur radio operator and communications volunteer. If you have an ARES ID, wear it. You should not need to have your call sign plastered all over you on hat, jacket, shirt, pins, buttons, etc.
- A cell phone. If it makes you feel better just think of it as another radio. Program the phone with primary contact numbers for other event volunteers, NCS, etc.
- A headset. Not only can there be circumstances where the ambient noise may prevent you from hearing even a speaker/mic, there could be a situation where you do not want staff to be bothered by the net audio or casual bystanders to hear traffic that may be confidential or none of their concern.
- Charged spare batteries for your HT. Even better, also have a battery pack for your HT that uses disposable AA batteries. Even batteries that you believe are fully charged may turn out to not have the operational life that you expect.
- If you are going to be working at a location where you should be readily identifiable as a communications volunteer, wear an ARES or other similar hi-viz green vest. Vehicle placards should also be used if you are deployed with your vehicle.
- Sunblock, hat, sunglasses and other gear that protects you from the summer elements.. Of course this is seasonal but it beats getting sunburned.

The Actual Event

First and foremost, be at your assigned location on time and report in to the NCS or other designated person. The comms plan or assignment list should provide contact phone numbers for comms team leaders so in the event you may be unable to locate your assigned site or be otherwise delayed in reporting or unable to attend you can call the appropriate person immediately for information or instructions.

Make sure that you are familiar with the communications plan, your assignment and the traffic that you are expected to handle.

Situational Awareness and Personal Safety

Your first priority as a deployed volunteer should always be to ensure your own safety. You are of no help to the event staff or communications team if you are injured and unable to perform your duties. More importantly, we want all members of our comms team back safely after they have been out in the field. We never want to expose them to undue risk.

But you are the person who is in the best position to make sure that you stay safe and your first step is to maintain **situational awareness**. Examine your assigned area for potential hazards, whether for you, other staff or event participants.

If you identify a hazard that you believe presents an undue risk to you or others, report it to the NCS and ask that the communications coordinator be advised. If you think that the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced and that it is not safe for you to perform your duties at that location, tell the NCS and request instructions.

Pay attention while you are on the radio, too. Don't be so distracted by your job that you quit paying attention to potential risks. Keep your guard up at all times by always being observant and watching for changing conditions.

Check the weather forecast before you report for duty and be prepared for weather hazards. These can range from snowy roads during a winter assignment or severe weather, particularly including thunderstorms, during the rest of the year. If there is lightning in your area, take appropriate precautions.

If you are aware of hazards for participants, advise them as they pass your location.

Event Staff

Many times you will be assigned to a location where one or more event staff or volunteers will be working. When you arrive, introduce yourself to them. Ask if one of them is in charge of event activities at that location. Explain your communications duties to them since they may be unfamiliar with your role. Invariably, you will find that they will be appreciative of your service and impressed by the effectiveness of radio communications.

If you run into any personality conflicts in the field, simply step back from the situation, don't make it worse. Do your job politely, you will probably never have to work with that problem individual again.

Pay attention to the event operations at your location. Having a better idea of what the staff are doing can help you anticipate their communication needs.

Additional Duties

You always want to remember that you are a communications volunteer and that your primary responsibility is to ensure that you are managing the communication needs at your service site. But you are also a volunteer in support of the overall event. What should you do if you are asked to perform some additional tasks?

This question comes up on a regular basis and the answer is simple: do what you can to assist with tasks that will not distract you from your radio communications duties and that do not put you at personal risk or exceed your capacity to perform them safely. You have to use your own judgment on this, but you can bet that your help will be greatly appreciated.

These extra duties can be as simple as helping to fill cups at a water station, picking up route signs, or directing runners or cyclists. If it is something more complicated or risky, take a moment and explain to the event staff why you won't be able to assist. Never use the "My job is just to do communications line" as an excuse. You will certainly be remembered, only for the wrong reason.

Other Tips

- Always deploy with a copy of the communications plan, assignments and materials that describe the event. Take a clipboard and a pad of paper for notes.
- Record the times and details of any significant incidents in your area.

- Participants may ask you questions about the event because you may have that “official” look. If you don’t know the answer, tell them and refer them to staff who may be able to assist them. If net traffic is light you may also be able to ask the NCS to refer the inquiry to appropriate staff if the answer is not available locally.
- Refer all media inquiries to the event organizers.
- If you are watching for first or last participants, remember to get correct descriptions, including gender, bib number, etc.
- Never leave your assigned area without advising the NCS and receiving permission to do so. Then advise when you return to the net.
- Usually your service will be completed when the last participant passes your location. Advise the NCS and request permission to close or secure your station.
- Avoid all unnecessary radio communications.

After Action Reports

No communication effort is complete until an After Action Review had been conducted and the After Action Report drafted. The AAR is the best way for us to conduct a candid self-assessment of our performance during an event.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has published an excellent guide on after action reviews. That guide offers this definition of an AAR:

“An after-action review (AAR) is a professional discussion of an event, that focuses on performance standards and enables development professionals and colleagues with similar or shared interests to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. The AAR tool affords leaders, staff, and partners an opportunity to gain maximum benefit from every program, activity, or task.”

It goes on to say that an AAR provides:

- Candid insights into specific strengths and weaknesses from various perspectives
- Feedback and insight critical to improved performance
- Details often lacking in evaluation reports alone

The guide also describes the AAR as

“...the basis for learning from our successes and failures. A good manager or leader does not learn in a vacuum: the people involved in an activity—those closest to it—are the ones best poised to identify the learning it offers. No one, regardless of how skilled or experienced they are, will see as much as those who actually carry out the events, program, or activity. The AAR is the keystone of the process of learning from successes and failures.

Feedback compares the actual output of a process with the intended outcome. By focusing on the desired outcome and by describing specific observations, teams can identify strengths and weaknesses and together decide how to improve performance. This shared learning improves team proficiency and promotes bonding, collegiality, and group cohesion.

Though not a cure-all for all issues or problems, the AAR provides a starting point for improvements to future activities.

Because AAR participants actively discover what happened and why, they can learn and remember more than they would from a critique or formal evaluation. A critique only gives one viewpoint and frequently provides little opportunity for discussion of events by participants. Other observations and comments may not be encouraged. The climate of a critique, focusing on what is wrong, often prevents candid discussion and stifles opportunities for learning and team building.”

In short, every participant should have input into the AAR since everyone's experience was different during the event.

One very useful format for an AAR is to ask and answer the following questions

- What did we expect to happen?
- What actually happened?
- What went well and why?
- What can be improved?

With these simple questions we can quickly focus on what our communications plan anticipated (our expectations) versus the reality of what happened during the event and then identify the pluses and minuses of both our plan and performance. This can all be done in a way that focuses on facts and not on personalities.

If possible, a debriefing held immediately after the event can be a convenient way to get all participants' impressions while still fresh in their minds. Even if a debriefing is used it can still be beneficial to allow for written comments within a few days after team members have had a chance to reflect on the event. It can be helpful to circulate the draft AAR for comments and suggestion before the final version is released.

The AAR is useful for both the communications team as well as the event planners. Those "lessons learned" are invaluable for the planners and the future communication unit leaders. Remember, we can never be sure who is going to be filling those roles for future events so we cannot simply rely on someone's recollection of what was done and how well things went in past years. A written communications plan and an AAR are the best tools for providing both continuity and improvement from year to year.

Although the communications team's AAR is intended to specifically address its plans and performance, most event organizers will also appreciate constructive comments and suggestions regarding the overall event.

Attachments

From the Portage County RACES Manual, here is a sample version of what your Go-Kit might contain for a public service event.

ALL DEPLOYMENTS REGARDLESS OF LENGTH

IDENTIFICATION & INFORMATION

- ID cards and other authorizations
- Copy of Amateur Radio license
- Driver's License
- RACES operations manual, including:
 - Communications plan(s)
 - Frequency lists and net schedules
 - Maps, both street and topographic for Portage County
 - Key phone numbers, email and internet addresses
 - Contact information for other members in your group
 - Copy of emergency plans
 - Resource lists: whom to call for which kinds of problems
- Log sheets, message forms, note paper, pencils, pens, sticky notes, clips, rubber bands, envelopes, stapler, markers, etc.

THREE TO SIX HOUR DEPLOYMENT KIT

RADIOS AND ACCESSORIES

- Handheld VHF or dual-band radio with manual or operating guide
- Spare rechargeable batteries for handhelds
- Alkaline battery pack for handhelds (if available)
- Alkaline batteries (AA, AAA, 9 Volt)
- Speaker mic and earphone for handhelds
- Battery chargers, AC and DC for handhelds
- External antenna, e.g. mag mount or J-pole, plus adapters and coax

PERSONAL GEAR

- Clothing appropriate for the season and deployment (including Emergency vest)
- Foul weather or protective gear, warm coats, hats, etc. as needed
- Snacks and water
- First aid kit, personal medications and prescriptions
- Money, including quarters and one dollar bills for vending machines, tolls, etc., and credit card

- Multi-purpose tool (e.g., Leatherman) and/or multi-purpose knife (e.g., Swiss Army), crescent wrench, screwdrivers
- Flashlight or mini-mag light, spare bulb and batteries

OPERATING SUPPLIES

- Standard forms used by the served agencies
- Extension cord(s), multiple outlet power strip
- Clipboard(s)
- Compass

OPTIONAL

- Amplifier for HT
- Cell phone, spare battery, charger