Emergency Communications Plan

Clinton County ARES
(CCARES)

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1. INTRODUCTION

A. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is composed of those FCC licensed amateurs who have agreed to volunteer their time, equipment, and services on behalf of the community on a non- compensated basis.

B. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) along with the National Traffic System (NTS) comprise the Public Service Corps, a component of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the national organization which represents the American Radio Amateur in both the national and international arenas.

C. The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a communications service conducted by licensed amateurs for the purpose of providing radio communications to county, state, and federal civil defense preparedness organizations.

D. The Clinton County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (Northern New York Section), hereinafter designated by the acronym "CCARES", functions in accordance with approved plans as directed by the Northern New York Section Emergency Coordinator, an appointee of the Northern New York Section Manager, an elected official of the American Radio Relay League.

E.   All licensed radio amateurs are invited to become members of CCARES regardless of their affiliation with the American Radio Relay League. The only qualification other than possession of an Amateur Radio License, is a sincere desire to participate in public service.

F. Members of CCARES will be reviewed every two years to determine if:
    (1) They have been active in nets, drills, or other CCARES activities,
    (2) They desire to remain active in the group, and to continue their enrollment.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

A. To serve as a written guide for the mobilization, deployment, and operation of members and equipment in support of any declared or undeclared disaster, other emergency, or called operation requiring the deployment of primary and secondary communications as the situation warrants. An emergency is an event in which regular communications fail completely, or are inadequate to support the situation at hand.

B. To delineate the organizational framework of an amateur radio activity which is capable of providing the required routine and emergency communications for the geographical area of Clinton County.

C. To ensure readiness of CCARES by means of frequent drills, equipment deployment, pre-positioning of equipment and instructions, and any other items deemed necessary or advisable.

D. To enumerate the organizations, which this activity may be called upon to serve.

3. **CONDITIONS Of ALERT**

A. Notification of a major disaster or impending threat such as a micro-burst, ice storm or earthquake will usually be obtained from the electronic news media. CCARES members should thereupon begin monitoring the local SKYWARN or county VHF/UHF repeater frequencies (Whiteface 145.110(-) PL100, and Lyon Mtn. 147.285(+) PL123) and the County 911 dispatch frequencies to obtain further information.

B. The ARRL Northern New York Section has adopted a uniform "Condition Alert System" which will normally be so designated by the Section Manager (SM) or the Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC). The County Emergency Coordinator may establish the conditions of alert if deemed necessary after consultation with the local Civil Defense or Public Safety officials.

(l). Condition One:
CCARES members in the alerted area are advised that a potential exists for a call for their services. Members should monitor ARES nets, public service radio, news media and generally stay well informed of any impending situation. Amateurs in the alerted area should prepare to respond immediately to an actual call for their services. Preparations would include checking emergency related equipment, packing equipment for transportation on short notice, and any standard precautionary measures advised by civil authorities.

(2). Condition Two:
When any part of the section is on CONDITION TWO, one or more section nets may be activated at the discretion of the Section ARES officials. Amateurs in alerted areas may be deployed to emergency-related assignments, and special equipment and procedures may be activated as needed. NO ROUTINE TRAFFIC will be handled on designated nets. Most emergencies, even severe ones, can be handled without ever going beyond CONDITION TWO.

(3). Condition Three:
CONDITION THREE can be invoked only by the SEC or SM. CONDITION THREE applies only to specifically designated nets; not to all active emergency nets. It will generally apply only to a single net when CONDITION THREE is invoked, the SEC or SM may request the FCC to limit use of the frequency to emergency-related traffic. CONDITION THREE is useful mostly for maintaining tight control over HF circuits where large numbers of stations are causing communications problems. Even if traffic volume is low, the frequency is maintained for high-priority traffic. All traffic must be formal, tactical or administrative. NO ROUTINE COMMUNICATIONS are handled.

(4). Condition Four:
The STM and Net Managers are authorized to reduce operating hours or to restrict operations as the emergency passes and traffic loads subside. Only the SEC may invoke CONDITION FOUR on an alerted section net or if more than one District is involved in the emergency operation. CONDITION FOUR can be invoked by a DEC when the emergency operation involves only his own District and no Section net has been activated.

4. ACTIVATION OF THE SYSTEM

A. In Clinton County potential disasters would primarily be caused by severe weather conditions associated with ice storms, earthquakes, and blizzard conditions, which would create power outages and the disruption of normal communications. Railroad, highway and shipping mishaps, plus major fires, may also force the evacuation of personnel and the opening of shelters. Disasters in adjacent counties could also result in the influx of great numbers of evacuees who must be housed and fed.

B. Aid may be requested by the Clinton County Department of Public Safety, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the National Weather Service and other various local municipal and county officials, in keeping with procedures already established between the Clinton County School Board, Clinton County Sheriffs Department and the Clinton County Department of Public Safety, the Clinton County Emergency Services Department will coordinate all shelter activities involving County Schools. Clinton County Emergency Services Department will coordinate the opening of schools for sheltering, the activation of the Emergency Operations Center and activation of Clinton County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (CCARES) for sheltering communication support during activities involving the Clinton County School System.

C. This plan will be implemented when the appropriate civil authorities declare an emergency and/or when a communications emergency exists as determined by the Clinton County Emergency Services Director and/or the County RACES Radio officer or ARES EC.

D. The CCARES VHF/UHF Emergency Net will be activated by the County Emergency Coordinator, the county RACES Radio Officer, or by any Assistant Emergency Coordinator depending upon the circumstances and the availability of personnel at the time. The person activating the net will assume the responsibility of a Net Control Station until relieved by a designated replacement.

E. Initial operation of the CCARES Net will be on the WHITEFACE repeater. If the repeater is not available, communications will be maintained as directed by the net control station in accordance with the alternate frequencies listed in the attached Communications Annex.

F. The Emergency Coordinator or the Assistant Emergency Coordinator and the designated Net Control Station will alert personnel listed on the CCARES/RACES roster by any and all means available utilizing the "Contact Tree Annex" attached to this Plan. This will include telephone calls, the main repeater frequency 145.110 MHz., first alternate frequency 147.285 MHz. and mobilization alerts on all local VHF/UHF repeaters. Depending on the gravity of the situation, calls can also be made to local TV and Radio stations, and the Clinton County 911 dispatch center.
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G. In any emergency activation of RACES whether it is local, state, or federal, assisting these and other related agencies will be considered top priority.

H. Members checking into the emergency nets will be directed to stand-by for possible assignments.Mobile units are to be prepared for extended stay if deployed and to equip themselves accordingly.

I. Actual deployment and/or recall of radio units to and from assigned locations will be made by the Emergency Coordinator, or Assistant Emergency Coordinator, whoever happens to be in charge at the time upon the request of authority through the medium of the net control station.

J. The Net Control Station will maintain a record of all stations checking into the net, note their communication capabilities, and the location and duration of their deployment, if any. If mobile teams or shelter operators are deployed for an extended period of time, the Net Control Station is responsible for ensuring their periodic relief and replacement.

K. The Net Control Station will ensure the establishment of appropriate liaison with other VHF/UHF nets and will designate specific stations to establish and maintain such liaison if they have not been assigned this task prior to the operation or emergency. Certain stations may also be requested to check into the Central Area or Statewide RACES Nets, the Northern New York Section Nets, and various MARS Nets. Net frequencies are included in the attached Communications Annex.

L. Before deploying any teams, the Net Control Station will thoroughly brief the parties concerned as to their mission and points of contact at their location of deployment.

5. MESSAGE HANDLING

A. Standard ARRL message forms and procedures are to be used for all messages going into the National Traffic System. Most of these will be of the health and welfare variety.

B. The originator of the message is responsible for the message contents and will sign the message.

C. ARRL recommended precedence would be used for all written traffic, i.e. emergency, priority, welfare, and routine. Welfare traffic will only be handled after all emergency and priority traffic has been cleared. This also applies to the Red Cross equivalent of the Welfare message - The Disaster Welfare Inquiry (DWI).

D. The CCARES operator is responsible for assigning the precedence designation to the message - not the message originator. It would be preferred to have all messages written and recorded. However, during emergencies and especially in fast moving situations it may be impractical if not impossible to record every message. The great bulk of the communications will be of a tactical nature (person-to-person) between the concerned parties. In these instances the local shelter operator or team chief will ensure that these conversations are brief and that net discipline is maintained. Any station involved with message handling should record as much information as possible, and at least the following.

1. A message number for reference purposes.
2. A precedence indicating the importance of the message.
3. A station of origin so any reply or handling inquiries can be referred to that station.
4. A check (count of the number of words in the message text) so receiving stations will know whether any words were missed.
5. A place of origin so the recipient will know where the message came from (not necessarily the location of the station of origin).
6. Filing time, ordinarily optional but of great importance in an emergency message.
7. Date of origin.

E. Copies of all written messages will be retained in accordance with FCC regulations. Deployed units and other CCARES stations with written traffic will forward copies of the traffic to the Emergency Coordinator after the termination of the operation.

6. TRAINING

In order to ensure the smooth operation of the CCARES emergency network in time of trouble, it is essential that the system be exercised on a routine basis. CCARES also participates in the annual ARRL SET exercise. This exercise is conducted in the fall of each year. Additionally, routine exercises will be conducted by the Emergency Coordinator.

7. ARES TEAMS

A. RED CROSS LIAISON TEAM
B. SHELTER COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
C. VHF NET COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
D. EOC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
E. ALTERNATE EOC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
F. MOBILE TEAMS
G. PACKET COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
H. REPEATER OPERATION TEAM
I. ARESMAT TEAM

RED CROSS LIAISON TEAM: This team is responsible for Red Cross liaison and for radio communications coordination with the Red Cross in Clinton County. The team consists of a team leader and two team members. The team should get to know the leadership of the local Red Cross and provide operators to the local chapter house if required. Interpersonal relation skills are most important for this team.

SHELTER COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: The shelter communications team provides communications for the shelters that are opened during an emergency. Desired skills are two-meter net operating, message handling and ability to man the shelter for a period of time when it is activated. The number of members is proportionate to the number of shelters open and the length of time that they are to be open. The team leader is responsible for who is to man what shelter and for how long.

VHF NET COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: This team provides liaison between the ARES VHF net on 2 meters and the state traffic and ARES statewide net on 75 or 40 meters. This position requires an operator with a general class or higher license, two-meter equipment, and HF radio capability on 40 & 75 meter SSB. Traffic handling skills and HF net experience are desirable. A team leader and several team members are needed.

EOC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: The EOC communication team provides the communication liaison between the EOC or Mobile command post EOC and the VHF ARES net. The EOC team may provide HF net liaison if the County personnel need "tactical" communication. This position requires a General license or higher, net control skill, message handling skills, and ability to operate more than one radio at the same time! This is perhaps the most demanding team assignment. A team leader and several members are needed.

ALTERNATE EOC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: This team performs its function at a location separate from the primary EOC in the advent of catastrophic failure at the primary location. The Alternate EOC communications team provides the two-meter net operation and control. The AEOC team also provides the control for the 220MHz operation if such facilities are available. The AEOC team needs net operating skills, net control skills, and Technician class or higher license.

MOBILE TEAMS: The mobile teams provide communications to locations within Clinton County or outside the county. Work outside the county comes when the Section EC requests help from outside counties.The team members need portable equipment for VHF and HF. Camping gear is desirable. The ability to be gone from home for a number of days may be required. Several team members are needed.

PACKET COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: The packet team will provide liaison and traffic handling via packet radio. The team will develop methods of incorporating packet radio into shelter operations if needed. The packet team will help publicize ARES activities on area BBS. Packet team members need two-meter packet equipment. Their terminal must permit either printing of messages or disk storage of messages. Team members need to become familiar with digi, non-digi, network and non-network as well as simplex operation.

REPEATER OPERATION TEAM: The repeater operation team provides repeater service to the ARES group. The team members will provide control of the repeaters during ARES activities. This requires some knowledge of repeater operation and repeater systems.

ARESMAT TEAM: The ARESMAT concept recognizes that a neighboring section's ARES resources can be quickly overwhelmed in a large scale disaster. Support must come from ARES members outside the affected area. This is when a "Jump Team" or ARESMAT (Amateur Radio Emergency Service Mutual Assistance Team) unit may be requested to assist. The CCARES EC or designated official will be responsible for assigning any extra needed personnel for the above teams.

8. DISTRIBUTION AND MAINTENANCE

A. A copy of this plan will be provided to each of the CCARES members.

B. This plan and its' associated appendices will be maintained and updated by the EC. The basic plan will be updated at least annually. The appendices will be up-dated as they become obsolete. Members should provide information reflecting changes in personnel, frequencies, and other pertinent data to the EC so that the EC can keep the plan current. Any ARES member in the county who feels an improvement can be made to the plan should submit his/her suggestion, in writing, to the EC for consideration and possible inclusion in the plan.

Mark A. Varin
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A. Communications Annex

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Primary Repeater - Whiteface      145.110 (-) PL100
Secondary Repeater - Lyon Mt.     147.285 (+) PL123
Tertiary Repeaters - Terry Mt.    145.490 (-) PL123
                   - Rand Hill    147.150 (+) PL123
Simplex Fx. -                          146.415
     National Simplex Call        146.520
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