POLK COUNTY ARES Emergency Operations Plan

Emergency Operations Plan
1. Scope

This document provides a general plan for Amateur Radio Operators within Polk County to support an emergency situation. A detailed procedure for specific emergencies (such as Skywarn) may be defined in a separate Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The information contained in this plan is to be used as a guide. It is not the intent of this plan to limit the action of an operator who is on site and best able to assess the prevailing conditions.

2. Definitions

ARES - Amateur Radio Emergency Service
AEC - Assistant Emergency Coordinator
EC - Emergency Coordinator
EOC - Emergency Operations Center
HLS/EM - Homeland Security/Emergency Management
ICS - Incident Command System
NIMS - National Incident Management System
RACES - Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services
SEC - Section Emergency Coordinator
SM - Section Manager
STM - Section Traffic Manager
SOP - Standard Operating Procedure
UC - Unified Command

3. Pre-Activation Procedure

Amateurs who become aware of a developing emergency situation in which Amateur Radio support may be requested, should:
Monitor 146.940 MHz (tone 114.8)- offset and 146.610 (tone 114.8)- offset Simplex frequency will be 146.490. Also monitor 147.075 (tone 114.8)+ offset(this is a link system repeater)
Limit non-essential conversations (rag-chews) to make it easier for other stations to monitor.

4. Activation Procedure

4.1 Request to Activate

A request to activate an Amateur Radio response may be made by:
Contacting a member on the Emergency Contact List.

4.2 Authorization to Activate

Formal activities begin upon the request of Polk County Homeland Security/Emergency Management or any public agency. A decision to activate may also be made by the EC or an AEC when it is apparent that an emergency exists or is imminent.

4.3 Activation Procedure

The following steps should be taken to activate an Amateur Radio response to an emergency:
 Attempt to notify the EC and all AECs via telephone or designated frequencies.
 Establish a formal net on 146.940 (tone 114.8)- offset and notify all amateurs
 monitoring. Alternate repeaters: 146.610 (tone 114.8)-offset 147.075 (tone 114.8)+ offset
Listening Amateurs should check in with net control only if requested.

Activate the telephone call tree if it appears that maximum resources will be needed. (telephone tree will be formed and incorporated at a later date)

5. Operational Procedures

5.1 Command and Control
The command hierarchy is as follows (in descending order):
1. Polk County Homeland Security/Emergency Management
2. Public Safety Agency being served
3. Relief Agency being served
4. EC, AEC or his/her designee

Net Control station Routine direction should be given by Net Control. The EC or AEC should provide direction via net control whenever practical. Specific direction may be given by the event coordinator at the request of the requesting agency or organization.

5.2 Net Control Operation
The net control operator has the responsibility of maintaining contact with all participants, and assuring that the requested operations are being carried out.
To facilitate this, he/she should:
  Limit traffic to highest priority if traffic levels are high.
  Keep a log of all participants on frequency.
  Periodically confirm contact with each participant.
  (This helps spot dead HT batteries or other communications problems.)
  Check progress on individual assignments
  Temporarily redirect specific traffic to alternate frequencies if necessary.

5.3 Polk County Homeland Security/Emergency Management Liaison
There should be a person located at Emergency Management (a different person than Net Control) to pass relevant reports to Homeland Security/Emergency Management. This person should man a secondary radio in the EOC radio room. Due to the level of activity in the EOC radio room, the liaison should monitor the net and present only relevant traffic to Homeland Security/Emergency Management. Homeland Security/Emergency Management can then request additional information via the liaison as necessary.

5.4 Agency Liaison/Event Coordinator
There should be an Amateur Radio operator assigned as liaison with each served agency or organization. His/her duties are to:
  Plan staging areas
  Prepare general information for participants,
  Select a net control operator (if a net is established specifically to support
  the organization's activities),
  Assign locations for participants or delegate that responsibility to net
  control,
  Pass on requests for information or action from the requesting agency,
  Pass collected information back to the requesting agency.

5.5 Maintaining Emergency Contacts
An Amateur with the capability to request emergency assistance shall be maintained during all activities. Methods to accomplish this (in order of preference) are as follows:

An Amateur located at the appropriate EOC, Police, Homeland Security/Emergency Management official, Fire, or Ambulance dispatch center.
An Amateur shadowing a participating Police, Fire or Ambulance member.
An Amateur base station with a telephone.
An Amateur with a Cellular Telephone.

A designated Amateur with access to (able to drive or walk to) a public telephone.

5.6 Staging Procedures

A staging area, where hams meet before going to the site of an incident, has many advantages. An organized group may have fewer problems getting through roadblocks, parking may be an issue at the site, people are less likely to get lost, equipment failure is less likely to be a problem, etc. The ideal staging area is outside the affected area, easy to find, and near a main road leading to the affected area. In a large emergency, the resource net control team may have a member at the staging area, checking people in and out, and making sure that they have sufficient batteries, gasoline, food, water, clothing, sleeping bags, etc. The location of this staging area should be selected after consultation with other groups. Amateurs are discouraged from going directly to a disaster site unless authorized by net control or by some other prior agreement.

5.7 Establishing Nets on Alternate Frequencies

Alternate repeaters or simplex frequencies may be established for specific functions (e.g. evacuation shelters, health and welfare, specific response agencies) as needed to keep traffic to manageable levels. These alternate nets may be formal or informal (i.e. with or without a net control station). However, each net shall always designate one station to act as liaison with the coordination net. It is important that the location and function of all participating Amateurs be known. Therefore, Amateurs should not join these alternate nets unless directed to do so by the net control station on 146.940 MHz or alternate frequencies determined by net control.

5.8 Resource Management

One person should be responsible for handling resource requests and tracking resource assignments. Resources tracked are both human and Amateur provided property. Stations shall check in and out of assignments with him. Normally, this function will performed by 146.940 net control. However, if the resource management activity exceeds the capability of net control, there should be an additional Amateur designated for this function, preferably operating from the EOC station console.
Note that this function does not attempt to manage resources at a specific incident. This is the responsibility of the Incident Commander. The Amateur resource management function exists to manage the distribution of Amateur resources between multiple incidents plus agencies functioning outside an established Incident Command System (ICS).

6. Termination

Participation is terminated at the discretion of the requesting agency. Individual members that wish to terminate early should notify net control so a replacement may be designated.

7. Identification

7.1 Personal Identification

There has been no standard established for identification of Amateur personnel at this time. Necessary identification for entry into a restricted area will be provided by the controlling agency. ID's will not guarantee entry into a secured area. Amateur Radio ID's are to be used only for events we have been asked to assist in. Polk County Emergency Responder ID cards are being implemented. Applications and requirements are available from the Polk County EC.

7.2 Vehicle Identification

There has been no standard established for vehicle identification. However, appropriate magnetic signs or cards placed in the windshield is encouraged. Suggested form of identification is the ARES logo. Laminated logos are available from the Polk County EC. While this identification will not automatically provide access to controlled areas, it will assist other agencies to identify an Amateur when one is needed. NOTE: If an amateur is challenged at a Security entry point, and after showing a proper Amateur Radio ID (when issued) and is asked or told to leave, DON'T ARGUE! Report back to the NCS that you were refused entry.

8. Security and Access

Certain situations may require Amateur participation within an area or facility that has been closed to public access. In these situations, a staging area should be established outside the perimeter, but close to an access control point. One Amateur should act as liaison to the officer in charge at the access control point. The liaison's function would be to identify the Amateur requesting entry, and issue any necessary identification. For future study: What identification will be issued, where, and by whom? Would it be better (permissible) to issue identification at the staging area instead of at the access control point?
NOTE: By being in a secure area or working with served agency personnel, you will observe and hear information that could be sensitive in content. Any amateur that is questioned by unknown persons or possible media shall refer all questions to a Public Information Officer (PIO) or chairperson of the event or an official of the agency you may be working with.

9. Participant Safety

While a disaster situation may require the taking of certain calculated risks in order to accomplish the mission, ARES members are ultimately responsible for their own safety and should take no action that places themselves in jeopardy. In a questionable situation, pull back and report your situation to Net Control.

10. Liability

Amateurs shall assume they are operating at their own risk.

APPENDEX "A"
Suggested Staging Areas

Northeast: Hy-Vee/Walgreens east of I235 on E. Euclid

Northwest: Merle Hay Mall at Merle Hay and Douglas

Southwest: Plaza containing Dahl's Foods just north of the Des Moines International Airport on the east side of Fleur Drive

Southeast: Walgreens just north of Army Post Road and SE 14th St. On the west side of SE 14th St.

West Des Moines: Valley West Mall north of I235 on 35th St. WDM.
Alternate: Hy-vee at 1700 35th St.

Urbandale: Pilot Truck Stop Primary
Flying J Truck Stop Secondary

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