

Public Service Communications Manual

Section I: The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

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Chapter Four: ARES and RACES

After World War II, when it became evident that the international situation was destined to be tense and the need for some civil-defense measures became apparent, successive government agencies designated to head up such a program called on amateur representatives to participate. In the discussions that followed, amateurs were interested in getting two points across: First, that Amateur Radio had a potential for and capability of playing a major role in this program; and second, that our participation should, this time as never before, be in our own name, as an Amateur Radio Service, even if and after war should break out. These principles were included into the planning by the formulation of regulations creating a new branch of the amateur service, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service, RACES.

Recognition of the role of Amateur Radio as a public service means responsibility--this time in our own name. The RACES regulations are printed in full in the ARRL publication the *FCC Rule Book*, along with the rest of the amateur regulations, and are not reprinted here. Every amateur should study closely and become familiar with these rules; civil preparedness, now a major function, may become our only on-the-air function if we are plunged into war.

4.1 What is RACES?

RACES, administered by local, county and state emergency management agencies, and supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the United States government, is a part of the Amateur Radio Service that provides radio communications for civil-preparedness purposes *only*, during periods of local, regional or national civil emergencies. These emergencies are not limited to war-related activities, but can include natural disasters such as fires, floods and earthquakes.

As defined in the rules, RACES is a radiocommunication service, conducted by volunteer licensed amateurs, designed to provide emergency communications to local or state civil-preparedness agencies. It is important to note that RACES operation is authorized by emergency management officials only, and this operation is strictly limited to official civil-preparedness activity in the event of an emergency-communications situation.

4.2 Operating Procedure

Amateurs operating in a local RACES organization must be officially enrolled in the local civil-preparedness agency having jurisdiction. RACES operation is conducted by amateurs using their own primary station licenses, and by existing RACES stations. The FCC no longer issues new

RACES (WC prefix) station call signs. Operator privileges in RACES are dependent upon, and identical to, those for the class of license held in the Amateur Radio Service. All of the authorized frequencies and emissions allocated to the Amateur Radio Service are also available to RACES on a shared basis. But in the event that the President invokes his War Emergency Powers, amateurs involved with RACES might be limited to certain specific frequencies (while all other amateur operation could be silenced). See Table 1.

Table 1
Dedicated RACES Operating Frequencies

1800-1825 kHz
1975-2000 kHz
3.50-3.55 MHz
3.93-3.98 MHz
3.984-4.000 MHz
7.079-7.125 MHz
7.245-7.255 MHz
10.10-10.15 MHz
14.047-14.053 MHz
14.22-14.23 MHz
14.331-14.350 MHz
21.047-21.053 MHz
21.228-21.267 MHz
28.55-28.75 MHz
29.237-29.273 MHz
29.45-29.65 MHz
50.35-50.75 MHz
52-54 MHz
144.50-145.71 MHz
146-148 MHz
222-225 MHz
420-450 MHz
1240-1300 MHz
2390-2450 MHz

While RACES was originally based on potential use for wartime, it has evolved over the years, as has the meaning of civil defense (which is also called civil preparedness), to encompass all types of emergencies. While operating in a RACES capacity, RACES stations and amateurs registered in the local RACES organization may not communicate with amateurs not operating in a RACES capacity. (Of course, such restrictions do not apply when such stations are operating in a non-RACES--such as ARES--amateur capacity.) Only civil-preparedness communications can be transmitted. Test and drills are permitted only for a maximum of one hour per week. All test and drill messages must be clearly so identified.

4.3 ARES and RACES

Although RACES and ARES are separate entities, the ARRL advocates dual membership and cooperative efforts between both groups whenever possible for an ARES group whose members

are all enrolled in and certified by RACES to operate in an emergency with great flexibility. Using the same operators and the same frequencies, an ARES group also enrolled as RACES can "switch hats" from ARES to RACES and RACES to ARES to meet the requirements of the situation as it develops. For example, during a "nondeclared emergency," ARES can operate under ARES, but when an emergency or disaster is officially declared by a state or federal authority, the operation can become RACES with no change in personnel or frequencies.

This situation is still not well understood and accepted throughout the United States; both ARES and RACES still exist, separately, in many areas. League officials will have to determine the situation in their own area. Where there is currently no RACES, it would be a simple matter for an ARES group to enroll in that capacity, after a presentation to the civil-preparedness authorities. In cases where both ARES and RACES exist, it is possible to join both or to be involved in either. As time progresses, the goal would be the merger into one strong organization, with coordination between ARES and RACES officials using the same groups of amateurs. In some sections of the US today, the ARES structure has also been accepted as the RACES structure.

4.4 Other Amateur Facilities

There are a number of other Amateur Radio facilities, not sponsored or directly affiliated with the League, which are nevertheless an integral part of our public service effort. Some of these organizations are the monitoring services, MARS, independent nets (both international and domestic) and other similar activities. While naturally we want you to participate in organizations sponsored by your League, it's better to participate in a non-League sponsored public service organization than not to participate at all. In this booklet we cannot give details of the operation of these other organizations because there are too many of them, and their operations change too rapidly. Suffice it to say that they do exist, and they are worthy of your support.

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