

ARES® South Texas District 14 Southwest Unit Emergency Communications Plan

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To implement Part 97.1 of the FCC regulations, and Federal and international treaty law applying to Amateur Radio and specifically to the South West Harris County, Texas ARES®.

The rules and regulations in Part 97.1 are designed to provide an amateur radio service having a fundamental purpose as expressed in the following principles: regulation and enhancement of the value of the Amateur Radio Service® to the public as a voluntary non-commercial communications service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications.

- 1.2. Southwest Harris County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®) is defined as that area within Harris County, Texas, which is south of Interstate Highway 10, and west of State Highway 288.

- 1.3. The primary responsibility of the Southwest Harris County Amateur Radio Emergency Service, (ARES®), hereinafter referred to as SWHCA, is to provide effective and efficient communications in the event of a natural disaster or emergency involving any major threat to life or property, to supplement normal communications, or in the event of communications failures to provide the necessary communications links where applicable and possible. These include:

- Hurricane Watch
- High wind advisories
- High water watch
- Flash flood watch
- Tornado watch
- Flash flood watch
- Winter storm watch
- Similar conditions in adjacent or nearby counties that could escalate into a mutual aid requirement

- 1.4. All drills, training and instruction will be planned and executed to ensure maximum readiness and capability to respond expeditiously and to provide effective and efficient Federal Communications Commission licensed radio operator volunteers for emergency communications whenever the need arises.

- 1.5. Agencies we may serve during an emergency requiring supplemental communications will have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SWHCA. Our main served agencies are:

- Harris County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

- American Red Cross, Greater Houston Chapter
- Other agencies or entities may also from time-to-time request assistance from us, but those with MOUs will receive first priority for our resources.

1.6. SWHCA is organized to merge with the overall management template of the Incident Command System, (ICS), and the National Incident Management System, (NIMS). The organizations served by ARES® units across the United States are required to work within the NIMS and ICS. All SWHCA communications personnel are most strongly encouraged to take FEMA courses IS-26, IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and IS-800, which describe the Incident Command System, National Incident Management System and The National Response Plan.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. SWHCA members are FCC-licensed Amateur Radio operators who have voluntarily registered their capabilities and equipment for public service communications duty.
- 2.2. All SWHCA personnel are strongly encouraged to obtain a State of Texas Division of Emergency Management State RACES Authorization Unit Number.
- 2.3. Under Federal regulations, Amateur Radio public service communications are furnished without compensation of any kind. All SWHCA radio operator personnel are federally licensed, receive no remuneration of any kind for their services, and in most cases, provide the equipment utilized at their own expense.
- 2.4. SWHCA functions under this Emergency Plan by direction of the SWHCA Emergency Coordinator (EC), who is appointed by the ARRL South Texas Section Manager with recommendation from the ARES® South Texas Section District 14 District Emergency Coordinator (DEC).
- 2.5. Where conflict may exist between this Emergency Plan and the District 14 Emergency Plan or the South Texas Section Emergency Plan, those emergency plans will take precedence over this plan.
- 2.6. As an ARES® volunteer you are working for ARES® and operate within the ARES® guidelines and FCC regulations. You are not an employee of the served agency and although we serve and operate strictly within their operational rules and regulations we are not their employees. The following statement has been taken from the South Texas Section Emergency Plan and is pertinent to this issue:

When ARES® operators are assigned to a duty post anywhere, they remain an ARES® operator for the full length of the ARES® assignment. That operator is responsible directly to the EC (and Assistant ECs), and to no one outside of the ARES® organization.

The officials of a served agency must never be permitted to take control of ARES® operators assigned to them, or to absorb them into their own organization, though they may sometimes

attempt that. ARES® does not recruit and train operators for other groups to use for non-ARES® purposes.

- 2.7. If you desire to take on an assignment other than your current ARES® assignment you must clear that with the on-site ARES® leader or supervisor you are currently working with and ensure that a qualified replacement is available to cover your assignment for the remainder of its duration.

3. ACTIVATING THE PLAN

- 3.1. Any member of the SWHCA who for any reason believes that a communications emergency exists, or is imminent, should monitor the South Texas Section ARES® District 14 information / bulletin repeater, 147.000 (+) PL 103.5 Hz. This repeater should be monitored for bulletins, announcements and other pertinent information relative to an event, or drill. Whoever activates the plan will coordinate with the District 14 SEC and SWHCA EC, and will contact other SWHCA members by any means necessary.
- 3.2. In the event of an actual emergency, or an impending emergency in which FCC licensed volunteer radio operators, who are ARES® members, could be employed to serve the community, SWHCA will be alerted. The actual alert will normally come through the ARES® District 14 DEC.
- 3.3. The net frequencies for each of the four quadrants in ARES® District 14, and other vital information will be transmitted on the 147.000 MHz (+), PL 103.5 repeater. See the NET OPERATIONS section of this document for a list of frequencies we plan to use.

4. MOBILIZATION PROCEDURE

- 4.1. The SWHCA EC, or an AEC will initiate mobilization of SWHCA by direction of the ARES® South Texas Section SEC or ARES® District 14 DEC. Instructions, including frequencies, will be given with directions for stations to be dispatched to shelters, assembly areas or the situation site as appropriate. Net control may be handled from Transtar, a mobile unit in route, or other fixed station location depending on availability, requirements and severity of the situation. Monitor the 147.000 ARES® District 14 bulletin / information repeater for information concerning the alert and/or mobilization.
- 4.2. All SWHCA members should check their email, monitor their phones and cell phones, and monitor the regularly utilized repeater frequencies, especially the District 14 information / bulletin repeater 147.000 MHz (+) PL 103.5 Hz.

When notification, or knowledge, that a communications emergency exists, members of SWHCA will check into the SWHCA Tactical Emergency Net and remain on frequency for instructions. The repeaters in use by SWHCA will be announced on the 147.000 information / bulletin repeater and on all of the SWHCA repeater frequencies. See the NET OPERATIONS section for a complete list of frequencies. Please be ready to indicate when you would be able to deploy and what capabilities you have which could be of use.

- 4.3. NO SWHCA personnel are authorized to go to the scene of an emergency or disaster without authorization, or an invitation, from the on-scene commander, or individual in charge at the site. Mobile stations, and assigned personnel may proceed to assembly areas in the general vicinity to await further instructions and authorization. The assembly areas are Wal-Mart parking lots and HEB parking lots, or other locations, which may be announced on the NET, or disseminated prior to the event

When assembly areas are required, and designated, an Intake Coordinator may be dispatched to assembly areas as needed. The Intake Coordinator disseminates instructions and directions to volunteers.

5. NET OPERATIONS

- 5.1. Liaison stations to the following National Traffic System (NTS) nets and local VHF and UHF communications nets will be assigned as necessary:

HF Frequencies

Freq (MHz)	Purpose
38733	Night Emergency Net (frequency may vary seasonally)
7285	Day Emergency Net
3935	Night Health and Welfare Net
7290	Day Health and Welfare Net
7092	Day Digital
3592.5	Night Digital

VHF & UHF Frequencies used by SWHCA

Freq (MHz)	Purpose
145.170 MHz (-), PL 123 Hz 145.190 MHz (-), PL 123 Hz 146.940 MHz (-), PL 167.9 Hz 147.200 MHz (+), PL 141.3 Hz 442.350 MHz (+), PL 131.8 Hz	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for use of the repeater has been agreed to.
145.560	SWHCA FM simplex VHF #1
147.560	SWHCA FM simplex VHF #2
146.520	National FM simplex calling frequency
446.000	National FM simplex calling frequency
432.560	SWHCA FM simplex UHF #1

- 5.2. The primary daytime HF SSB general traffic net is the 7290 Traffic Net, which meets Monday through Saturday from 1000 local through noon Central Time, and Monday through Friday from 1300 to 1400 Central Time on 7290 KHz.

- 5.3. In an emergency, one or more nets may be activated. When operating in emergency session:Emergency and tactical traffic will be handled on 7285 KHz during the daytime and 3873 at night.Health and Welfare Traffic will be handled on 7290 KHz during the day and 3935 at night
- 5.4. Training nets are conducted each Wednesday at 2000 hours local time on area VHF repeaters. Please see the Harris County ARES® site for the repeater training net schedule at <https://stxd14ares.org/southwest/>
- 5.5. SWHCA personnel are dispatched to supported agencies and other assignments as required. Supported agencies with a Memorandum of Understanding, (MOU) will have priority for SWHCA resources.
- 5.6. All written messages for the NTS must be in standard ARRL format using the approved ARRL transmission and receipt protocol and message forms. Formal messages within the ICS must be on the ICS 213 message form.
- 5.7. All messages must include the signature and title of the official originating the message. The official signing the message assumes full responsibility for the message content.

Never change the text of a message without written permission of the person that drafted the message.

Always ensure that originators of message traffic to be sent over Amateur Radio circuits understand that Amateur Radio is not a secure mode of transmission.

6. TRAINING, DRILLS AND PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

- 6.1. The SWHCA Training NET meets each Wednesday at 2000 hours local time on the designated repeater or simplex frequency. Check the Harris County ARES® website at: <https://stxd14ares.org/southwest/>, or simply Google Harris County ARES®.
- 6.2. SWHCA members are encouraged to participate in public service events. These public service events frequently provide realistic training in real life situations, enable the participants to acquire valuable experience, and promote ARES® and Amateur Radio to the general public.
- 6.3. Each year in October SWHCA will participate in the ARRL Simulated Emergency Test (SET) together with the other quadrants in District 14. SWHCA will also participate in other drills and tests sponsored by Harris County, The National Weather Service and other entities as requested.
- 6.4. Team members are also encouraged to complete other training as listed in the ARRL STX Information Depot site, and to keep their training profiles up-to-date.

7. STAGING AREA OPERATIONS

- 7.1. When amateur operators in large numbers augment District 14 in response to a disaster or emergency, one or more staging areas may be established. They will be announced on the 147.000 MHz repeater, or other designated VHF repeater.
- 7.2. If staging areas are established, the amateur managing it will record the following: operator names, call sign, license class, cell and home phone numbers, capability to provide HF, VHF, UHF and digital modes without assistance, and how long each operator can operate. The Intake Coordinator, or other coordinating individual should note special needs such as food and shelter or other important information on the form. It is important to note how long each volunteer operator is prepared to operate.
- 7.3. Staging area sites are as follows:
 - HEB Parking lots
 - Wal-Mart Parking Lots
 - Other locations that may be designated by the DEC or EC