



Lake County
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ®
Amateur Radio Emergency Services ®
1303 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048



Backgrounder: What Is A.R.E.S.?

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public interest 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.

ARES Organization

There are three levels of ARES organization--section, district and local. At the section level, the Section Emergency Coordinator is appointed by the Section Manager (who is elected by the ARRL members in his section) and works under his 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. It is at the local level where most of the organization and operation is affected, because this is the level at which most emergencies occur and the level at which ARES leadership makes 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 district EC (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. In large sections, the SECs have the option of grouping their EC jurisdictions into "districts" and appointing a district EC to coordinate the activities of the local ECs. 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. Special-interest groups are headed up by "assistant emergency coordinators," designated by the EC to supervise activities of groups operating in certain bands, especially those groups which play an important role at the local level, but they may be designated in any manner the EC deems appropriate. These assistants, with the EC as chairman, constitute the local ARES "planning committee" and they meet together to discuss problems and plan projects to keep the ARES group active and well-trained. There is any number of different situations and circumstances that might confront an EC, and his ARES unit should be organized in anticipation of them. There is no specific point at which organization ceases and operation commences. Both phases must be concurrent because a living organization is a changing one, and the operations of a changing organization must change with the organization.

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