

From the Kansas RACES Officer Joseph Plankinton, WDØDMV

What are the requirements for a County RACES Officer?

Primary requirements must be at least a General Class or higher and have a good understanding of Ham radio as to modes, traffic handling, and organizational skills. As a County RACES Officer, you work for the County Emergency Management to develop a support communication system and program using Ham radio. You may even, because of your great communicational skills, be asked to use other radios services to communicate. That is up to you and the County. You should develop a County RACES Plan.

RACES members for your County is up to you and the County. It would be nice if they were General class but Techs can be used for a lot of things like local communications such as storm spotting.

It would be good if these folks had a photo ID card after approved by the County RACES Officer and County. Also check on County liability for the group as they will be volunteers working for the County. Also how will they be "paged out" by whom and how. Should be in your County RACES Plan.

Basis of these requirements for RACES Officer and RACES member stations:

RACES was founded under the sponsorship of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) in the 1950s, RACES original mission was to provide emergency communications for Government agencies. .

HSPD-5

On February 28, 2003, President Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5. HSPD-5 directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer a National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents.

What encompasses the RACES Officer's role in training and disasters?

Working with your County Emergency Management write a County RACES Plan and decide on the type of training that is needed to meet your County goals. Each County has an Emergency Plan and you should have a role in that plan. Are you going to provide weather spotters, disaster response groups, or provide communications for what kind of situations?

I would recommend the ICS Courses for all volunteers, the 100 and 700 Courses are required presently for the County RACES Officer with 200 and 800 coming. Any training is good in any field. Maybe your group will help with communications for a major evacuation due to a Hazardous Material spill. You may want a Haz-Mat information class. A storm spotters class if storm spotting and/or first aid if you are the first in an area after a storm. Communications is your first responsibility but you may need to have more training just to protect yourself and others. Your part as a RACES group is open to what you and your County decides. I would hope in a major disaster you would have HF back to the State EOC if needed.

How have recent FCC rule changes affected amateur radio in the RACES service?

Not a lot. RACES is now not fixed to a group of frequencies anymore, that is good. We can use all the Ham bands frequencies.

Most believe that FEMA Certifications are only necessary if you are an Incident Command person at a scene.

Not true. It is required for the County RACES Officer. If you are involved with any ICS situation you need it. Any more, that is almost everything. Counties can do what they want about RACES personnel but it is very

highly recommended. This training gives an individual an understanding of the Command Chain and where we as Hams fit in the big picture.

These classes take about an hour on line and are Free or you can attend a local class.

You can also find information about NIMS at <http://www.fema.gov/nims/>

<http://www.arrl.org/news/features/2007/04/05/01/>

<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/index.shtm>

Comparing RACES and ARES

Who is RACES ?

RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service) is an organization of volunteer Amateur Radio operators whose mission is to provide supplemental radio communications to state and local government during times of emergency. *Only for government, on request by and between government agencies.* Founded under the sponsorship of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) in the 1950s, RACES original mission was to provide emergency communications for civil defense purposes. Since then, the mission has broadened to include all local, regional or national civil (but not military) emergencies, not just those which are war-related. It is strictly an Amateur Radio Service and, as such, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) regulates it. In peacetime, it uses amateur frequencies, and RACES operators have the same privileges and restrictions that are afforded to any amateur of the same class of license.

The administration and operation of RACES has been delegated by FEMA to the states. Kansas Emergency Management handles RACES in Kansas which is responsible for appointment of a volunteer State RACES Radio Officer..

In summary, RACES is a governmentally sponsored organization, provided for in statutes at both the state and federal levels. Its members, however, are private volunteers, and all are FCC licensed Amateur Radio Operators.

Who is ARES ?

We all know who ARES is, but I will recap for comparison. **ARES** (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) is a field service organization of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), a private, non-profit organization for Amateur Radio operators. Started in the 1930s, the ARES mission is similar to that of RACES, but a notable difference is that ARES is designed to provide emergency communications support to any agency, public or private. ARES may provide such support to municipalities, government and non-profit private agencies. Like RACES, all members of ARES must be FCC licensed Amateur Radio Operators. Like RACES, all of its members are private volunteers. However, in contrast to RACES, ARES is part of a nongovernmental, non-profit private organization.

Clearly, it is important that the volunteer know of the rules, procedures and limitations that apply to operations under RACES and ARES. Accordingly, to be effective, training of Amateur Radio volunteers in Kansas should be designed to address emergency communications aspects of both RACES and ARES organizations.

ARES/RACES.

ARES and RACES has not been totally integrated in Kansas. This has been recommend but never fully implemented. because RACES is sponsored by government while ARES is sponsored by a private (not-for-profit) organization, the two cannot be merged at the administrative level. However, the working portion of each organization (the volunteer members and leadership) can be. Integration has been partially accomplished in Kansas in some counties by requiring all ARES members to be registered as RACES operators and vice versa. Thus, with respect to the volunteers who actually provide emergency communications, the two groups are now the same and the leadership of both should also be the same. The

aim is to keep this integration as seamless as possible, consistent with mission and the provisions of law. Accordingly, the two organizations are then referred to as ARES/RACES in many of these counties.

Training.

A vital part of the mission of ARES or RACES is self-organization and training, so that the volunteer communicators are prepared to serve when emergencies occur. Training should be designed so that operators become proficient in the rapid, efficient passing of messages or other traffic using voice, data and other modes. However, traffic handling in real emergencies will not be exclusively between Amateur Radio operators. Volunteer operators may be required to pass or receive messages from people who do not follow conventions used in Amateur Radio.

It is also important that ARES/RACES volunteers be provided training so that they fully understand the significance of membership in both organizations. For example, if an ARES volunteer is operating during an emergency and RACES is subsequently activated by authority, the ARES volunteer becomes a RACES operator and may not communicate with non-RACES Amateur Radio operators (see Appendix 7, FCC rules covering RACES). Furthermore, if RACES is activated by the President of the United States under the War Powers Act, all amateur radio stations will be silenced except for RACES stations, and RACES transmissions will be restricted to certain frequencies. ***A very good reason for the dual membership.***

Registration and Identification Are you a registered ARES and / or RACES member? Are you sure ?

RACES requires that your group be sponsored by a governmental organization approved by the State and your information is registered at both the organization level and State level. You are required to hold a photo ID card. You must be registered to participate. Check with your RACES organization and see if you meet these requirements.

ARES on the other hand requires that you sign up with an ARES group. A paper membership card maybe offered to you. Membership in ARRL not required. No official ID required.

Conclusion

In these days of unknowns around the world and US, Kansas dual membership of ARES/RACES would be the optimal goal.