

Eastern Massachusetts ARES COVID-19 Update

The Eastern Massachusetts ARES staff is closely monitoring the progress of COVID-19 and the impacts on our commonwealth. At this time, this is “not” a communications emergency but it is definitely a health emergency and an issue affecting and disrupting the lives of many in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, across the United States and around the world. A “stay at home” advisory advising people to stay at home except for those who are essential workers and to pick up essential items such as groceries, takeout food and prescriptions remains in effect until May 4th, 2020 for Massachusetts. To continue to follow the latest on COVID-19 in the commonwealth, including impacts to Amateur Radio activities, the following resources will be of great use to you.

Massachusetts COVID-19 Information:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) COVID-19 Information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

John Hopkins Tracking of Worldwide and US Coronavirus Cases:

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

COVID-19 Response and Impacts to Amateur Radio related events in the Eastern Massachusetts section:

<https://ema.arrrl.org/covid19-response/>

From a communications standpoint, there are 4 possible ways where Amateur Radio could be utilized during this health emergency. They are all considered low likelihood at this time but will bear close watching and monitoring. They are as follows:

- 1.) In the event of significant quarantine centers for mass care, Amateur Radio may be utilized by agencies such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for these centers. Emergency Management via RACES could also request Amateur Radio support for such centers from ARES as needed.
- 2.) In the event of additional testing sites setup by medical reserve corps, there could be a need for Amateur Radio communications for these test sites. If setup by local Emergency Management, RACES could support those test sites and may reach out to ARES for assistance.
- 3.) In the event illness was rampant enough to cause disruption to cell or cable TV/Internet providers due to insufficient workers to repair these disruptions, Amateur Radio could fill communication gaps in these areas.
- 4.) In the event that mass vaccinations are needed several months from now, Amateur Radio could be utilized to support communications for these vaccination locations. This has been drilled in the past by various local emergency management, hospital and medical reserve corps groups.

Again, these are low likelihood and there could be inherent risks to our health supporting any of these items, particularly items 1-3, but these are the things the Eastern Massachusetts ARES leadership team is monitoring closely here from a support perspective throughout this health emergency. We remain in contact with key agencies at the local and state level by various means to understand the potential of any four of these items becoming a requirement from a communications perspective. In the meantime, members of ARES are encouraged to do the following:

- 1.) If you haven't already done so, take training classes offered online. For newer ARES members, you can take the EC-001 course offered by the ARRL and the FEMA ICS classes of ICS-100, 200, 700 and

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800. These classes are the basics that allow for people to deploy to Emergency Operations Centers and other key locations if a communications need arises.
- 2.) Eastern Massachusetts ARES remains closely tied to working with the National Weather Service in Boston/Norton. While we will not be activating the Amateur Radio station at NWS Boston/Norton until further notice barring an extreme weather event where communications by means outside of Amateur Radio would potentially be threatened, we have a robust protocol for SKYWARN self-activation and will utilize that for the foreseeable future when severe weather threatens. While the COVID-19 health emergency has captured our attention, weather and storms will continue to happen and a more significant weather situation will stress systems more given the ongoing health emergency. Amateur Radio's role in supporting the NWS SKYWARN program will be even more critical during this health emergency. We will continue to support NWS during this timeframe. Live SKYWARN training classes have been cancelled but a method of online SKYWARN training is under development and further details on that will be available by late April and we will broadcast widely to everyone.
 - 3.) Check into local/section level regularly held ARES, RACES, NTS, Weather/SKYWARN, Public Service, and Club nets. This is a great way to practice radio communications in a non-stressful way and to meet new people over Amateur Radio while continuing to practice social distancing protocols. A great resource that lists all of the various nets is available on the Eastern Massachusetts section ARRL web site via the following link: <https://ema.arrl.org/ema-arrl-activities-calendar/> and if you have input on nets to list in this calendar that are not on there, please let us know. Send an email to the following people with the info:
 - KD1CY-Rob Macedo (rmacedo@rcn.com)
 - WQ1O-Frank O'Laughlin (wq1o@comcast.net)
 - W1SHS-Stu Solomon (w1shs.stu@gmail.com)
 - K9HI-Phil Temples (phil@temples.com)
 - 4.) Many local Amateur Radio Clubs are doing "club meetings on the air" to support keeping their local clubs moving given the restrictions on meeting. This is another way to practice net protocol and to meet new people and learn about local Amateur Radio Club activity.
 - 5.) Take the time spent at home to assure your home station is working and any Go Kits are working are tested. Work on home radio and other station projects and do so safely practicing social distancing. Gather any supplies you might need for your radio gear as well as for your home while being responsible about the supplies you need given shortages of key items.

We appreciate everyone's help and support during this health emergency. We will provide updated information on the ongoing crisis in 1-2 weeks or sooner if a significant change to the situation occurs.

Respectfully Submitted,

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