



The American Radio Relay League Eastern Massachusetts



Welcome to Eastern Massachusetts ARES!

First, I would like to thank you for signing up as an ARES volunteer. As an ARES member you have the potential to be an important communications link in times of local, regional, national and even international crisis. Your willingness to give your time and energy in times of need is to be commended and is truly appreciated.

Please remember to keep your ARES volunteer information up-to-date with any new radio capabilities you may have, new training you may have completed and your most current contact information. You can log on to your ARES volunteer data at [ARES Member Logon](#).

So, what's next? Being an ARES member is all about preparedness for an activation and/or deployment in times of need. To that end, there are many formal and informal opportunities available to gain and improve the radio skills needed to be successful. What follows is a partial list of resources and suggested activities to help sharpen your skills and learn more about emergency communications and incident management.

ARES Resources

Education

Both FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and the ARRL (American Radio Relay League) offer courses for all levels of ARES volunteers. None of these courses are mandatory for level 1 ARES volunteers, but I highly recommend taking at least the Level 1 introductory courses. Level 1 courses will give you a broad sense of the mission and scope of emergency preparedness and incident management which will help greatly in an activation.

Level 2 involves additional education required for field deployment while Level 3 includes educational material required should you want to advance to an ARES leadership position.

These courses are all free and available on-line.

Level 1 courses include:

[ARRL EC-001 Introduction the Emergency Communication](#)

[FEMA IS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command Systems](#)

[FEMA IS-700 An Introduction to the National Incident Management System](#)

Additionally, a collaboration between multiple New England ARES groups is in the process of creating a New England Division-Wide ARES Academy curriculum. ARES volunteers will be informed of the Academy once it is formalized and scheduled.

SKYWARN

Many ARES members are also SKYWARN weather spotters. You do not need to be a member of one group to also be a member of the other, though we do encourage amateur radio operators to do both if they are able and have the time.

SKYWARN is a network of trained weather spotters that report 'ground truth' to the National Weather Service via amateur radio, text, email, social networks, etc. We have a large and dedicated contingent of spotters and are arguably one of the most active SKYWARN groups in the country. If you are interested in weather, as many radio operators are, SKYWARN gives another way to improve radio skills while providing invaluable data to the weather service in times of severe weather conditions. The ARRL and the ARES program have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Weather Service at the national level making our SKYWARN spotters an extremely valuable resource to the National Weather Service.

To become an official SKYWARN spotter you will need to take a SKYWARN training course presented by National Weather Service forecasters or specially trained ARES/SKYWARN members. More information on SKYWARN and training opportunities along with SKYWARN repeater frequencies can be found at [Eastern Massachusetts SKYWARN](#). You can also obtain more information on the NWS Boston/Norton SKYWARN program and WX1BOX, the amateur radio station at the National Weather Service in Norton Massachusetts, via [WX1BOX](#).

RACES

RACES, an amateur radio emergency service often confused with ARES, is the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services that serves in assisting emergency management communications at the local, regional, state and national levels. More on the differences between ARES and RACES can be found at the [ARES/RACES FAQ](#). Many ARES members also serve as RACES radio operators. RACES operations are activated at the direction of the local Emergency Management Director, State Regional Office Manager or the Communications Manager at the State Headquarters level. At the national level, RACES operations are managed by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA RACES operations are coordinated with the ARES Section Emergency Coordinator and State RACES Radio Officer as required.

To become a RACES Radio Operator or Radio Officer for a city or town, an application must be approved by the local Emergency Management Director. To assist at the state level as a RACES Radio Operator, approval is made by the Region's RACES Radio Officer and the Regional Office Manager. Finally, at the State Headquarters level, approval would be made by the MEMA, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, Communications Manager.

National Traffic System (NTS)

Another opportunity for ARES radio operators is participation in the National Traffic System. Through directed nets, the NTS handles the rapid movement of written traffic predominantly within the US and Canada though messages may also be relayed internationally with [other countries that the US has signed an official third-party traffic agreement](#). During emergencies, the most frequent type of messages are those related to the health and welfare of persons in the disaster areas.

The NTS operates daily, even during non-emergencies. The movement of these routine, non-emergent messages keeps the operators of relay stations well practiced and ready for actual emergency situations.

Official Relay Stations are ARRL appointments. More information on the NTS and how to apply to be an operator can be found at the [Official Relay Station](#) ARRL page and the [Eastern Massachusetts NTS](#) page.

Digital Modes and Voice Over IP

Digital modes as well as Voice Over IP (VoIP) are becoming increasingly popular among amateur radio operators as well as operating modes for emergency communications. Of most interest is WinLink, currently being used by the American Red Cross as well as ARES. I highly encourage all ARES members to download a free copy of [WinLink Express](#) and become familiar with its use. The also free, Fldigi suite of applications, is also in wide use in the ARES community as well as other agencies that ARES partners with. Once again, I encourage all ARES members to download [Fldigi](#) and its associated 'FI' applications and become familiar with the many digital modes it supports.

EchoLink and [IRLP \(Internet Radio Linking Project\)](#) are two widely supported and in use VoIP applications. Many area FM repeaters support both of their use so endeavor to learn how to use this feature on your local repeater network. Also download and learn to use the free [Echolink](#) application for your desktop and laptop computers as well as your smartphone. Echolink on your computer or smartphone can be an important tool in your ARES toolbox when local repeater access is not possible.

Know Your Radio

Probably one of the best and most important ways to prepare for ARES and/or SKYWARN activation is to thoroughly know your radio. Know how to pre-program your radio with known repeater frequencies used in local and regional ARES and SKYWARN activations and program your radios well in advance of any situation. Just as important, know how to program new or changed frequencies, PL tones, simplex operation or repeater frequency offsets on-the-fly during field deployments. Practice these skills often so they become second nature.

Many operators also keep with their radios a printed manual or commercially available mini-manual or even homemade cheat sheets. Also recommended are .pdf versions of manuals downloaded to your phone and/or keychain USB drives. These can be useful to both yourself or a colleague that may need to operate your radio during a deployment.

Join Nets

Joining regular area nets is a great way to exercise your radio skills while also keeping in touch with other ARES, RACES, NTS and SKYWARN volunteers. The nets are also a way organizers can track communication issues with particular geographic areas, repeaters and individual stations. ARES net information can be viewed at [Eastern Mass ARES Net Schedules and Frequencies](#). You can also review a far more comprehensive schedule of various local nets and other activities at the [Eastern Mass ARRL Activities Calendar](#).

NTS nets are held daily and are interesting to check into as well. Through the nets you can familiarize yourself with formal, written traffic and perhaps even originate a test message or two. For those of you that are CW fans, some of the daily nets could be for you! A full schedule of NTS nets is available at [NTS Schedules](#).

Drills and Exercises

Drills and exercises are held at the local, regional, state and national level throughout the year. Stay informed of these via the various web sites and newsletters mentioned within this document and try to be part of them.

Subscribe to the ARES E-Letter

Another great ARES resource is the ARRL ARES E-Letter, which is a regular monthly publication. Information on how to subscribe and read back issues can be found at the [ARRL ARES E-Letter](#).

Public Service Opportunities

An excellent way to improve your communications skills is by taking part in the many public service event opportunities available in the Boston area. Two that quickly come to mind are the Boston Marathon and The Head of the Charles Regatta, both of which welcome hundreds of amateur radio operator communications volunteers each year. For more public service opportunities, visit [Eastern Massachusetts Public Service Activities](#).

Join the ARRL

And finally, if you are not already an ARRL member, please consider becoming one. Many of the resources I mentioned above are supported by the ARRL. Being the largest organization for Amateur Radio operators in the US, the ARRL advocates for Amateur Radio locally, regionally, nationally as well as internationally. As a member you can also enjoy the numerous magazines, publications and podcasts included as part of your membership. The ARRL depends on memberships for its ability to continue its mission of advocating for the betterment of Amateur Radio. More information on becoming a member of the ARRL can be found at [ARRL Membership](#).

Who to Contact

ARES, SKYWARN

For any questions regarding ARES,SKYWARN or Emergency Communications please contact:

Stu Solomon, W1SHS, w1shs@arrl.net - Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator, Eastern MA, District Emergency Coordinator (Norfolk County) and Assistant Section Manager, Eastern MA

Frank O'Laughlin, WQ1O, wq1o@comcast.net - District Emergency Coordinator

Your Designated District Emergency Coordinator for your county is available at [EMA ARES Organization](#).

RACES

For any questions regarding RACES, please contact your regional RACES Officer who also serves as an ARES District Emergency Coordinator liaison for RACES:

MEMA Region 1 - Terry Stader, KA8SCP, ka8scp@wb1gof.org - RACES Radio Officer, ARES DEC

MEMA Region 2 - Mike "Sparky" Leger, N1YLQ, wc1mab@gmail.com - RACES Radio Officer, ARES DEC

You may also contact your local Emergency Management Director to see if they currently have a RACES program in place and if not, have an interest in developing a RACES program. You can find your city or town's MEMA Region and local Emergency Management Director at the [Emergency Manager Directory](#).

National Traffic System

NTS questions may be directed to:

Marcia Forde, KW1U, kw1u@arrl.net, Eastern Massachusetts Section Traffic Manager

General Questions

For any general questions about Amateur Radio or the ARRL, please contact the Eastern Massachusetts Section Emergency Coordinator found at the [EMA ARES Organization](#).

For any questions regarding the ARES volunteer information forms and database, please contact District Emergency Coordinator, Phil McNamara, N1XTB, n1xtb@powersrvcs.com.

Other interesting and valuable sites to visit include:

[Eastern Mass Emergency Communications Section News](#) for the latest EmComm information

[Eastern Mass ARES Organization](#) for Eastern Mass ARES information and Leadership

[Eastern Mass ARRL](#) for more complete information about the Eastern Massachusetts section of the ARRL

Once again, my sincere thanks for joining Eastern Massachusetts ARES!

73

Stu Solomon, W1SHS

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