

ACS and Amateur Radio



Bob Craven N7GTE

What is an ACS
or “Who are those guys?”



ACS is the acronym for Auxiliary Communications Service

There are several Auxiliary Communications Services (ACS) in operation and available to serve during a disaster or emergency. The widest known of these are the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service, known as RACES and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, ARES.

RACES

Founded in 1952, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a public *service* provided by licensed radio amateur volunteers registered with a government agency and, when called upon, serve in times of extraordinary need.



RACES (cont' d)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is responsible for the regulation of **RACES** operations. The Amateur Radio Regulations, Part 97, Subpart E, §97.407, were created by the FCC to describe **RACES** operations in detail.

RACES is administered by a local, county, or state civil preparedness agency responsible for disaster services. This civil preparedness agency is typically an emergency services or emergency management organization.

RACES (cont' d)

RACES role is to provide communications for ***civil preparedness purposes only*** during periods of local, regional, or national civil emergencies.

In Utah, RACES is administered by the State through the Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management.



ARES

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is a volunteer *non-governmental* organization managed by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL).



ARES (cont' d)

There are three levels of the ARES field organization – the Section level, the District level, and the Local level.

Utah (the entire State) is a Section in the ARRL ARES structure. There is a Section Manager (SM), and a Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) that oversee the ARES program in each ARRL Section.

Utah currently does not implement the District level.

ARES (cont' d)

In the Utah Section and most ARRL Sections, the Local level begins with the Counties. The SM and SEC appoint an Emergency Coordinator (EC) to each County. Each EC then develops the ARES organization within his or her County to work with the *served agencies* that want to use ARES as an Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS).

ECs may appoint one or more Assistant Emergency Coordinators (AEC) to act as a coordinating liaison to cities, hospitals and other served agencies within his/her county to optimize emergency communications and coordination.

ARES (cont' d)

In Utah, ARES is separate from RACES, although most amateur radio operators that desire to support emergency communications, register as a volunteer in both.

In some states, Auxiliary Communications Service units combine government RACES and non-government ARES as ARES/RACES.

It is important to remember that RACES is a *service* and not an organization, club, or special interest group.

Other ACS groups

Other ACS organizations operating in Utah include:

Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS)

LDS Church Emergency Response Communications (ERC) system

Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN)

Southern Baptists with a corps of dedicated radio volunteers

Mercury Amateur Radio Association (MARA)

What an ACS does

Amateur Radio operators in an ACS set up and operate organized communication networks locally, regionally, statewide or nationally for governmental and emergency officials. This includes non-commercial communication for private citizens affected by a disaster.

When volunteering during a declared disaster their hours can apply toward the 25% state match for FEMA 75/25 disaster funding.

Typical ACS Assignments

When called out by the local *served agency*, members of an ACS (usually ARES) may be assigned any one of the following:

- COML Shadow – May be assigned to help with Cache Radio check-out/check-in or as a RADO
- Command Post
- Damage Assessment
- Decontamination Facility
- Dispatch Center – Call taker/message center
- EOC Communications Center
- Fire Station
- Assist Public Safety agencies w/evacuation communications
- Reception Center Red Cross
- Sheltering
- Staging area
- Traffic Control Point
- National Weather Service - Spotter

Not just for disasters

Many local events that may effectively involve an ARES or ACS group (other than RACES) can include:

- Parades
- Marathons and endurance races
- Bike races
- Triathlons
- Fireworks displays
- Annual civic celebrations
- Preparedness fairs and exercises
- ...and others

Utah incidents where ACS was used

- Machine Gun fire
- Logan Canal break
- Centerville fire
- Farmington fire
- Elizabeth Smart Search
- 2002 Winter Olympics
- Utah Youth Winter Games
- Weber-Davis Canal break
- Salt Lake tornado

Questions?

Utah RACES Officer contact information:

Bob Craven

Utah Division of Emergency Management

1110 State Office Building

Salt Lake City, UT 84114

801-209-7373 Work Cell

801-538-3772 FAX

Email: rcraven@utah.gov

Link to RACES Application Form:

<https://dem.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2016/01/RACES-Registration-Form.pdf>