# MARION COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE

# BASIC EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Revised January 2025 – Hayden Kaufman N2HAY Emergency Coordinator

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Amateur Radio Service

The Amateur Radio Service is composed of radio operators who have volunteered their capabilities and equipment to provide supplementary communications in time of public need. Amateurs are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission after passing an examination on their knowledge of telecommunications and technical skills in the operation of radio equipment.

In accordance with treaties agreed under the International Telecommunication Union, frequencies throughout the radio spectrum are allocated to the Amateur Radio Service. By selecting appropriate frequency bands, amateurs can communicate around the world, throughout a geographic region or may limit communications to only a local area.

All nations allocate valuable space in the radio spectrum to the Amateur Radio Service because of its ability to immediately respond in time of need and quickly establish communications where none existed or to supplement existing emergency radio services overloaded with disaster communications.

Under FCC rules, amateurs may not be compensated for providing communications and are prohibited from providing communications that further the conduct of any business.

## B. Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)

Under FCC rules, RACES is provided specific radio frequencies on which amateurs, registered with state and local Civil Preparedness agencies, would continue operating in the event Emergency War Powers act was invoked or a nationally declared disaster occurred. (NB. Marion County does NOT have registered RACES officials or stations. Marion County does, however, participate in the FEMA CISA CASM program, offering properly certified and registered communicators to FEMA, Florida DEM, or any other authorized agency.)

## C. Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

ARES is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League to provide supplementary or emergency communications for public service purposes other than Civil Preparedness agencies. Agencies served include American Red Cross, Salvation Army, National Weather Service, and local police, fire, and emergency management agencies.

D. National Traffic System (NTS)

NTS provides a network of local, state, area, and transcontinental radio circuits for the transmission of non-commercial message traffic in support of the public interest.

E. Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS)

MARS is a radio communications service consisting of licensed amateurs who are affiliated with the Department of Defense military services as an adjunct to military communications. (NB. While there is still limited use for MARS stations, there is no longer an active station in Marion County. The last MARS affiliate station to operate on a large scale was AAR4CSS, the Silver Springs Radio Club.)

F. Marion County ARES

Marion County ARES is an organization of licensed radio amateurs within Marion County, Florida dedicated to serving the public needs of our area during communications emergencies.

II. AUTHORITY

Title 47 US Code 97.1 et seq., Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations, Amateur Radio Service and the Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Appendix II: ESF 2.

This plan has been reviewed and approved by the Director of the Marion County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management and the State Wireless Interoperability Coordinator.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidelines for the authorization and mobilization of volunteer Amateur operators when needed in a communications emergency and to define procedures to be followed.

# IV. ORGANIZATION

The Marion County ARES Emergency Coordinator (EC) is appointed by the North Florida Section Emergency Coordinator, with the concurrence of the North Florida Section Manager. The Marion County ARES EC is responsible for all aspects of Marion County ARES, including recruiting, training, and operations. The County EC may delegate specific functions, as necessary, by appointing Assistant ECs.

The County EC reports administratively to the Section Emergency Coordinator and operationally to the Marion County Emergency Management Director. ARES networks may be organized to accommodate any need:

1. Coordination Net: A communications circuit among various officials, agencies, or services not normally in contact with each other or whose normal means of communication have been disrupted or overloaded.

2. Relay Net: Direct communication between competent local officials and the local broadcast station(s) to relay emergency information or program material for rebroadcast.

3. Point-to-Point Communications: Direct communication between any two or more points, even in remote areas not served by other communications facilities.

4. SKYWARN Observation Net: Spotters may be positioned in strategic locations to report observations of local conditions (weather, traffic, etc.) back to public officials.

5. Back-up and Supplementary Communications: Where a public safety radio system may be out of service, overloaded, or not able interface with diverse units, amateurs can provide necessary communications, by supplementing or replacing the primary system.

## V. ACTIVATION PROCEDURE

A. Activation will be at the direction of the Marion County Emergency Coordinator after consultation with the Section Emergency Manager, Section Manager or State Wireless Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC). Activation may be requested by any agency or organization within Marion County by contacting the Marion County EM Director or the Marion County Emergency Coordinator. Cities, municipalities, American Red Cross, Hospitals, Salvation Army, or any agency that serves the citizens of Marion County in an emergency may request ARES assistance. In an emergency, the Marion County EM Director may be contacted 24-hours-a-day through the Marion County 911 Center. The Marion County EC can be reached through information available on the Marion County ARES Website, [http://www.aresmcfl.org](http://www.aresmcfl.org).

B. The requesting official, or their delegate, must define their communications needs.

C. If notified directly, The EM Director will contact the ARES EC to initiate activation. Assistant ECs are also authorized to activate the ARES organization.

D. The ARES EC will design, organize, and staff the communications networks to meet the stated needs. If additional assets are needed, the EC will contact the ARES ECs in surrounding counties for assistance.


## VI. MOBILIZATION

Amateurs will immediately establish communications on the 146.610 MHz repeater when notified by the EC or other ARES designee tasked with telephone alerting. If members directly observe conditions that indicate an emergency condition might exist or an alert or warning is issued on NOAA Weather Radio for Marion County, they should monitor 146.610 MHz for possible mobilization instructions.

The EC will assume net control or delegate another station as net control station (NCS). NCS will operate from the Marion County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located at the Marion County Sheriff's Operations Complex. This station is designated as a "Key Station" and will be extensively utilized during a communications emergency. Key Stations will have full emergency power capability and will be staffed with relief operators assigned to ensure continuous operation. (NB. Beginning in April of 2025, the Key Station Operator at the EOC will be making calls and information notifications via the KJ4CLL repeater on 145.330 MHz)

## VII. OPERATIONS

A. The NCS will establish a directed net on 146.610 and receive check-ins from responding ARES members. Once this net is established, the NCS will utilize the callsign AF4FL. Check-ins will be with FCC assigned call signs. The NCS will instruct operators to either (1) stand by, (2) report to a staging area with specified equipment, or (3) report to a public official or agency at a specified location.

B. To speed communications flow, tactical call signs will be assigned by the NCS. The call sign will be indicative of the function or location of the operator. FCC call signs will be used to close out each exchange of transmissions, e.g., "This is Weather One, WA4XYZ, out." Operators should contact the NCS with their tactical call signs when (1) reporting on station, (2) when they have emergency traffic, or (3) when called by the NCS.

C. If necessary, operators will be directed to shift to an alternate repeater if the primary malfunctions or becomes overloaded with traffic. Simplex operations may also be used for point-to-point applications. The primary simplex frequency is 146.580 MHz.


## VIII. SCOPE

A. Amateur Radio operators are trained communicators. When acting in that capacity, they are not interpreters, evaluators, or field responders. Their purpose is to transmit messages given to them by responsible officials.

B. Messages should preferably be written and signed by the official responsible. Short, verbal messages that are easily understood are acceptable in tactical situations.

C. By this plan, amateurs are prohibited from transmitting personal observations or opinions, unless specifically requested by a responsible official. This avoids misinterpretation by citizens or the media who may be monitoring scanners.


## VIII. TRAINING AND EXERCISES

A. An annual exercise should be held in conjunction with the national Simulated Emergency Test.

B. At the discretion of the EC, the activation procedure should be tested unannounced, with response only to net check-ins, as he deems necessary to ensure its efficient operation.

C. The emergency response group will meet each Wednesday on the 146.610 MHz repeater at 1930 local time to exchange news and information. Limited on-air training will also be conducted.

D. At the request of the EM Director, ARES may participate in other county level exercises such as those conducted with the Marion County Sheriff's Office or Marion County Fire Rescue.

IX. CONTINUING EDUCATION

    A. Every opportunity to engage in additional classroom training is strongly encouraged.

    B. The FEMA Independent Study program offers a multitude of opportunities for advancement.

        1. IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, and IS-800 are MINIMAL REQUIREMENTS for ARES membership.

        2. When available, members are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to take the AUXCOMM training course. Whether you choose to pursue certification or not, the course is informative and will assist in the completion of your ARES Taskbook.