

**The Highland Lakes ARES®**

**Amateur Radio Emergency Service**

**Emergency Communications Plan**

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1. The Highland Lakes Amateur Radio Emergency Service (HLARES) unit is composed of FCC-licensed amateur radio operators who have voluntarily registered their capabilities and equipment for public communications service especially in times of man-made or natural emergencies. They have agreed to receive training in emergency communications and procedures.
   2. Under Federal regulations, the contents of messages handled by amateur radio are not divulged to unauthorized persons and such public service communications are furnished without compensation of any kind. However, such messages are not encrypted and should never be considered secure communications.
   3. The HLARES functions in this EMERGENCY PLAN under the direction of the HLARES Emergency Coordinator (EC), Tom Hauer, K0YA, who is appointed by the South Texas Section Manager (SM) of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL®).
   4. This document incorporates, in full, the South Texas Section Amateur Radio Emergency Service ® Emergency Communications Plan Version 3.7 as revised September 19, 2023.
   5. The South Texas Section Amateur Radio Emergency Service ® Emergency Communications Plan Version 3.7 as revised September 19, 2023 Appendix A: Amateur Radio Communications Teams (ARCTs) establishes minimum requirements for HLARES Communications Team participation.
   6. Safety is our first priority. We never advise placing anyone in any position of danger.
   7. The Emergency Coordinator may appoint, and cancel the appointment of, Designated Alternates, and/or Assistant Emergency Coordinators as necessary. These appointments will be given the titles and duties as described by the Incident Command System (ICS) for general staff positions as appropriate for the incident or exercise.
2. **PURPOSE**
   1. The purpose of this plan is to provide a written guide containing the minimum information that would be needed in an emergency. Each emergency is different and flexibility is a necessity to provide an adequate response. No plan can anticipate all possible emergency needs so common sense and a safety orientation is required in all activities.
   2. The primary responsibility of the HLARES is to furnish emergency communications in the event of a natural or a man-made disaster when regular communications fail or become inadequate. An emergency consists of a threat to life or property.
   3. Drills, training, community service events, practice nets, and instruction shall be carried out to ensure readiness to respond quickly in providing effective amateur emergency communications
   4. The following jurisdictions/agencies shall be served, upon their request, in an emergency:
      1. Incorporated Jurisdictions in HLARES area including Blanco, Burnet and Llano County, Texas.
      2. The Unincorporated Area or Populations under the authority of the County Judges and the Blanco, Burnet and Llano County Offices of Emergency Management. Today this includes:
         1. Blanco County, TX, Chris Liesmann, EMC
         2. Burnet County TX, Derek Marchio, EMC
         3. Llano County TX, Gilbert Bennett, EMC
         4. The American Red Cross (Travis County/Central Texas)
         5. The Salvation Army SATERN group.
         6. Law Enforcement and Fire Departments:
            1. Blanco, Burnet and Llano County Sheriff’s Departments
            2. Llano Police Department
            3. Sunrise Beach Police Department
            4. Horseshoe Bay Police Department
            5. Marble Falls Fire Department
            6. Horseshoe Bay Fire Department
            7. Marble Falls Volunteer Fire Department
            8. Blanco County ESD #2
            9. Johnson City Volunteer Fire Department
            10. Kendalia Volunteer Fire Department
            11. Round Mountain Volunteer Fire Department
            12. Willow City Volunteer Fire And Rescue Department Inc
            13. Llano Volunteer Fire Department
            14. Valley Springs Volunteer Fire Department
            15. Castell Volunteer Fire Department
            16. Tow Volunteer Fire Department
            17. Buchanan Volunteer Fire Department
            18. Kingsland Volunteer Fire Department
            19. Sunrise Beach Volunteer Fire Department
            20. Sandy Harbor Volunteer Fire Department
   5. Hospitals, EMS, and Nursing Homes:
      1. Baylor, Scott & White, Marble Falls
      2. Seton Ascension Highland Lakes, Burnet
      3. Midcoast Central Medical Center Llano
      4. Marble Falls EMS
      5. North Blanco County EMS
      6. Hamilton EMS
   6. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)
   7. The District Emergency Coordinator, South Section of the ARRL, when surrounding counties request assistance under ARES Mutual Assistance Team (ARESMAT).
      1. The State of Texas Division of Emergency Management
      2. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
3. **PLAN ACTIVATION** 
   1. Any member of the HLARES, who becomes aware that a communications emergency may exist, should contact the EC or his designated Alternate and monitor the assigned VHF net repeater frequency of 147.020 mHz (tone 100.0 hz) for activity. Depending upon circumstances, the cellphone call-up tree should be activated. Any served agency may contact the EC or any member of HLARES and request communications support at any time.
   2. If local cellphone service is available, the EC, Designated Alternates, and/or Assistant EC’s and members shall be notified by cellphone or by any other means available using the call-up plan provided to members in a separate document.
   3. In any emergency in which amateur radio is requested to serve, amateur radio operators may be alerted by any City/County Emergency Management Coordinator, Red Cross, or State official notifying the EC. In the event the EC is unavailable, a designated Alternate or other HLARES member shall be notified. The designated Alternate will attempt to notify the EC periodically.
4. **MOBILIZATION** 
   1. The EC or designated Alternate will notify ARES members by using cellphone, VHF/FM communication on the HLARES repeater frequency, email, and/or paging systems or any other legal means. If cellphone service is available, the HLARES telephone call-up plan will be activated. If cellphone service is not available, notification will be by radio and/or runner, as necessary.
   2. The EC, or operator designated by him, will transmit on the VHF 2-Meter repeater or the back-up frequency, in turn, advising all stations of the ARES activation and request that all operators switch to the ARES frequency for further instruction.
   3. Upon the awareness or notification that a communications emergency exists, members of the HLARES should check-in on the HLARES Emergency Net and maintain radio silence. The first member of HLARES to check in will act as NCS until relieved.
   4. Mobile and Portable units will be activated. See Para 5.g.
   5. The EC will assume NET CONTROL as soon as available or delegate another operator to act as Net Control Station (NCS) on the repeater or other frequency to be determined by the EC. Control will be established at whichever EOC is activated by the Emergency Management Coordinator of the jurisdiction involved with the emergency.
   6. Only VHF equipment will be used at the EOC unless the EC sees a need for other frequency utilization. This restriction is to reduce interference and operator fatigue.
   7. HF stations will be established as needed at a location(s) away from the disaster site at the residence of an ARES operator or designated EOC. HF stations will have a 147.020 mHz link with the EOC and will utilize 20, 40 and 75 meter bands for long range communications. HF frequencies used will be used as defined in the HLARES ICS-217 included as Appendix 3 or specifically issued for an event.
   8. WinLink Express over VARA FM or Packet will be used whenever possible to expedite message handling and hard-copy printouts.
   9. Operators with pre-assigned operating positions/locations as assigned in Appendix 1 or the event specific command structure shall contact the EC or designated Alternate to determine if they should proceed to their operating locations immediately or standby on the primary net frequency for further instructions.
5. **DUTIES OF NET CONTROL STATION, (NCS)** 
   1. OPEN The NET:
      1. The HLARES Emergency Net will be activated by the Net Control Station.
      2. Based upon the facts, stations will be fully advised as to the nature of the disaster.
      3. Assign a Back-up Net Control Station
      4. Assign an individual to create and maintain an ICS-309 to detail **all** transmissions and calls make to the NCS. The Back-up Net Control may assume this duty.
      5. Remind all participating stations to maintain an ICS-309 for all of their individual transmissions.
   2. CHECK-IN STATIONS:
      1. Stations will be checked in from their home stations, mobiles, portable stations, and handheld radios. All stations shall standby for further instructions.
      2. Preassigned station operators will be deployed to their served agencies as safety conditions allow and needs are determined by agencies being served.
      3. Operators of hand-held portables will be advised to save batteries by switching them off while in hearing distance of a non-battery operated unit and will not be required to maintain an ICS309 during portable operation (these transmissions should be recorded by the NCS)..
      4. Mobile operators will be given a reminder to re-fuel if possible and run engines only when necessary.
      5. Stations operating from gasoline-powered generators will be reminded to arrange for continuous fuel supply.
      6. An inventory list will be made of operators and equipment for possible assignment as relief operators.
      7. All check-in stations will create and maintain and ICS-309 for all transmissions except as noted above.
   3. HF liaison stations will be assigned to the Texas Traffic Net or Texas ARES net both on 3873 kHz or 7285 kHz depending upon whether it is day or night. If possible, a liaison on 2 meters will be assigned to HF liaison stations for maintaining contact with EOC NCS on the assigned VHF frequency.
   4. The Emergency Medical Service of HLARES is coordinated with a countywide Emergency Plan.
      1. If a request for assistance is received, HLARES will furnish 2-meter operators as needed and as available
      2. A 2-meter repeater will be designated by the EOC HLARES NCS and/or the HLARES EC.
   5. The NCS will establish other nets as conditions dictate, on various frequencies, for handling Welfare type traffic.
      1. An incoming and outgoing traffic system will be established with mobile runners.
      2. NCS operator, deployed HLARES responders, liaison station relief shift schedules shall be developed when 24-hour operation is needed. These shifts will be 8-hour (maximum) shifts.
   6. NCS operators on each net are requested to wear headphones with noise canceling microphones whenever possible while serving at the EOC, Sheriff's Office or other agencies to prevent audible interference to other services and to prevent them from interfering with our nets, thus avoiding unnecessary repeats of messages.
   7. Mobiles and Portables will be dispatched as needed. The location of each will be noted at all times by the NCS. These mobile units and hand-held units will not normally be assigned to fixed stations, but will be dispatched to serve as mobile or portable units unless assigned to act as relief operator at an HF station or VHF fixed station. Then the mobile or portable unit will not be used. The fixed station equipment will be used instead.
   8. When there is an electrical power outage at the home of an Operator and there is no alternate power source, the operator will be assigned as relief operators where emergency power is available in order to effectively use every operator.
6. **OPERATIONS** 
   1. Messages
      1. Formal Messages
         1. Definition: Formal messages are those, which request material or services, which may require payment or replacement.
         2. Message Forms: All formal messages must be written in standard ARRL format, ICS 213 format or the specific format requested by the served agency. The served agency representative can create their message on the Message Forms provided by the ARES radio operator for that purpose.
         3. Message Precedence: The Operator must assign the message ARRL PRECEDENCE, defined on ARRL CD Form 3. This PRECEDENCE will be used on all messages.
         4. Signature: All formal messages **require** the signature and title of the originator. Messages received requesting materials or services, which may later require payment, **will not be transmitted** until signed with the title shown.
         5. Save Messages: All Operators must save his copy of all such messages. All messages will be logged in the station   
            ICS-309.
   2. Tactical Messages:
      1. Tactical Emergency messages, such as fire, police or Life-or-Death situations do not require numbers. These are first priority messages and we use "Break, Break!" to get attention of the NCS, between transmissions.
      2. When accepting such messages for transmission, require only the following information;
         1. To (Example: Kingsland Fire Station)
         2. What (Example: Pumper)
         3. Why (Example: Structure fire)
         4. Where (Example: High School)
         5. Who (Example: Name)
   3. TRANSMITTING Stations do not transmit unless invited to do so by the Net Control (NCS).
      1. Exceptions:
         1. Stations having Emergency traffic
         2. To recheck into the net after having been directed by NCS to pass traffic on a different frequency.
      2. Keep transmissions short and to the point.
7. **Situation Report**
   1. Upon activation of an ARES group by its leaders, the EC or representative should send a short situation report to their DEC not less than once daily. DECs should consolidate EC reports and send one to the SEC each day of the ARES activation based on a schedule determined for the incident.
   2. By citing only, the line number (Line 1, Line 2, Line 3, Line 4a, Line 4b, etc.), this can be passed in radiogram format.
   3. ARES DAILY SITUATION REPORT
      * 1. INCIDENT TYPE: brief description
        2. REPORTING PERIOD
        3. SUPPORTED CLIENTS & LOCATIONS: brief description
        4. NUMBER OF ARES OPERATORS
           1. Currently committed:
           2. Contacted:
           3. Additional needed:
        5. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS
        6. REPORT BY: name, callsign, county
8. **DRILLS, TESTS AND ALERTS**
   1. An annual test will be conducted each year whenever possible in conjunction with the nationwide Simulated Emergency Test (SET) sponsored by ARRL. Periodic exercises will be conducted in cooperation with the various HLARES(r) Emergency Management Coordinators.
   2. The HLARES Training Net will be held at 2030, local time, every Sunday night, on the 147.0200 mHz (100.0 hz) repeater.
   3. At the discretion of the EC, HLARES will be activated unannounced at least once a year for training and evaluation.
   4. The HLARES Amateur Radio Emergency Service Plan and Standard Operating Procedure shall be reviewed annually with updates as necessary to keep this plan current and viable.

**Appendix 1**

**HLARES Operational Organization**

**Appendix 2**

**K5HLA Digital Station ID Plan**

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**Appendix 3**

**Highland Lakes Amateur Radio Emergency Services**

