**ARRL Public Service Enhancement Working Group Chairman Updates Hamvention® Crowd on Proposed ARES Changes**

At the *ARRL Member Forum* at 2018 [Hamvention](http://www.hamvention.org/)® last month [May, 2018], hosting Great Lakes Division Director Dale Williams, WA8EFK, chairman of the ARRL Public Service Enhancement Working Group, spoke about the dramatic changes that are occurring among agencies serving in the emergency/disaster response sector. He discussed planning for proposed new guidelines for participants in the ARES program, including plans for a new volunteer management software system, called [*ARES® Connect*](http://www.arrl.org/news/amateur-radio-emergency-service-transitioning-to-new-online-reporting-system) (see above). Upgrades to ARES training and resources will ensure the service continues to be a valuable partner for its served agencies into the future.

Williams' program was titled *ARES Advances into the 21st Century -- A New Program, A New Mission.* The vision is for an ARES that is comprised of *organized, trained, qualified,* and *credentialed* Amateur Radio operators who can provide public service partners with radio communications *expertise*, *capability*, and *capacity*.

Goals include aligning the ARES organizational structure with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS). The Emergency Coordinator (EC) will continue to lead the ARES team locally during an incident, while the District EC and Section Emergency Coordinator will continue to serve as resources and support for the EC. *ARES Connect* is the new platform designed to support *Reporting, Membership, Database - Portability, Record Keeping, and Statistics*.

It is envisioned that additional training will be mandated, including ARRL Emergency Communications courses and the now standard FEMA NIMS/ICS courses IS-100, 200, 700, 800, with IS-300 and 400 for higher levels. Other specialty courses will be required in certain cases such as SKYWARN and other agency-specific training.

Levels of training attained would dovetail with three new levels of participation: Level One would be comprised of all entering the program with no training, while progressing through the ARRL emergency communications training and the FEMA Independent Study courses 100, 200, 700, and 800. Level Two would be attained upon successful completion of these courses, and would be considered the "Standard" level for ARES participants. Level Three would be attained upon completion of the advanced FEMA courses IS 300 and 400, which would qualify candidates for the ARES leadership positions EC, DEC, SEC and Assistants.

Level One participants would be able to fulfill most ARES duties with the target of attaining Level Two in one year. Level Two would be considered the normal participant level, which would gain the participant access to most incident sites and EOCs. Level Three would convey full access as granted by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), and qualification for ARES leadership.

It is proposed that ARRL will provide a basic ARES ID, which would convey recognition of registration with ARES nationally and indicate level of training. No conveyance of site access is guaranteed. The AHJ would grant an additional ID/pass for site access, which would be "owned" by the AHJ.

What is Happening Now

The ARES Connect system is currently being field-tested and implemented, with ARRL HQ staff undergoing training in its administration, and group registrations currently being made. Group IDs are being assigned. Beta testing with four ARRL Sections with large ARES organizations is underway.

*The plans as described above are pending approval by the ARRL Board of Directors.* An *ARES Strategic Plan* for the ARRL Field Organization, and an Introductory Announcement are being drafted. Editing/updating ARRL ARES-related publications is underway.

A full article on the ARES enhancements, once approved, will appear in September *QST*.