ECom Emergency Coordinator Training (ECT)

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Contents

Attitude and how it influences your District

You have taken, or are about to take control of an Emergency Communication (ECom) or Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) group. In that position you have direct control over the attitudes of your peers and subordinates. You say, "Wait a minute! How do I control THEIR attitude?". That is very simple. YOUR attitude will be reflected in the actions of those around you. When you not only speak positively about service to your Served Agency(ies) but display in your actions the commitment to service, you provide a positive example to all. This positive example WILL be picked up by those you work with and WILL provide positive guidance.

You have accepted appointment to a job that requires a large amount of effort on your part. The amount of effort you expend will directly relate to the success of your unit. Again you say, "Wait a minute! It takes more than just me to make it work!" Very true. Think about this for a minute. You have accepted the responsibility to manage your group. How much of the actual work must YOU do, to be successful?

Definitely less than all of it and probably less than most of it. You will need to delegate. Those that micro-manage will tend to have more to do than they can accomplish and usually have a group that is very ineffective when "their leader" is not there. Those that learn to delegate still maintain responsibility for the work but share the burden with others. No, this is not "sluffing off". It is rather a way of insuring that your group is able to function if you are unavailable and is a positive training experience for your Assistant ECs.

If you maintain the positive attitude of leading by example and not asking anything of your people that you are not willing to do yourself, your group will prosper. The side benefit is your people will soon be doing more than the group thought possible, simply by your providing positive example and reinforcement. Many people refer to this as enthusiasm!

Your duties as an EC

Your first duty as EC is to maintain impartiality. There are many people that find certain people in their group very interesting and tend to devote most of their time to that group. This will create an imbalance that will adversely effect efficiency. This impartiality MUST also include the duties of your unit. Some people tend to emphasize the activities they like at the expense of the activities they do not like. This can create a very poor level of training with the "less popular" subjects. This in turn can produce a measurable inability to properly respond to your served agency needs!

Other subjects you will need to be concerned with are:

- ECom "Basic" material or the ARRL's ARECC Level I
  By the point you are looking at being an Emergency Coordinator most would think that you have already taken either the ARRL's Amateur Radio Emergency Communication Course Level I or the Colorado ECom basic training. If you have not completed either of these, it would serve you and your district well to do one or both SOON.

- ECom "NCS" material or the ARRL's ARECC Level II
  After taking the ARECC Level I or the ECom Basic course you should take either the ARRL's Amateur Radio Emergency Communication Course Level II or the Colorado ECom NCS training. If you have not completed either of these, it would serve you and your district well to do one or both SOON.
  Please pay close attention to the NCS self evaluation at the end of the ECom NCS material.

- **Weekly Nets**
  Communication Networks (Nets) are our lifeblood. We live or die based on our ability to pass traffic on behalf of our Served Agency(ies) and the Net is our vehicle to accomplish this.

  Weekly nets are your easiest opportunity for training. They provide you with a regular place to emphasize any segment of net operations you wish. Utilize this resource and it will pay dividends you can only dream of. Unfortunately a few ECs ignore this facet of weekly nets and simply use them as a place to be more visible.

- # Monthly Reports!
  As a District EC you will be expected to submit a monthly report on the membership and activities of your district.
  Submitting this report is simply a matter of going to the WWW, fill out the form and your information will be sent via E-mail to the Section Emergency Coordinator. This report needs to be submitted by the first of each month for the month just ending!

- Regular Training
  Unfortunately, many people look at ECom work as if it were like riding a bicycle (once you learn, most never forget), this is not true. Communication skills require very regular practice to maintain proficiency.

  The Colorado Section ECom material is a condensed form of the source material used by the ARRL in their ARECC courses.

Do your best to have as many of your people complete at least the "Basic" material as possible. Once your people have the basics down then they need to learn how best to apply what they just learned. Structure your exercises to emphasize one or two very specific portions of ECom work per exercise. This allows them to polish their skills one step at a time and makes it easier to determine where additional emphasis is needed.

- Resource Development
  Resource development can be either the most rewarding or the most frustrating portion of being an EC. Many people are very enthusiastic about a very limited portion of the ECom effort. Is this because they are intimidated by what they do not know or simply because they are very happy in this niche? If the former, gently (remember that word) introduce them to new subjects. Most will "bloom like a flower" if their limits are slowly stretched. Move too quickly and they will rebel. The accuracy of your assessment here will determine how frustrating this process is or is not, for both of you.

- **Simulated Emergency Test**
  The first full weekend in October is the regularly scheduled Simulated Emergency Test sponsored by the ARRL. This should be one of your major events of EVERY year. The ARRL's S.E.T. Guide provides details. This also provides you with an excellent opportunity to train not only your workers but also your AECs in planning.

> The following is Chapter 2 from the ARRL's Public Service Communication Manual. It details the annual Simulated Emergency Test (SET) and is provided here to remind you that an annual SET is strongly recommended.
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Chapter Two: Simulated Emergency Test (SET)
The ARRL Simulated Emergency Test is a nationwide exercise in emergency communications, administered by ARRL Emergency Coordinators and Net Managers. Both ARES® and the National Traffic System (NTS) are involved. The SET weekend gives communicators the opportunity to focus on the emergency communications capability within their community while interacting with NTS nets. SET weekend is held in October, and is announced in QST.

2.1 Purpose of SET
1. To find out the strengths and weaknesses of ARES® and NTS, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) and other groups in providing emergency communications. 2. To provide a public demonstration--to served agencies such as Red Cross, Civil Preparedness, and through the news media--of the value to the public that Amateur Radio provides, particularly in time of need. 3. To help radio amateurs gain experience in communications using standard procedures and a variety of modes under simulated- emergency conditions.

2.2 SET Format
The scoring format reflects broad objectives and encourages recruitment of new hams and use of digital modes for handling high-volume traffic and point-to-point Welfare reports out of the affected simulated-disaster area. Participants will find SET an opportunity to strengthen the VHF-HF link at the local level, thereby ensuring that ARES® and NTS are working in concert. The SET will give all levels of NTS the chance to handle exercise-related traffic. The guidelines also recognize tactical traffic on behalf of served agencies.

ARES® units and other groups are free to conduct their SETs anytime during September 1 and November 30 if an alternative date is preferred. The activity period should not exceed 48 hours. The deadline for receipt of all reports is January 31. A complete array of reporting forms will be mailed to affected Field Organization appointees.

2.3 Preparing for SET

Emergency Coordinators sign up all available amateurs in their area and work them into the SET plans. They make special efforts to attract new Technicians as outlined earlier.

A meeting of all ARES® members and prospective members is called to briefly outline (no details!) SET activities, and give general instructions. ECs contact served agencies and explain the intent and overall purpose of the SET, offer to send test messages to other branches of their agencies, and invite officials to ARES® meetings and SET operating sites. Publicity is arranged in consultation with an ARRL Public Information Officer in local newspapers and radio/TV stations.

2.4 During the SET
The "emergency" situation is announced and the emergency net is activated. Stations are dispatched to served agencies. Designated stations originate messages on behalf of served agencies. Test messages may be sent simulating requests for supplies. Simulated emergency messages (just like real emergency messages) should be signed by an authorized official. Tactical communications for served agencies is emphasized.

At least one session (or substantial segment of a session) of the local net should be conducted on emergency-only basis. Or, if a repeater is on emergency power, only emergency-powered stations should be allowed to operate through the repeater for a certain time period.

2.5 After the SET
An important post-SET activity is a critique session to discuss the test results. All ARES® (and RACES) members should be invited to the meeting to review good points and weaknesses apparent in the drill.

2.6 NTS in SET
The main function of NTS in an emergency situation is to tie together all of the various local activities and to provide a means by which all traffic destined outside of a local area, section or region can be systematically relayed to the addressee.

The interface between NTS and ARES® lies in the liaison function between local nets and other NTS nets, particularly at the section level. Responsibility for representation of the local network on the section net lies with the local net manager who may or may not be the EC.

At least one net session or substantial segment of a session should be conducted on emergency power. A surprise session or two should be conducted.

2.7 Summary
One of the first steps on the way to a successful SET is to try to get as many people involved as possible, and especially new hams. In a real emergency, we find amateurs with all sorts of varied interests coming out of the woodwork. Get them involved in SET so they will know more about how emergency communications should be handled. Promote SET on nets and repeaters, and sign up new, enthusiastic Technicians.

End copy of ARRL's PSCM, Chapter 2.

- # After Action reports!

As you conduct exercises within your district or in concert with other districts you will find areas that went very well and some that did not. Most agree that if everything went very well, except on rare occasion, then you did not test the knowledge and experience of your people sufficiently. The easiest way to track these exercises and at the same time provide other ECs with information is the After Action Report. Please submit one of these for each exercise or event and your information will be sent to the Section Emergency Coordinator via E-mail.

- **Incident Command System**
  It is incumbent upon you to learn as much about the Incident Command System (ICS) as possible. Nation wide, the vast majority of Public Service Agencies (Police, Fire, Sheriff's Offices, and Emergency Management organizations) use the ICS to manage their responses. The more you understand how that management system operates, the more effective your response will be.

  Minimum recommended classes for you are ICS-100, ICS-200 and I-700 (NIMS), available via FEMA as online courses or from your OEM. The Ham Radio portion is detailed in the ECom Basic training.

- Public Service Communication Manual
  Another manual that you will find useful is the ARRL Public Service Communication Manual. This was previously available as hard copy but is now more readily available online.

- ARESCO Web site
  The ARESCO Web site is a good resource for overall information about Colorado Section. You will find many useful links there.

- **ARESCO-EC reflector**
  The Colorado Section has an ARESCO-EC reflector available for your use. This reflector is for discussion of topics prior to the information being released to the ECom population at large. Go to the ARESCO web site for the link to sign up.

Lastly are the infamous ODAs - Other Duties as Assigned. Fortunately if you take care of all of the above, there will be virtually none of these.

The COPLAN

In simplest terms, the Colorado Emergency Radio Plan, known as the COPLAN details how all of the Colorado districts "play" together. Details include:

- Purpose of the COPLAN
- Served Agencies
- Coordination and Communication Between Amateur Radio Groups
- Training
- Resource Management
- Individual Emergency Plans
- Local Responsibilities
- Escalation Procedures
- Net Control Operations
- Safety, Legal and Insurance Issues
- Frequencies used by each district
- Time, day, and frequency of each district's nets

This is a true resource for each Emergency Coordinator

Colorado Section ECs meet yearly to review the COPLAN to insure it reflects what we as a Section are doing and to insure the frequency lists are up to date. You will be invited to attend these meetings.

Building an ECom Group

To be successful an ECom group needs a "reason" to exist. If you live in hurricane, tornado, forest fire, or earth quake prone areas, it is easy to keep people interested. If you live in an area that has very few natural disasters it is much more difficult to maintain interest on the part of your members. One area that perpetually needs communicators are public service events. There are many non profit organizations doing fund raising that clearly qualify for Amateur Radio communications assistance. These public service events can easily be used for very effective communications training and regular practice.

How do you build your organization?

1. **Establish the "need"**
   This is sometimes called "sizing up" your district. It involves working closely with your Served Agency(ies) to assess:
   - What services your Served Agency needs
     Often in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
   - What services your district can provide
     Usually detailed in the MOU
   - Plan on how you will resolve any differences between the first two items.
   - What manpower is needed to support required services
   - Plan for how will you acquire resources you do not have
   - What technical advancements do you need to address in support of required services
   - What unique long term requirement will you face for long term incidents

2. **Recruit new members.**

   Membership recruitment will be one of your ongoing responsibilities. Due to the ever changing makeup of our society, people will find their priorities changing as time passes. The operator with boundless enthusiasm may find that after a while his wife, family, or job take more time that they had previously and he will not be able to be as active as he had been. Thus you will need an ongoing supply of operators for your group. Recruitment is how you survive. Many ECs will enlist the aid of one or more of their Assistant ECs (AECs) with this activity. Some factors you will need to consider are:

   - **Eligibility**
     If your district does not have Identification cards (IDs) issued by your served agency, then eligibility is simply an Amateur Radio license and an interest in public service. If your served agency issues the IDs and performs background checks, then their requirements must be added to the ECom requirement of a Ham license.
   - **Recruiting materials** Be sure you have a good supply of one page handouts that give a brief explanation of ECom and details the time and training commitment involved. It is far better to get a smaller number of people that are ready to train and work than a large number that are surprised that they actually have to do something once they become members.
   - **Recruit at local clubs or swap fests** The easiest way to meet active hams is at local Radio Club meetings and swap fests. If you bring a supply of your hand-outs, you are ready.
   - **Recruit at local licensing classes** This is a wonderful source of new and interested people.

3. **Select your assistants**
   An EC should recruit as many Assistant ECs (AECs) as his group needs to function smoothly. Remember, if you are out of town when an actual incident begins, you need leadership people in place to handle the operation in your absence. A few examples of AEC positions are:
   - AEC for administration
   - AEC for logistics
   - AEC for Net Manager
   - AEC for operations
   - AEC for training

   Be sure you pick people with established skills for Net Manager, operations and training.

4. **Hold training sessions**
   The first training session that every new ECom person needs is orientation. This will get the person started with the information that most of us take for granted, such as:
   - Date and time of the weekly net
   - Overview of served agencies
   - History of the organization
   - **SAFETY!**
   - Operational procedures
   - Participation expectations. Those districts without participation expectations tend to not do as well.

   After the initial orientation, regular training sessions are essential for efficient operations. The attitude of "I've done that before, I know how to do that" is not inducive to concise nor effective operation practices. People with that attitude will be one of your major challenges.

   Hold four to six major training events each year. This gives everyone a chance to shine and yet will not wear them out. You can adjust that number as your district's needs dictate.

5. **Praise good work!**
   Keep in mind that ALL of your people are volunteers. A warm smile and a public thanks will go further to keep them happy than anything else you can do. Be sure to praise those that deserve it! Unfounded praise undermines your credibility and lessens the contribution of those that deserve the praise.

6. **Hold regular meetings**
   The best way to keep people interested is to help them participate. The easiest way to handle that is to hold regular meetings. Be aware that you can take this premise too far and drive people away by holding more meetings than necessary. Once per month can work well if there is a portion of the meeting devoted to social interaction. One technique that has proven very successful is to hold a breakfast or lunch session at a local restaurant and go into your meeting after the meal. This provides a good socialization time and that produces people that are ready to pay attention to the business portion. You should solicit feed back from your people to determine what frequency and type is best for your group.

   Be sure you have a good "reason" for the meeting. Holding meetings, just to have meetings, is severely counterproductive.

7. Start with number 1 again. This, of necessity, is an iterative process. You cannot perform the above steps once and be done. A regular review of all of the steps above will keep your group prepared, enthusiastic and ready for what ever your Served Agency needs.

ARRL Field Organization

Within the ARRL's Field Organization program the country is divided into seventy one administrative sections. Most sections are whole states but a few, such as Texas, Florida and California are divided into two or more sections. The membership in each section elects a Section Manager (SM) once every two years. The SM is responsible for the management of the Field Organization program within his/her Section. This includes recruitment and appointment of volunteers to handle the jobs of:

- Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC)
- Section Traffic Manager (STM)
- Official Observer Coordinator (OOC)
- Technical Specialist (TS)
- Public Information Coordinator (PIC)
- State Government Liaison (SGL)

ECom volunteers that have chosen to go above the registrant level (those that require an official ARRL appointment, such as OO, OES, PIC, EC, etc.) are part of the overall ARRL Field Organization. These volunteers perform various specific functions for Amateur Radio and the community at the local level. Several of these appointees can provide valuable support roles to the ECom community.

See http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/org/ for more details.

RACES

The single hardest interface to build within your organization is the one with your local government agency. Sometimes this is because they have not had previous direct contact with ECom and in others it is because the contact has proven to be non beneficial for the agency. In either case you will need to prove yourself. The first phase is the initial contact. This can be very difficult if the agency is not of the opinion that you can provide a worth while service. One approach is to use the FEMA agreements with RACES as your starting point.

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) was formed in the early 50's in response to the Civil Defense effort. Its mission is to provide communications support to local, state and federal government agencies in time of emergency. RACES is supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

There is one facet of RACES that many people choose to ignore. RACES operations can ONLY be authorized by the appropriate local, state or federal official and is limited to official emergency management communication. [97.3(a)(33)] On the plus side, RACES is the only Amateur Radio group authorized to be on the air if the President invokes the War Powers Act.

ECom/RACES Cooperation

In many areas ECom and RACES are in direct competition for qualified radio operators. This is not beneficial for either group. Let's look at the similarities and differences between the two organizations and see how they can compliment each other and thus both benefit.

- Both organizations provide trained communications operators in times of emergency or disaster.
- The vast majority of training is common to both organizations.

RACES

- Is limited to 1 hour per week training [97.407(e)(4)]
- Can only be called out by the local Civil Defense Authority (usually the local Office of Emergency Management [OEM]).
- When activated by OEM (as RACES) can only talk with other RACES stations
- Are the ONLY Amateur Radio stations authorized to operate if the President invokes his war powers authority

ECom

- Can be called out by any organization that ECom has an MOU with
- May train as often as they like, for as long as they care to
- Cannot talk with RACES operators if RACES is called out by the Civil Defense Authority
- Cannot operate if the President invokes his war powers authority.

Summary

If virtually all operators, interested in community service (the reason we get to keep our licenses), were to join BOTH organizations we would have a group that can:

- Be called out by OEM
- Be called out by any other organization we have an MOU with
- Train as much as we care to
- Talk with other RACES organizations when activated as RACES
- Talk with any other Amateur Radio group when not activated as RACES

In short, we can take full advantage of every unique operational characteristic offered to either organization by any agency. Or more simply, "wear the hat" that allows us to do the most good.

Other Organizations

One potential pit-fall that you will need to be wary of is some organizations believe that any ECom person that has training in any of their courses automatically becomes a volunteer for that organization. Red Cross is one of those organizations. While the national MOU with the ARRL says nothing about this, some chapters expect Red Cross training in certain areas before they will allow ECom people to assist. After this training, the Red Cross considers these people to be Red Cross volunteers and will attempt to use them as they (Red Cross) like. We are making headway in this area but it still can cause you problems.

Ensure that if you have any volunteers with training outside of ECom, they make a commitment to you about which organization has "first priority" should there be a conflict on their time. If their first priority as a volunteer is with ECom then you are fine. If they have higher priorities as a volunteer, you need this information before you make any staffing decisions! Remember, while ECom workers may do other work for served agencies, our first responsibility is to communicate. Therefore any assignment that detracts from our ability to communicate should only be accepted if another ECom person can be there to handle the communication.

The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD) is a partnership between thirty one organizations (the ARRL is one of those organizations) that seeks to minimize duplication of effort during disasters while optimizing the use of the available resources. The primary items where NVOAD and its local affiliate (VOAD) work are:

- Communications
- Member group cooperation
- Coordination
- Education
- Leadership Development
- Mitigation
- Convening Mechanisms (Seminars)

Please see the NVOAD website for more details.

Some of the more well known organizations in this group are:

- ARRL
- American Red Cross
- National Emergency Response Teams
- Multiple church organizations
- Salvation Army
- Volunteers of America

Another organization that most of us as Hams ignore is REACT. There are a few REACT groups that do train and can provide a service in communication with truckers bringing in relief supplies to a disaster area. A few of their operators may be used as runners. Be sure to fully understand your local REACT group before you attempt to use them.

Expedited Response Teams

Expedited response teams can be implemented in many different ways. The most common is with teams of people within your group that do not have to go to the staging area for assignment or to pick up equipment. Rather they are known to the served agency and are pre-assigned to a specific location in time of need. These locations are usually places like:

- Hospitals
- Schools regularly used as evacuation centers
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Local Red Cross Center

which will have equipment and antennas pre-installed.

With this implementation, you will usually be able to have the "essential" sites open and operational in twenty to thirty minutes, rather than the more common two to four hours.

Another implementation is what Colorado Section has going with its Disaster Response Team (DRT). This is a stand alone district comprised of qualified members from each of the other districts within Colorado. This group is very well trained, well equiped and available for deployment anywhere within Colorado. They may also be called out to support the EComMAT concept in other states. Please see http://www.codrt.org for more details.

Emergency Operations Plan

This plan is an ongoing effort that requires regular reviews and updates. This is where you are working closely with your Served Agency(ies), your peers, your people and the Section leadership to pull together a unified plan for success. Let's look at the major components.

1. **Served Agency Contacts and Requirements**

   This is one of the highest priority items (beyond your people) that you will have. Your efforts here will either cement relations with your served agencies or doom your district. A few hints that will make this a bit easier are:

   - Spend some time with your served agency(ies). The better they know us and what we can do, the more effective your organization will be.
   - Understand your served agency communications and what is most likely to fail or become overloaded.
   - Know the served agency management structure and who is backup for whom.
   - Know and have established access for the served agency buildings/areas most likely to need our support.
   - Know and publish phone numbers and frequencies we should monitor.
   - Know and understand what, if any, paper-work we may need to handle for the served agency(ies).

2. **Call out procedures**

- How will you be notified by your served agency(ies)?
  What agreement do you have with them for notifying you when ECom services are needed?
- How will you notify your people?
  If you use the usual call up tree, how do you handle a person that is not available and how do you keep that from blocking that portion of your call out tree?
- What contingency plans do you have in place for callups?
  You will need more than one way to notify your operators.
- Where is your staging area?
  What is your contingency plan if your main site is not available?
- If you have district owned equipment, how will it be accessed / distributed?

3. **Resource Prioritization**

The olde saying "when it rains it pours" applies here.

- If you have more than one Served Agency, who will get how many people when they all want ECom help?
  - **Who will arbitrate differences?**
- At what point will you call for extra help from adjacent districts?
  REMEMBER - If you call for help, be sure you use them!
- At what point will you ask for Section level help?

4. **Frequency usage and agreements**

Your plans need to be well documented in your own Emergency Operations Plan and shared with the Section.
This is part of your input to the COPLAN. They need to include:

- Net frequency(ies)
- "Normal" operations frequency
- "Staffing" frequency
- Simplex Frequencies
- Packet / BBS Frequencies AND COVERAGE
- HF Frequencies
- Liaison frequencies
- Backup / alternate frequencies

5. **Relief Operators**

If any operation (event or incident) will run over eight hours, you need to have plans for relief operators.
What process will you use to obtain these people? What, if any, special processes will be used to handle change of operators?

6. **Event / Incident shutdown**

What processes / procedures will you use to shut down your operation?
Detail who, what, where, when, and why as applicable.

7. **Debriefing Process**

Every event or incident should have a debriefing. Any event or incident that involves anyone being hurt, property damage and or loss of life **must** have a debriefing session. See the ECom Basic material for more information.

Federal Response Plans

Suffice it to say that when the "Feds." arrive everything will change. First, you will need a federally recognized identification card just to be in the area. Second, they use techniques and procedures that most people are not familiar with. What can you do? The best procedure is for you to start by reading the key elements in the Federal Response Plan (FRP), by section, to gain an understanding. Key elements are:

1. Transportation
2. Communications
3. Public Works
4. Firefighting
5. Info. and Planning
6. Mass Care
7. Resource Support
8. Health and Medical Services
9. Urban S & R
10. HasMat
11. Food
12. Energy

Once you understand those portions that relate to your area, be prepared to work with the Federal people on behalf of your served agency(ies). Your job may be totally different than under "normal" emergencies but will be equally important to public safety.

The latest information on Federal Response is contained in the IS-800 National Response Plan (NRP). You should, at a minimum, be familiar with this material. Once you have read the PDF, you may take the final exam (this in PDF form) and then go to the FEMA website for the official test.

Communication Networks

The largest portion of communication networks that are different than we would normally think is that we need to focus not just on "getting the message through" but on how to most efficiently get that traffic passed. The process is most easily defined as:

1. Divide messages by priority
   Emergency then Priority then Routine then the distant fourth Health and Welfare.
2. Within each category, divide by complexity
   A list of required supplies is complex where the message "Unit 4 arrived safely" is very simple. Both can be of equal priority but differ significantly in complexity. Simple messages lend themselves to voice modes where complex messages usually are more efficient on data modes.
3. Determine time "urgency"
   Some messages are time dependent. These will be processed before any other in their group and may be processed before others with a higher priority. Look closely at the total situation before you make decisions here.
4. Separate by single or multiple destination

Now you are ready to determine which method is best to handle the traffic. An emergency message will normally be handled by voice and followed up by packet or other data mode(s). Where routine will normally be held until any backlog of higher priority have been handled. Health and Welfare messages will normally be handled only after the first 72 hours of an emergency and then only as outgoing messages. Evaluate each situation in perspective of the total event.

Use every pathway appropriate

Many times during an emergency, people will become very myopic in their approach to communication. They are so heavily focused on their task that they fail to recognize that there may be more expedient ways to pass the traffic. For example, a Packet operator may forget that an emergency message should first be passed by voice, with a followup by packet. Telephones are usually overloaded during emergencies, but if you have one available and it is functional, use it as appropriate. Use every reasonable means at your disposal to get the traffic to its destination in a timely manner.
Or as some would say - think outside the box.

Plan on something going wrong

The key element in your planning needs to be anticipation of some condition that we don't want. Murphy said it very clearly, "Anything that can go wrong, will. Anything that can't, still will." Anticipate problems and be ready for as many as you can. Redundancy has a worth while place in your planning.

Designing Exercises

Regular participation by individuals within your group is the best method of measuring how ready your group is to support your Served Agency(ies). Unlike what most people seem to think about riding a bicycle (you never forget?) communication skills and technical skills in support of the communications effort, require practice. Practice can become boring if the same exercise is used time and again. Thus we need to design new exercises regularly to keep as much "fun" in the exercise as possible. Let's face it, if your people enjoy an exercise they are much more likely to "make" time for the next exercise.

A few items, under your control, will make designing these exercises more effective. They are:

1. Set specific goals for the exercise.
2. Vary the skills being exercised.
3. Regularly test each aspect of your operation.
4. Articulate the purpose of the exercise.
5. Solicit and use feed-back on the exercise.
6. Choose the type of exercise
7. Let the scenario evolve

Set specific goals

This is easy. Some of the more frequently used are:

- Introduction of new procedures
- Stress a particular skill or process. Such as Packet, voice operations, APRS, ATV, etc.
- Re-Test of weakness discovered in previous exercise(s)
- "End-to-end" test of your operation (from "blind" callout, to assembly at staging areas, to setup on scene, to operation, to tear-down, to Debriefing).

Vary the skills being tested

This is also easy. It usually includes:

- Net operations
- Net interruptions and relocation
- Digital procedures
- Message handling
- Video Procedures

Regularly test all aspects of your operation

It is far too easy to emphasize one or two of the more glamorous aspects of your unit. Make sure you exercise every skill required to support your MOUs.

Articulate the goals

People respond well to timely information. If they understand the purpose of each exercise it is far easier for them to maintain focus on what the exercise is for and thus will provide more accurate information on where other training is needed.

Solicit and use feed-back

Each person likes to think that their opinion and input will be listened to and used. If you consistently ask for their input, you are much more likely to get good information. The better the information, the better the results.

Choosing the type of exercise

There are three types of exercise used by most ECom groups. Which of these will work best for you is a function of the goals you have for this specific exercise

1. **Full Scale**
   A prime example of a full scale exercise is the S.E.T. Of necessity you are looking to test every aspect of your preparedness. These exercises are very complex, prone to failure of some type (that's where you want the failures - in exercises), and will yield the best information about if and where you need to focus your training.

2. **Tabletop**
   Tabletop exercises are especially valuable for introducing new procedures or techniques in a classroom setting. Their primary limitation is that fewer participants can be involved. Tabletop exercises are essentially role-playing meetings with one person acting as moderator and others representing various locations or functions to review their response to the situation.

   The main luxury of tabletop exercises is that you can interrupt the exercise to discuss any aspect of the drill.
3. **Functional**
   Functional exercises utilize the same facilities as the full scale drill but have the latitude of having some of the people perform their duties from home. It also provides much the same latitude the Tabletop exercise does in that the drill may be suspended for discussion of anything needed.

Scenario Evolution

EVERY scenario must have three elements.

1. Starting point
2. One or more tests
3. Ending point

Think through your simulation in detail but do not loose sight of the exercise goal. Before adding any element to your exercise, ask yourself the question "Where/how does this element fit the goals?" If it does not fit then either do not use this element or modify the goals. Nothing is "cast in concrete" until the exercise is finished.

Working with People

There are many areas in your assignment as EC that will take more time than you would wish. One of the largest will be in dealing with people that are not as cooperative as you would like. For most of these people it is simply that the pressures of home, family, job or even traffic on the way to the event or exercise has created the stubbornness. Simply give them a little extra space and time. They will go back to being cooperative very shortly.

If the person is not in the above category you will need to look closely to see if this person has a hidden agenda. That is to say are they attempting to further a goal that is not in the best interest of your group. If so, then look hard at the potential contribution of this individual. If it is not significant and possibly even then, it may be best to help this person find other areas to contribute in.

In a more pleasant vein, there are many things that you as EC can do to help your people with their contribution to ECom.

- First is by being a facilitator during your meetings. There can easily be many times when you want to present specific subjects for their consideration and to help them understand why a specific action is being taken. There you need them to listen. In many others, you will need their input. It will serve you well to implement specific procedures in your meetings that state gently but clearly when you want them to listen. For all other items you want (really want) their input. They will appreciate that.

  Hints and kinks to make this easier:

  - Utilize their skills and talents to accomplish group goals.
  - Acknowledge and act on contributions from your group.
  - Help people interact smoothly and discourage off-topic conversations between group members during meetings.

- Second, effective meeting management preserves your people's time. Managing competing conversations in meetings builds positive work relationships. Off-topic or multiple discussions detract from everyone's understanding of the issues. Your people will feel that their time and contributions are valued and respected when competing conversations in meetings are well managed.

- Conflict avoidance is most frequently the topic when conflict in organizations is discussed. Conflict resolution - as quickly as possible - is the second most frequent topic. This is not good because meaningful conflict is a cornerstone in healthy, successful organizations. Conflict is necessary for effective problem solving and for effective interpersonal relationships. These statements may seem unusual to you. If you are like many people, you avoid conflict in your daily work life. You see only the negative results of conflict. Especially, as a manager you may find that you spend precious time mediating disputes between your people.

  There are many reasons why people don't stand up for their beliefs and bring important differences to the table. In ECom organizations, this translates into people nodding in unison when the EC asks if the group agrees, but then complaining about the decision later.

  Effectively managed conflict has many positive results for ECom. When people can disagree with each other and lobby for different ideas, your organization is healthier. Disagreements often result in a more thorough study of options and better decisions and direction. What ever you do, do not let discussions reach a personal level. Maintain conflict discussions at the technical level. Create a group norm that conflict around ideas and direction is expected and that personal attacks are not tolerated.

  Some tips to make this easier:

  - Create an environment in which healthy conflict is encouraged by setting clear expectations.
  - Foster an environment in which differences of opinion are encouraged.
  - Make differences the expectation and healthy debate about issues and ideas the norm.
  - Place emphasis on the common goals that every one can help with.
  - Ask others to express their opinion before you speak your own.
  - What ever you do, **DO NOT** say "I was just about to say that myself". This lessens the persons contribution and makes you look like you are attempting to make yourself look better, and that at the expense of your people.
  - Reward, recognize, and thank people who are willing to take a stand and support their position. Make VERY sure it is a very public recognition when that disagreement produces positive results!

If you experience little dissension in your group, **examine your own actions.** If you believe you want different opinions expressed and want to avoid "group think," and you experience little disagreement from staff, examine your own actions. Do you, non-verbally or verbally, send the message that it is really not okay to disagree? Do you put people in a "hot seat" when they express an opinion? Do they get "in trouble" if they are wrong or a predicted solution fails to work?

Expect people to support their opinions and recommendations with data and facts. Divergent opinions are encouraged, when the opinions are arrived at through the study of data and facts.

Group expectations help establish expected and acceptable behavior. A few very good ones are:

- All members will speak honestly
- All opinions are equal
- Each person will participate.

These guidelines also set up the expectation that personal attacks are not tolerated whereas healthy debate about ideas and options is encouraged.

Handling Walk-Ons

One reality of ECom is that during emergencies you will always need more trained operators than you have. This situation is normally created because there is little or no "real work" to be done on a regular basis. Many people have an interest in ECom but receive no gratification from "just" training. Some of these people can be good operators but the majority tend to be those with an "instant gratification" syndrome and thus are less useful than we would like. The problem comes in that you most likely will not be able to tell the difference within any one individual, between a good operator and one that is merely adequate.

There are two approaches to handling the situation.

1. Use "walk-on" operators only in non critical areas
   In mining diamonds each ton of ore will have a few diamonds. Are you ready to ignore one good operator to get the majority in a correct assignment? You need to be. If this is a good operator, you can put them in a higher responsibility area later in the day.
2. Attempt to quickly train the walk-on using the [EComIntro]
   If you have the time and have your instructional materials ready, this may produce good results. The really positive side of this approach is that any operator that is offended by being asked to read a few pages of material before going out on assignment, usually is not worth having in your group and you made a successful assessment in just a few seconds. You then go back to the prior option with this operator or, if they are really upset, send them away. It is far better to be short one operator than to send out an operator that causes problems on your net or for your Served Agency!

A few items you need to consider

- The walk-on doesn't have a valid ECom/RACES ID. This means he will not be allowed into the operational area if it is restricted. A different assignment is in order for this person.
- If the event involves an evacuation this person may be a candidate for support at one of the shelters. However, if this person has their family with them, it is best to not use them or have them be a "back-up" for the team at that shelter.
- Have walk-on operators operate as backup to a trained member of your team.
- Walk-ons can free up trained people that have skills needed else where.

If you choose to be ready for on-scene training, you will want to consider having/building a small handout, in advance, to give to the person to orient him/her to operations. It should include:

- A copy of the EComIntro PDF.
- An overview of ICS and how they fit in.
- List of frequencies and telephone numbers.
- Sample of the ARRL Radiogram message and handling instructions
- Short list of do's and don'ts.

Training Others

As you begin to train others on a regular basis you will need to consider many things that are difficult to quantify. The reason they are hard to quantify is that each person learns at a different rate and in one of several different ways. Some of the more common learning/teaching techniques are:

- Stick to the subject.
  Examples, used to make a point, are good. So long as you spend more time with the main material than on examples (commonly called "war stories").
- Vary your speed of presentation.
  Highly technical information should have a slower presentation rate while simpler material can be covered more quickly. Take extreme care to realize what is simple to some may be quite complex to others.
- Organize your material.
  The standard "timing" for course preparation is two hours of preparation time for each hour of presentation time. This will vary with how many times you have taught the material. The first time you do a segment you may need three to four hours of prep. time for each hour of class.
- Have a specific learning goal in mind for each segment.
  The most effective presentations are short, concise and handle one subject.
- Use charts and diagrams as applicable.
  Many people find it easier to learn material when they have "pictures" to help with explanations. The old true-ism states "a picture is worth a thousand words".
- Make copies of the material for your students.
  Handouts give the student a good place to make notes and insures they will have a place to find those notes later.
- Make notes to yourself - on your copy - about which examples work best for this segment.
  As you teach, you will find specific examples that work very well in emphasizing a given point. The notes will help you remember which one(s) work the best and where.
- Above all else, try to have fun while you teach.
  Students pick up, very quickly, how relaxed you are. If you are having fun teaching, your students will probably have fun learning.

It has often been said that you learn more about a subject when you teach it. That is true and it can be fun.

Staffing Events

The subject of staffing has been left for last in this document because it is only once you have addressed all of the previous subjects that you begin to have an appreciation for the complexities of staffing. In general, you will want one or two of your AECs to assist with the staffing. This person or these persons will need to be very discrete with the information they will need to adequately assist with staffing issues. All of you doing staffing will, of need, have a large data base of information, NONE of which is committed to paper or computer. This is because of the very sensitive nature of that information and what could happen should the wrong person receive this information and let it be published.

Some of the information you will need, to make informed staffing decisions are the persons:

- Likes, in people, assignments and served agency(ies)
- Dislikes, in people, assignments and served agency(ies)
- Personal hygiene history (a few take a bath once a month, if they need it or not)
- Temperment
- Physical limitations (if any)
- Mental limitations (if any)
- Work history (once assigned, do they complete the assignment)

With the above in mind and a full list of assignments, you can begin the process of finding the "right person for the right assignment". Each item listed below will doubtless have many possible solutions. We attempt here to provide the simplest solution we can find.

1. **Initial Information**
   When you receive a call from your served agency for help, the first information you must have is a clear statement of event needs. Since each situation our served agencies deal with tend to have unique requirements, you will need to know what is unique for this incident. Once you have that information you can start staffing for the event at the correct level (five people may be able to handle a small event, yet twenty may not be enough for some large ones). You will likely not get exact answers for several of these questions. Specific informational items include:
   - Who will we be communicating with and on behalf of whom?
   - What information will we likely be communicating?
     - Will voice communication be sufficient or will we need
       - Packet
       - ATV

       in place of or in addition to voice?
   - Where will the Incident Commander likely be?
   - Where will the staging area be?
   - How many sites will we need to support?
     - What skills are needed for each site?
     - What equipment is needed at each site?
   - When would they like us to be there? (Probably answered with "NOW")
   - How long do they anticipate our participation? (Most times the answer will be - "Until the situation ends").

2. **Call Lists**
   Each district must have some sort of roster/list of its members. That list will need to include:
   - Name
   - Call
   - Phone Number(s),
   - Training/Proficiency (HF, VHF, Packet, ATV, NCS)
   - AVAILABILITY

   for each ECom member.

3. **Your Response**
   The size of the event will determine the extent of your response.
   - A <u>small</u> event may be handled simply with phone calls to the people you are sure will be available.
   - A <u>Medium</u> even will likely start with a callup of your base staff and then continue with a staffing net.
   - A <u>LARGE</u> event will likely start with a call to your local staff, progress to a staffing net and include mutual aid as described in the COPLAN.

4. **Safety**
   Each person that supports your effort <u>MUST</u> understand that safety is our primary concern. State CLEARLY that each person has three priorities <u>IN THIS ORDER:</u>
   1. Their own safety
   2. The safety of their team
   3. Their mission

   The second item that many tend to forget is that we <u>are NOT</u> first response teams. By the time we are called, the event has been in progress for multiple hours. Thus we need to act expiditiously but not as if a few extra minutes would cause ireparable damage.

5. **Staffing Assignment**
The staffing person needs to know the skill set of most of the ECom members in their district. This will allow the matching of skills to assigned positions. It will also insure persons with physical limitations (unable to lift heavy objects for example) will not be asked to do something that could hurt them.

6. **Pre-Assignments**
When ever possible have people pre-assigned to locations that are most likely to be needed. This allows people to become familiar with the location as well as the served agency people who will likely be there. Trust born from experience will enhance our ability to serve.

7. **Teams**
When ever possible send teams of three or four persons to each location. You may send only two if you are short on people or if the situation dictates.
Insure you:
   A. Match individual strengths to assignments
   B. Pair persons with limited training to experienced people in that assignment.
   C. Assign a person to verify each team member has proper equipment with them before they leave the Staging Area.

8. **Staging area**
A staging area is a location where hams meet before going to their work site. The ideal staging area will be outside the affected area, easy to find and near a main road. The location of the staging area shall be selected after consulting with other involved groups to minimize conflict with other groups.

9. **Shifts**
Shifts will vary from six(6) to ten(10) hours (depending on the number of people available and the needs of the served agency) and shall include a thirty minute overlap to facilitate inter shift information exchange.

10. **"Problem" help**
Every district has people who are driven to be "sleepless heroes". These people tend to let their enthusiasm overcome good judgment. Try to find assignments for these people that will keep them busy but not allow them to impede the communication effort.