



Objective

The primary goal of the Incident Communications Plan for CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) & ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) teams is to establish effective and efficient communication protocols during events or incidents. This plan outlines the communication channels, procedures for calling for assistance, radio usage guidelines, and alternative communication methods.

Communication Channels

- Major Incident (MI) Channels: MI-1, MI-2, and MI-3: Used for internal team communication during events or incidents or inter-agency communications.
 - The CERT Coordinator or their designee will work with Santa Rosa County Communications ahead of the event to determine what channel should be used.
 - When working events with other agencies, the general ARES or CERT volunteers may operate on a separate channel from the primary incident if more detailed communications are needed.
 - ARES & CERT leadership will continue to monitor the primary frequency in use for coordination with other agencies.
- EM Admin Channel: This channel is the daily operating channel for ARES & CERT leadership as well as the channel monitored for being dispatched to a call.
- Fire Region, EMS, and other channels: **Do not transmit on channels that you have not been authorized to use.** These channels should only be used when advised to do so by Santa Rosa County Communications or leadership of an agency such as Fire, EMS, Emergency Management, or the Sheriff's Office.

Information needed for assistance calls

- Gather all relevant information before making a call to the communications team including:
 - Address/major landmark or business
 - Nearest cross streets
 - For medical assistance, patient details:
 - Approximate age & gender of the patient
 - Chief complaint
 - Level of consciousness
 - Patient name should not be transmitted
 - For fire assistance:
 - Where is the fire located (ex. Single story business, two story home)
 - If a brush fire, approximate area (x feet by y feet)
 - Does the fire appear to be spreading?
 - For law enforcement assistance:
 - Nature of issue
 - Number of parties involved
 - Description of suspect or involved vehicle(s) if applicable
 - Suspect direction of travel if applicable



Radio Calling Procedure

- When using public safety communications, use the format “[Channel name] from [Your Station]”
 - For example, if on the “EM Admin Channel” you would say “EM Admin from CERT XX” (where XX is your assigned unit number)
 - When calling another CERT leader or volunteer CERT XX from CERT YY
- Wait for acknowledgment before providing information (speak clearly & calmly)
- Continue to monitor the channel in case the communications team has additional questions or the responders need to reach you

Radio Usage Guidelines

- Minimize radio traffic on public safety channels and transmit only essential information
 - Remember these communications are recorded and are public record
 - In accordance with the FCC, the use of profanity, foul language, or intentional interference on the radio is strictly prohibited
- Use public safety radios with care, as they are provided by Santa Rosa County Emergency Management. You are responsible for ensuring no loss or damage to the radio.
- Leadership from ARES & CERT teams should assess volunteer experience before allowing the use of public safety radios. Inexperienced volunteers should use one of the alternative communications methods below.

Alternative Communication Methods

Amateur Radio Repeaters:

- Primary Repeater: 146.700 K4SRC repeater (for events)
- Southern Part of County: 444.200 K4ECR repeater (if needed within range)
- Simplex frequencies:
 - 146.43
 - 146.55
 - 146.58
- Crossband repeater frequency (when needed)
 - 446.025

FRS/GMRS Channels:

- Primary Channel: GMRS 7
- Backup Channel: GMRS 11

Individual Incident Communications Plans

While these guidelines are the general direction for any event or incident, please refer to the incident action plan provided for the event or incident you are working to ensure that you utilize the proper communications methods.

Conclusion

By following this Incident Communications Plan, our CERT & ARES teams can ensure effective communication during events or incidents. Clear protocols for radio usage, calling for assistance, and alternative communication methods will contribute to a coordinated and organized response, minimizing confusion and improving overall incident management.