

Amateur Radio Nets

Any licensed amateur radio operator can start a net to get assistance with a situation. However, emergency nets are nearly always recognized and requested by agencies or authorities outside of the Amateur Radio Service through a local amateur radio *Emergency Coordinator (EC)*

Declared Net -- Begins with a statement that a net is being started for a particular purpose; there is an identified Net Control Station (NCS) and perhaps an identified backup or logging station.

Open Net -- Net declared; not much is happening; normal use of repeater or frequency.

Directed Net -- NCS declares the net active and actively controls the frequency. Normal usage of the frequency is stopped. Specific topic, conditions, and/or instructions for check-in are given.

- **Informal Directed Net** -- Public service nets and practice nets (such as regular ARES).
- **Formal Directed Net** -- Activation of specific nets for a specific purpose.
- **Sub-nets** -- NCS may establish sub-nets with their own frequencies and NCSs, reporting to the main net. Typical sub-nets: *Resource* (personnel, standby, relief, scheduling), *Logistics* (supply, transportation), *Health & Welfare*, *Search & Rescue*, *Damage Assessment*, and *Security*

15 Rules of Operation:

1. Net Control Station has absolute control of the frequency until the net is closed. All communications must pass through NCS; ask NCS for permission before making a direct contact; all communication should be important and relevant to the net; no personal transmissions, except during *Open* or *Informal Directed* nets with that as a purpose.
2. NCS will give check-in instructions. During an a *Formal Directed* emergency *Net*, these could be phonetic *Callsign*, *Name*, *Mobile and/or Base and location*, special *Training/Qualifications*, *Availability* for how long, *Band/Equipment* (including Power Source) availability, *Condition* of your radio and *Power source*, approximate *Range* of your system, and *Other information* as directed. Have information available before checking in.
3. If requested by NCS to check-in to a *sub-net*, instructions will include all frequency information as well as information needed to complete check-in. Listen carefully. Sub-net NCS has absolute control (as above) until the sub-net is closed.
4. *Tactical callsigns* may be issued by NCS to facilitate operation during *Formal Directed* emergency or *Informal Directed* public service/emergency practice nets. **Use them.** FCC callsign ID is required every 10 minutes. Do not interrupt emergency traffic to FCC ID. NCS may call for FCC ID from all stations, or station should ID with both tactical callsign and FCC ID on next net contact, to meet FCC requirement.
5. Unless in immediate danger, or at the direction of the on-scene authorities or of the NCS, never leave your post, your transmitter/receiver, or the person to whom you have been assigned. Do not switch back and forth between net and sub-nets. If assigned to a sub-net, contact main NCS only through sub-net NCS. Pay attention to your power source and be prepared with backup.
6. If authorities ask you to leave your post or the person to whom you have been assigned, **comply** immediately and without comment. Notify NCS of your change in status as soon as possible.

7. If on-scene authority requests that radio be shut off, or that no transmissions be made, **comply** immediately and without question. Do not notify NCS from that location. There may be a danger that could be triggered by RF or electronic spark. If possible, ascertain whether you can leave the location of the danger in order to notify NCS of the circumstances
8. During *Formal Directed* emergency or *Informal Directed* public service/emergency practice nets, keep all your transmissions short and to the point. Always be ready to record messages transmitted to you or to be transmitted to NCS. **Rule:** Think it, Write it down, Say it, Get off the key.
9. **Listen, listen, listen** -- Pay attention to everything that is going on. Effective performance and personal safety require all operators to be aware of all events in order to be able to change responsibilities during net operations.
10. **Emergency. Priority.** -- During *Formal Directed* emergency or *Informal Directed* public service/emergency practice nets, everything STOPS with the transmission of **Emergency** or **Priority**. The highest, **Emergency**, is reserved for **only danger-of-death or serious-injury-if-message-is-not-heard-immediately** messages. The second, **Priority**, means the traffic concerns an *immediate safety issue regarding Human life or injury, or impending property damage*. NCS will stop everything and answer these calls immediately. Rely on NCS to dispatch assistance.
11. Never transmit the name of an injured, trapped or deceased subject Request only that the NCS send the appropriate authorities and help to your location on a priority basis as outlined above. Never transmit the name of a minor lost or separated from responsible adults. Be prepared to respond to NCS with description and or identifying information established ahead of time. Should this not suffice, have authorities authorize transmission of the name.
12. Never make any comment to a member of the media regarding information about injuries, deaths, addresses of the most severe damage, license numbers of vehicles, rail car numbers, and possible reported causes which might lead them to a "trail-of-responsibility/blame." *I can't answer that question* is always a good response. Refer them to the Public Information Officer or to the authorities. If you don't recognize people, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to be part of the authorized on-site operations team, don't discuss the situation with them. You *may* discuss the role of the communications volunteers and amateur radio in the overall, but not the specific, situation. But be careful.
13. Allow authorities to communicate directly as third-party traffic. Hand the microphone to the person who wishes to pass a message and tell them they can't use foul language or conduct commercial business. Relays often become incorrectly "translated" by the relay operator, especially if there is a high percentage of special agency terminology, technical terms.
14. Turn down emotional sensitivity; be objective. Do not criticize. Be patient with NCSs. Do not be an "ambulance chaser." Check-in to the net and follow orders. Amateur Radio Service volunteers must respect and cooperate with the served agencies or authorities. Often that means being a "servant" in order to provide "service" in Public Service activities.
15. Amateur radio operators are communicators. The authorities are in charge. Our only job is to communicate, when asked to do so, what the authorities want communicated. Identify yourself and tell them you are available for communications service when needed.