



San Benito County  
Amateur Radio  
Association

## San Benito County ARES/ACS/RACES – Volunteer Emergency Communications

### Use of Volunteer Radio Operations in Emergency Operations

This document describes the use of communication operators to assist the County of San Benito California in emergency communications. It was prepared by the San Benito County Amateur Radio Association.

**Participants** – Operators may participate in two different levels depending on their availability, expertise, equipment, and what they best feel their level of commitment can be. Appropriate FCC licenses are required for those who will operate on frequencies as required, and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. There are two levels of participants:

Level 1 Participants	Level 2 Participants
<p>Communication operators who have agreed that the emergency communications for San Benito County will be their primary response activity. They have current background checks and are sworn volunteers for the county.</p> <p>These operators have participated in previous training and are aware of the basic procedures that will be followed in emergency incidents and ready to be used immediately in emergencies with minimal direction and preparation.</p>	<p>These are Amateur Radio Operators who chose to not serve as regular volunteer staff, but may be available to work in an emergency.</p> <p>They may also be those operators brought in and trained during an extended emergency.</p>

#### Emergency Readiness Conditions (RECON)

SBC ARA maintains a given Ready Condition at all times. As a situation develops the current RECON level may change. All ARES members should be responsible for knowing the present RECON.

1	<b>Imminent Danger.</b> Condition 1 could be triggered by severe weather warnings or actual conditions, such as, high winds, tornado sighted close to or moving towards a populated area, or flooding. <b>ACS or ARES is activated with all available resources.</b> Assignments issued via radio, operations frequencies set, etc.
2	<b>Alert.</b> Condition 2 could be triggered by severe weather warnings, such as high winds, high water, tornado warning, flash flood warning, or winter storm warning. Members that are available to respond are instructed to have all portable gear ready and be monitoring the coordinated frequencies.
3	<b>Caution.</b> Condition 3 refers to a situation that presents a greater potential threat than Condition 4, but poses no immediate threat to life or property. This condition includes situations that could develop into a hazardous condition. This includes severe weather such as hurricane. Members should monitor the coordinated frequencies or advise how they may be reached.
4	<b>Awareness.</b> Denotes a situation that causes a higher level of readiness than is normally and routinely present. This could be triggered by the onset of a particular hazard vulnerability season, such as hurricane, tornado, or flash flood seasons, or increased fire threat due to severe drought. Notification of ACS and ARES members not yet necessary.
5	<b>Situation normal.</b> This is the RECON level most of the time.

**Local Frequencies** – For local communications, the following frequencies will be used as described in the San Benito (XBE) ICS-217.

## GROUPS

In emergencies, Amateur Radio Operators can be assigned into one of three basic groups. Assignment is based on the number of operators needed, the level of expertise of the operator, the type of equipment available, and the availability of the operator.

<b>GROUP 1</b>	<p><b>COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONAL CENTER (EOC)</b> – In most emergencies, the County Emergency Operational Center (EOC) will be activated and one Amateur Radio Operator will be assigned to this center. Currently, the EOC will be stationed at the Hollister Police Department. Depending on the length of the emergency, this position will be rotated on a regular basis during the event. Duties will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving direction and control to other Amateur Radio Operators not at the EOC as directed by the County Office of Emergency Services (OES)</li> <li>• Contacting outside agencies (such as the State OES) for assistance and information as directed by the County OES</li> <li>• Receiving calls from the local Amateur Radio Operators (Group 2) that are relaying important information and requests for assistance</li> <li>• Contacting local home base stations manned by Amateur Radio Operators (Group 3) for relaying incident information and requests.</li> </ul>
<b>GROUP 2</b>	<p><b>MOBILE OPERATORS</b> – Most Amateur Radio Operators will be assigned to this group. This group includes those operators assigned to a fixed or mobile field location. This would include assignments at local agencies (cities, fire, staging, shelters, etc.) or on a mobile task. It is expected that the members of this group own a VHF hand-held and/or a mobile radio.</p>
<b>GROUP 3</b>	<p><b>HOME BASE STATIONS</b> – Those Amateur Radio Operators that have multiple base radios permanently set up in their residences may fall into this group. In emergencies, a traditional job of Amateur Radio Operators has been to provide long-range communications to areas outside the emergency area. These could include making requests for emergency assistance, relaying the status of the local emergency to outside agencies, and relaying requests for health and welfare checks. The base stations should also monitor the National Simplex channel to direct any outside Amateur Radio Operators coming up on the air volunteering their assistance.</p> <p>They can also serve as a back up to the EOC for local communications when traffic levels are high. They could monitor other radios used by the general public (e.g. Family Radio Service (FRS), General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) and Citizen Band (CB) frequencies) to relay important information obtained from these bands. Many members of the public have FRS radios and FRS radios could be used in the future by local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Conditions of regional roads could be obtained from commercial truck drivers on CB channel 17.</p> <p>It is expected that the Amateur Radio Operators in this group will have a HF and a VHF base station at their residence. Other desirable radios include UHF, FRS, GMRS, and CB radios. It would also be desirable to have a back-up power system.</p>

## LOCATIONS

**ACS/ARES DOC** – The SBC ARA Headquarters on Southside Rd will be used as the DOC. There are four radios on the communications desks: a VHF/UHF unit, a commercial case with a VHF and UHF radio, and a HF unit. All are attached to their own antennas on the roof.

**County EOC** – The main conference room at the Hollister Police Department will be used as the County's EOC. The small room at the SE corner of the conference room is the amateur radio communications room. There are two radios on the communications desk: a VHF/UHF unit, and a HF/6m/2m/440 unit. Both are attached to their own vertical antenna on the roof.

**Hazel Hawkins Hospital** – There are two amateur radio antennas on the roof of Hazel Hawkins Hospital (HHH): a 2-meter vertical, and a HF dipole. They were installed by the local hams. The coax leads into the Board Conference Room. The coax for each antenna is behind a plastic electrical outlet cover located on the south wall of this room. Bring a PL-259 barrel connector and a length of coax.

**COMMUNICATION NETWORKS**

<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<p><b>REGIONAL NET: COUNTY EOC to STATE OES</b> – Provide direction and control communications between the County EOC and Regional EOC (REOC) located in Oakland. The REOC is the regional office for the State OES.</p> <p>Depending on the equipment availability at the EOC and other considerations, contact with the REOC may be delegated to home amateur base stations.</p> <p>The home base stations will receive direction from the EOC via the Level 3 network.</p>
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<p><b>INTER-AGENCY NET: COUNTY EOC to LOCAL AGENCIES</b> – Provide direction and control communication between the County EOC and the Amateur Radio Operator assigned to a local agency’s headquarters.</p> <p>Examples would be city halls, fire agencies, public works, airports, animal control, school districts or shelters.</p> <p>This would also include communications to any staging areas.</p>
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<p><b>COUNTY EOC to BASE OR MOBILE AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS</b> – Provide communications between the County EOC and deployed mobile or home base Amateur radio units.</p> <p>Amateur Radio Operators may be assigned to mobiles or to their home base stations. Home base stations may contact outside agencies or other local Amateur Radio Operators when delegated to by the EOC.</p> <p>Direction and communication between the home base stations and the EOC will take place on a Level 3 net.</p>
<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<p><b>LOCAL AGENCIES to MOBILE AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS</b> – Provide communications between Amateur Radio Operators assigned to local agencies and to Amateur Radio Operators working under those agencies.</p> <p>This net is also used by mobile Amateur Radio Operators assigned to the same task to contact each other directly.</p>
<b>LEVEL 4R</b>	<p><b>OUTSIDE RESOURCES NET</b> – Used to establish initial communication with other Amateur Radio Operators who are volunteering their services to the incident.</p> <p>These operators might be those who are arriving from outside the area or other local Amateur Radio Operators who are not aware of the local calling procedures.</p> <p>This net will be used to direct these operators to a staging area or to another location where they can be signed up and assigned to a task.</p> <p>After initial contact is made, further communication will be conducted on a designated Level 3 or 4 net.</p>