

## Serving "Served" Agencies

Meeting the communications needs of "served" agencies is a challenging, and often daunting proposition in today's complex disaster/emergency relief arena.

With the proliferation of emergency relief organizations, increasingly sophisticated needs, all competing for that scarce resource--the volunteer--coupled with the emergence of other non-ARES amateur providers, it's enough to make an ARES member's head spin.

As more of the population moves to disaster-prone areas, and less government funding is available, more pressure is consequently placed on agencies to use (and sometimes abuse) the volunteer sector for support of their missions in disaster mitigation.

Toes are sometimes stepped on and volunteer morale can be undermined. On the other hand, the League's formal relationships with served agencies are vitally important and valuable to radio amateurs. They provide us with the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the relief of suffering among our fellow human beings.

Another substantial benefit not to be overlooked is that these relationships lend legitimacy and credibility for Amateur Radio's public service capability, and that is important when it comes time to defend our frequencies and privileges before the FCC and Congress, an ever more challenging task. So, ARES' relationships with the emergency/disaster relief world are to be nurtured.

### What to Do?

First, it is imperative that a detailed local operational plan be developed with agency managers in the jurisdiction that set forth precisely what each organization's expectations are during a disaster operation. ARES and agency officials must work jointly to establish protocols for mutual trust and respect.

Make sure they know who the principle ARES official is in the jurisdiction. All matters involving recruitment and utilization of ARES volunteers are directed by him/her, in response to the needs assessed by the agency involved. Make sure ARES counterparts in these agencies are aware of ARES policies, capabilities and perhaps most importantly, resource limitations. Let them know that ARES may have other obligations to fulfill with other agencies, too.

Technical issues involving message format, security of message transmission, Disaster Welfare Inquiry policies, and others, should be reviewed and expounded upon in the detailed local operations plans.