Training and Why it is Important:

TRAINING, THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ARES COMMUNICATIONS
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Yes, training is the most important part of ARES Communications. Without it the organization will not be able to meet its responsibilities.

ARES Communications has the responsibility to handle traffic in a fast, efficient and accurate manner. This requires practice. Practice takes time. And time seems to be the one thing everyone is short of.

The leaders of an ARES Communication organization must use all of their abilities to insure that the lack of time for training on the air, or the member's part does not cripple their effectiveness.

A Training Officer can be the key to a good training program. This person must be an amateur radio emergency communications expert. Now, not everyone can know everything about everything ARES requires. A good training plan can help put everything into perspective.

THE TRAINING PLAN
Every public service organization does not require a training plan. Of course, not every public service organization can and does effect the outcome of an incident where property and lives depend on the abilities of the volunteer public servant. Especially if the service performed requires a high degree of technical and administrative expertise.

A solid training plan covers every position in the organization. The Emergency Coordinator, Packet Manager, Operator... every position requires training. If there is a position within an organization that does not require training, than the organization does not require that position. Everyone should have a job to do and a source of information to assist in the learning of that job.

There are many ARRL publications, which are outstanding. Equipment and software have operations and users manuals.

Effective disaster response in a large-scale emergency requires immediate and sustained coordination between organizations for the duration of the emergency. Preparing your ARES group for this type of coordination through effective training and planning is your responsibility. Remember: "Be Prepared!"

GENERAL PROCEDURES
1. To transmit in the voice mode, always remember to TALK ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MICROPHONE! It is unfortunate that TV shows don't use this technique when they present, for example, detective shows. Actually that mike the cop/actor appears to use is dead--they record him on a high fidelity system with a different mike. So to make the picture appealing, the actor holds the mike six inches away and talks directly into it. This is how bad habits are picked up! If you are using a push-to-talk mike, put your lips right at the edge of the mike and talk across it. If you have a D-104 or similar fixed station microphone, it is still a good way to get crisp, clean speech across. Talking across the mike cuts down on sibilants, breath sounds, the "popping" of "P's" and similar sounds. This technique makes the communication more understandable.
2. Speak slowly, distinctly, clearly, and do not let your voice trail off at the end of words or sentences.
3. On FM, hold the transmit button down for a least a second before beginning your message. This will assure that the first part of the message is not cut off by a slow squelch system.

4. Know what you are going to say before you push the mike button. Don't clutter the air up with: "Net Control, uh, this is WA, uh, seven, uh, xyz, and, uh will you call Mister, uh, uh, Black to uh, the radio uh, for Mister Green, uh, over?" It is very easy to confuse the whole transmission if the operator does not have the facts right on the tip of the tongue and ready to put out the message in a crisp and orderly fashion.
5. Make sure you are not on the air with someone else. Listen before transmitting--the pause you hear from the Net Control Station (NCS) may be deliberate to allow two other stations to complete a transmission.
6. Chewing gum, eating, and other similar activities tend to clutter up the clarity of your speech. Don't.
7. On 2-meter and other VHF fragment frequencies, look for a receiving "hot-spot" site and use it, particularly when on the fringes of communications. Don't walk around talking while in communications fringe areas. Repeaters have much more power than your handheld. Even if you have a good signal from the machine, it does not mean you are good into the machine.
8. Under stress, many operators have a tendency to talk fast. Even if you are in the midst of the action, remember to talk slowly and clearly in order to get the message across correctly. ACCURACY FIRST, SPEED SECOND.
9. Avoid angry comments on the air at all costs. Also, obscene statements and reflect on the Amateur Radio fraternity. Remember there are many "scanners" in use by unlicensed but interested people and, as such, your operating techniques are under observation all the time.
10. If you are relaying a message for another person, be sure you repeat the message exactly, word-for-word, as it is given to you. If it makes no sense to you, get an explanation before you put it on the air. Refer the message back to the originator for clarification.
11. Sound alert. Nothing destroys confidence as much as a bored or weary-sounding radio operator does. If you are tired, get a relief operator.
12. Forget humor on the air during drills and obviously in real emergencies. A radio system suffers enough confusion without wisecracks and jokes. Amateur Radio may be a hobby to enjoy, but the ARES function is serious business and should be treated as such at all times.
13. Watch certain words. They sound almost like the opposite meaning. For example, "can't" almost sounds like "can," and with a poor signal--who knows. "Unable" is a better choice. Use "affirmative" instead of "yes." Use "negative" instead of "no." "Roger" is a good word. It means "message received," implying that it is understood. It does not mean "affirmative" or "yes." The use of Q signals on ARES voice circuits is not advisable! They are too easily misunderstood, rarely save time, and often result in errors.
14. Identification of units in a multi-station ARES function is a requirement by FCC. However, if the NCS and each of the outlying ARES stations give a complete identification at least once in a ten-minute period during the contact, the use of abbreviated call-sign identification or tactical ID is acceptable. As an example, W7XYZ can use "7XYZ" or "First-Aid 1" or "Command Central" as long as the complete call is given by W7XYZ at 10 minute intervals during the contact and at the end of the communication. See 97.119(a) of the FCC rules.
15. Always identify your unit at the beginning of each transmission. The NCS, or anyone else for that matter, needs to know who is calling because voice identification may be difficult. Identify your unit again when the message exchange is completed, as required by FCC rules.
16. The word "break" is never used UNLESS there is an emergency. Otherwise, use your call letters to gain access to the net.
17. Remember that the strongest signal "captures" the receiver on FM. When two or more stations are on the air at the same time, confusion can result. Check to see that you are not overriding someone or blanking out his or her communications with your signal.

18. Do not act as a "relay station" unless the NCS, or another radio station, asks for a relay--and you can fulfill the requirement at your station.
19. When transmitting numbers (house numbers, street numbers, and telephone numbers) always transmit the number sequences as a series of individual numbers). Never say numbers in combinations. Example: "12345 SW 148 Ave." is given as a series "one, two, three, four, five, south west, one, four, eight Avenue." Do not say: "Twelve three forty-five south west A-hundred forty-eight Avenue." There is much confusion when sending combinations of numbers.
20. There is no such thing as "common spelling" in ARES work. If there is a proper name to be transmitted, always spell it out using the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) phonetic alphabet. Do not improvise a phonetic alphabet; if you don't know the recommended phonetics, now is a good time to learn it and use it in your daily operations.
21. Always acknowledge calls and instructions. You can acknowledge by just giving your unit identification or tactical call sign. Nothing is more disruptive to the smooth flow of communications than dead silence in response to a message. If you cannot copy, or respond to the call immediately, then tell the caller to repeat or stand by. Otherwise, acknowledge each call immediately.
22. Never acknowledge calls and instructions unless you understand the call or instructions perfectly. If you do not understand, ask for a repeat. Make sure you have the instruction right before acknowledgment.
23. NCS stations frequently are very busy with work that is not on the air. If you call the NCS and do not get a reply, be patient and call again in a minute or two. If it is an emergency, call more often and so state; otherwise, just space the calls to the NCS until they answer. You may be in a dead spot; try moving your position slightly until acknowledged. Above all, be patient.
24. ONLY TRANSMIT FACTS. If your message is a question, deduction, educated guess, or hearsay, identify it as such. Do not clutter up the air with non-essential information. Particularly important is information regarding ARES emergency work where rumors can be started from overhearing a transmission on a scanner or other non-ARES receiver. Be careful what you say on the air!
25. Always know where you are located. If you are mobile or portable and moving around, always keep a sharp lookout for location identification. The NCS and many others may need to know exactly where you are physically located, so keep a sharp eye on surroundings. If called upon, you can accurately describe your location at any time. This is particularly important if you are with a search team or other mobile units.
26. Always keep a monitor on the net frequency. If you must leave the frequency, ask permission from the NCS to change. Advise the NCS of the change and always report back to the NCS when you have returned to the net frequency. It is vital that the NCS knows the whereabouts of each station in the net, and it is up to you to keep the NCS advised.
27. Stay off the air unless you are SURE you can be of assistance. It does no good to offer advice, assistance, comments or other input to a net unless you can truly provide clarification. It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt!
28. Many times radio conditions are poor and words must be over-exaggerated to be understandable. In general, speak very slowly and distinctly to carry through static or weak signals. The following list provides pronunciation of numbers in poor conditions:
29. If you do not understand the whole message given to you or if you missed a word out of the transmission, reply with "Say again." Do not say, "Please repeat" because it sounds too much like "Received" when conditions are poor.

30. When you have understood the message, acknowledge the receipt with the words "received" or "acknowledged." DO NOT use "QSL" since it may be misunderstood or even missed under poor conditions. These few rules/suggestions are intended to help you become a better operator whether in a ham contest or an ARES mission. As you can see, most of this material is directed toward phone operations. CW and digital operations are far better described in several other ARRL publications, such as The ARRL.

Check your Operating Manual:
Above all, analyze your present operating methods and try to polish each element so your contribution to ARES is worthwhile. The NCS may have final authority, but good, crisp operating methods and procedures almost make a net run without an NCS.