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| Emergency Communications Plan | Abstract  Overall Concept of Operations (CONOP) for the organizational structure, policies, and procedures to effectively support our served agencies and the community within Saint Mary’s County, Maryland.  Christopher J. McGraw, SMC EC |

# Emergency Communications Plan

*Drafted December 5, 2022*

## 1. SCOPE

### 1.1 This plan applies only to the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) operating under the auspices of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) in Saint Mary’s County Maryland.

### 1.2 If any action requested by a served agency involves risk and is beyond the scope of the anticipated assignment, the person should NOT take the action and should notify net control that he/she will not be performing the action requested, along with a statement of the risk assessment.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 The Saint Mary’s County ARES is a field organization of the ARRL and is composed of FCC licensed amateur radio operators who are trained emergency communicators, and volunteer personal time, skill and equipment to serve in the public interest. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) mission is to provide RELIABLE and COORDINATED EMERGENCY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS for served agencies at their request and on a voluntary basis. This plan is written in conformity with the [ARRL Maryland Section Emergency Response Plan](http://arrl-ohio.org/SEC/OSERP%20revision%20Oct%202019.pdf). It details the ARES emergency communications operations in Saint Mary’s County in support of that plan, and other ARRL operational plans and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between served agencies.

### 2.2 The Saint Mary’s County ARES functions in this Emergency Communications Plan are under the direction of the ARES Saint Mary’s County Emergency Coordinator (EC). The EC is appointed by the Maryland/District of Columbia (MDC) Section Emergency Coordinator of the ARRL with the support of the local amateur radio clubs.

### 2.2 The EC may appoint Assistant Emergency Coordinators (AEC’s) as needed.

### 2.3 When the emergency plan is activated, the EC/AEC performing the activation will become the ARES Officer In Charge (OIC) or will designate an OIC. The OIC will be the final authority within Saint Mary’s County ARES for the event.

## 3. PURPOSE

### 3.1 The purpose of this plan is to provide a written guide containing the minimum information needed in an emergency. Each emergency is different, and flexibility is necessary to provide an adequate response. Situations that may not be covered here can still be managed by using what works best, but remains within the intent of the following guidelines:

#### 3.1.1 To provide effective and orderly communications system for emergency traffic within Saint Mary’s County.

#### 3.1.2 To communicate and pass traffic to or from any location within the State of Maryland.

#### 3.1.3 To activate local members of ARES and setup whatever type of net operation needed.

#### 3.1.4 To provide the names, calls, addresses, and phone numbers of each ARES member for contact purposes during an emergency.

#### 3.1.5 To provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of key people in our county.

### 3.2 The primary responsibility of the Saint Mary’s County ARES is to furnish emergency communications in the event of a natural or a man-made emergency when regular communications fail or become inadequate or overloaded.

### 3.3 Drills, training and instruction shall be carried out to ensure readiness to respond quickly in providing effective amateur emergency communications.

### 3.4 Following is a list of jurisdictions/agencies that will be served, as requested, in an emergency. Other city and/or state agencies will be served as requested by Saint Mary’s County’s Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

#### 3.4.1 Incorporated jurisdictions within Saint Mary’s County.

#### 3.4.2 The unincorporated area or populations under the authority of the Saint Mary’s County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

#### 3.4.3 [The American Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org/)

#### 3.4.4 Police and fire departments

#### 3.4.5 Hospitals and nursing homes

#### 3.4.6 The District Seven Maryland Section of the ARRL ARES District Emergency Coordinator when requested by surrounding counties needing assistance.

#### 3.4.7 The State of Maryland Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

#### 3.4.8 [The Federal Emergency Management Agency](https://www.fema.gov/)

#### 3.4.9 [The Salvation Army](https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/)

### 3.5 Saint Mary’s County ARES may provide volunteer communications support for other public events in non-emergency situations.

### 3.6 Saint Mary’s County ARES contributes to the [Central Maryland Severe Weather Net](https://www.severe-weather.org/) when weather conditions warrant and reports to the [National Weather Service (NWS)](https://www.weather.gov/). No request from a served agency is needed.

## 4. PLAN ACTIVATION

### 4.1 Any member of the Saint Mary’s County ARES® who becomes aware that a communications emergency exists, should contact the EC or an AEC and monitor the assigned VHF net frequency of 147.195 MHz for activity. In the event the 147.195 repeater is down, we will use 147.390 MHz repeater. Additional backup and/or alternate frequencies will be 146.540 MHz (simplex) for the North portion of the county and 146.550 MHz (simplex) for the Southern portion of the county. Periodically, announcements should be made by Net Control to let others know the situation.

### 4.2 Net Control will only authorize operators to go to the site of an emergency event if the appropriate served agency requests ARES help at that site. The request, requester name, title, served agency, and time should be documented in the net log. NOTE: Currently mobile units may stage in the parking lots of pre-defined staging areas which are: **{TBD}**

### 4.3 The EC, Designated Duty Officer, or Assistant EC shall be notified by telephone or pager. Other methods including amateur radio or courier may be used if needed.

### 4.4 In any emergency in which amateur radio is requested to serve, amateur radio operators may be alerted by any Emergency Management Coordinator, American Red Cross, or state official notifying the EC or designated Duty Officer. If the EC and Duty Officer are unavailable, notify an AEC. The AEC will periodically attempt to contact the EC and Duty Officer. The EC or designated Duty Officer who activates ARES will become the ARES Officer in Charge (OIC). The ARES OIC will document the name, title, and served agency of the requester.

### 4.5 The ARES OIC will oversee all ARES operations during any emergency activation. He/she will be the top Saint Mary’s County ARES authority for the event. All ARES participants will take direction from him/her. The OIC may change during the event at the discretion of the OIC or EC.

## 5. MOBILIZATION

### 5.1 Notification

### The OIC or designee will notify ARES members by using **{TBD}**

### 5.2 Announcement on 2m/70cm Repeaters

### If required to accomplish necessary staffing for the emergency, the OIC or designee will transmit on each VHF 144-148 MHz and UHF 420-450 MHz repeater, in turn, advising all stations of the ARES activation. E-mail may also be used when appropriate.

### 5.3 Phone Tree

### If necessary, a telephone calling tree will be activated. If telephone service is not available, notification will be by radio and/or courier, as necessary.

### 5.4 Member Response

### Upon notification that a communications emergency exists, members of the Saint Mary’s County ARES will listen to the frequency and will only check in if they have urgent information or when the Net Control Station (NCS) asks for check-ins on the Saint Mary’s County Emergency Net. Stations will maintain radio silence unless they have business with the net.

## 6. DUTIES OF NET CONTROL STATION (NCS)

### 6.1 OPEN NETS The Saint Mary’s County Emergency Net will be activated by the Net Control Station. Based upon the facts, stations will be fully advised as to the nature of the emergency. Net control will establish backup frequencies and a backup NCS station. As appropriate, net control will periodically announce that a net is in progress, give brief summaries, and remind users of backup frequencies and backup net control, etc. .

### 6.2 CHECK IN Stations will be checked in to the emergency net from their home, mobile, and portable stations. All stations shall stand by for further instructions. A roll call and inventory list will be made of operators and equipment for possible assignment as relief operators.

### 6.3 MOBILE AND PORTABLE Stations will be dispatched as needed either to a “Staging” location or directly to the incident site as determined by the OIC. OIC must notify NCS which Agency Official, by name and title, requested our deployment should our deployed units encounter a restricted access condition or other challenges. The location of each will be noted at all times by the NCS.

### 6.4 Communications Supervisor (CS) Each site will have a designated CS who will coordinate amateur communication at their specific deployment site.

## 7. OPERATIONS

### 7.1 MESSAGES

#### 7.1.1 Formal Messages: Formal messages are those which are written in a standard format. All messages which request material or services which may require payment or replacement must be formal messages.

#### 7.1.2 Message Forms: All formal messages must be written in standard ARRL format unless otherwise directed by the served agency.

##### 7.1.2.1 It is strongly encouraged to restrict messages to 25 words or less, particularly if the message will be relayed multiple times or sent out of the area. Messages over 25 words are much less likely to reach their destination quickly. Operators receiving messages from officials should encourage the officials to produce messages in 25 words or less to ensure prompt and reliable delivery.

##### 7.1.2.2 The served agency representative can create his/her printed message on the Message Forms provided by the radio operator for that purpose.

#### 7.1.3 Message Precedence: The operator must assign the message an ARRL PRECEDENCE, defined on the ARRL Website and in the ARES Field Guide. This PRECEDENCE will be used on all messages.

##### 7.1.4 Any operator receiving messages should check the precedence of messages received for EMERGENCY precedence messages.

##### 7.1.5 Anyone giving messages to an operator should check the messages and inform the operator if any of the messages are of EMERGENCY precedence. The person passing the messages should be sure the receiving operator acknowledges this precedence.

##### 7.1.6 Requester name: All FORMAL MESSAGES require the PRINTED NAME, TITLE, SERVED AGENCY and SITE of the requester.

##### 7.1.7 All requests to dispatch operators to a location require PRINTED NAME, TITLE, SERVED AGENCY and SITE of the requester. These requests should be written down in the net log.

##### 7.1.8 MESSAGES RECEIVED REQUESTING MATERIALS OR SERVICES WHICH MAY LATER REQUIRE PAYMENT or REPAYMENT OF FUNDS WILL NOT BE TRANSMITTED UNTIL THEY CONTAIN THE PRINTED NAME, TITLE, SERVED AGENCY AND SITE OF THE REQUESTER.

##### 7.1.9 Save Messages: All operators must save a copy of all formal messages.

7.1.3 Tactical Messages: Tactical Emergency messages, such as FIRE, POLICE or Life-or-Death situations do NOT require NUMBERS. These are first priority messages and we use “Emergency, Emergency!” to get attention of the NCS, between transmissions. When accepting such messages for transmission, require only the following information:

A. To (Example: Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department)  
B. What (Example: Pumper truck needed ASAP)  
C. Why (Example: Structure fire)  
D. Where (Example: Great Mills High School)  
E. Who (Lt. Joe Smith, Hollywood Vol. Fire Department)

### 7.2 TRANSMITTING Stations must not transmit unless invited to do so by the Net Control (NCS).

#### 7.2.1 Exceptions:

##### A. Stations having tactical emergency traffic.

##### B. As designated in the standard operating procedure of Amateur Radio.

#### 7.2.2 Keep transmissions short and to the point. All stations, including net control, should leave frequent gaps in their transmissions for emergency traffic. (Long enough for someone to recognize the gap and call “EMERGENCY EMERGENCY.”)

### 7.3 COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

#### 7.3.1 Operators should use the most efficient method available to transmit their message. If available and appropriate, use the telephone, cell phone, Internet, packet, foot, automobile, etc.

#### 7.3.1 The more traffic passed off the air, the more available ham radio is for traffic to/from locations without alternate means of communications.

## 8. DRILLS, TESTS AND ALERTS

### 8.1 An annual test will be conducted during the Fall of each year in conjunction with the nationwide Simulated Emergency Test (SET) sponsored by ARRL. Periodic exercises will be conducted in cooperation with the various Saint Mary’s County Emergency Management Coordinators.

### 8.2 The Saint Mary’s County ARES Net will be held at 7:30 P.M., local time, the first and third Wednesday nights of each month, on the 147.195 MHz repeater (+ Offset / PL 156.7). This bi-weekly test may be preceded by an electronic mail notice weekly to all ARES members whose electronic mail addresses are listed on an electronic mail mailing list.

### 8.3 At the discretion of the EC, ARES will sponsor an unannounced activation at least once a year.

### 8.4 A Standard Operating Procedure detailing emergency response procedures and actions shall be written.

### 8.5 The Saint Mary’s County ARES Emergency Communications Plan and the Standard Operating Procedure shall be reviewed annually with updates as necessary to keep this plan current and viable.

### 8.6 The ARRL’s [Public Service Communications Manual](http://www.arrl.org/ares) constitutes an overall source of basic information on the League’s public service communications program. The appendices provide comprehensive operational details and guidance for both the new and experienced public service communicator.

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| **1. Incident Name:**  STMA-ARES MDC SECTION | | | | | **2. Date/Time Prepared:**  Date: 17 February 2023  Time: | | | | | | | **3. Operational Period:**  Date From: Date To:  Time From: Time To: | | |
| **4. Basic Radio Channel Use:** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone Grp. | Ch # | Function | Channel Name/Trunked Radio System Talkgroup | | | Assignment | | RX Freq N or W | RX  Tone/NAC | TX Freq N or W | TX  Tone/NAC | | Mode (A, D, or M) | Remarks |
| 1 | 1 | Command-VHF (Pri. Wide Area) | STMA-01 | | | NCS | | 147.390  W | None | 147.990  W | 123.0 | | M | Leonardtown (Cty Fairgrounds) System Fusion (C4FM/FM Auto)\* |
| 1 | 2 | Command-VHF (Sec. Wide Area) | STMA-02 | | | NCS | | 147.195  W | None | 147.795  W | 156.7 | | A | Oakville Transfer Station  (St Marys-Charles Coverage Area) |
| 1 | 3 | Command-VHF (Sec. South) | STMA-03 | | | NCS | | 146.640  W | None | 146.040  W | 146.2 | | A | Lex Park (Mid Atl Test Range) |
| 1 | 4 | Command-UHF (Pri. Wide Area) | STMA-04 | | | NCS | | 443.300  W | None | 448.300  W | 123.0 | | M | Leonardtown (Cty Fairgrounds) System Fusion (C4FM/FM Auto)\* |
| 1 | 5 | Command-UHF (Sec. Wide Area) | STMA-05 | | | NCS | | 443.050  W | None | 448.050  W | None | | A | Great Mills (100W @211' ASL) |
| 1 | 6 | Tactical-Simplex (Pri. North) | STMA-06 | | | ICP / NCS | | 146.540  W | None | 146.540  W | None | | A | Tactical Freq for use North of St Mary's Cty Regional Airport (LTW) |
| 1 | 7 | Tactical-Simplex (Pri. South) | STMA-07 | | | ICP / NCS | | 146.550  W | None | 146.550  W | None | | A | Tactical Freq for use South of St Mary's Cty Regional Airport (LTW) |
| 1 | 8 | WL2K - VHF  (Pri. Wide Area) | STMA-08 | | | ALL | | 145.070  W | None | 145.070  W | None | | D | RMS - North: KB2SKP-12 \*\* RMS - South: KB2SKP-13 \*\* |
| **5. Special Instructions:**  \* STMA-01 & STMA-04 are Yaesu System Fusion repeaters setup in Mixed Mode for Analog and Digital use and can be independently connected to YSF Rooms remotely.  \*\* 145.070 is Primary WINLINK frequency whereby either RMS node KB2SKP-12 (Hollywood FD) or KB2SKP-13 (Lex Park) can be reached.  For repeater coverage purposes, using the Saint Mary's County Regional Airport in California, MD as the North / South divider (38.315330, -76.550578) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **6. Prepared by** (Communications Unit Leader)**:** Name: Christopher McGraw (KB2SKP) STMA EC Signature:  ' | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **ICS 205** | | | | **IAP Page** | | | Date/Time: | | | | | | | |