



Sumter County ARES

Amateur Radio Emergency Service

501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Non-Profit Organization



SCARES RADIOGRAM TRAINING SERIES

Introduction

An important component of amateur radio emergency communications is the ability to pass “Formal Traffic”. Amateur radio “Formal Traffic” refers to a structured system of relaying messages between amateur radio operators through designated networks, typically following a standardized format and procedures, often used to deliver non-commercial messages on behalf of third parties, most commonly managed through the American Radio Relay League's (ARRL) "National Traffic System" (NTS).

Amateur radio operators have been sending, receiving and delivering formal traffic over the air for decades. Formal traffic can now even be sent via the Internet using computer software such as Winlink. Although this new digital option makes sending and receiving formal traffic easier and quicker, and a preferred method by many, as emergency communicators we must never totally rely on digital methods that rely on the Internet to be useful. To that end, amateur radio emergency communicators need to become proficient in handling formal traffic by conventional over-the-air means. Although formal traffic can be sent over the air by CW and digital methods, for the purpose of this training series, we will focus on the Phone (voice) method.

When we hear the words, “Formal Traffic”, we usually think of messages being passed over the HF bands because the message’s destination is outside the local repeater service area. Although less common, formal traffic can also be passed between amateur radio operators using VHF and UHF simplex frequencies and repeaters.

Because of the importance of handling formal traffic, Sumter County ARES presents this training series. Even if you do not have HF capabilities, you will still benefit from this training to acquire the skills to pass formal traffic using Winlink, as well as by phone using VHF and UHF simplex frequencies and repeaters.

Part-1, Watch Radiogram Video

SCARES members should watch an on-line training video titled, “National Traffic System – Online Training Session”. [Click here to view the video.](#) This video and other information about traffic handling and the National Traffic System can also be found on the Sumter County ARES website at www.sumterares.org/radiograms.

Part-2, ZOOM Meeting

Part-2 will be accomplished during a SCARES on-line Zoom meeting. For this part of the training, we will not be using Winlink or its radiogram template. Students should already have viewed the video described in Part-1 above. Students should print out and have ready a blank radiogram form. You can find the form by clicking [here](#). The instructor will show an actual radiogram form and demonstrate how to properly complete the form. The instructor will then demonstrate how the message will be spoken over the air.

The instructor will then speak a second message for which the students will transcribe that message onto their blank radiogram form. The instructor will then share his screen to show how the message should have been transcribed onto the radiogram form. The SCARES NTS Liaison will be present to address any questions.

Part-3, SCARES Radio Net

Part-3 will be accomplished during a SCARES VHF radio net. For this part of the training, we will not be using Winlink or its radiogram template. Students should already have viewed the video described in Part-1 above. Students should print out and have ready a blank radiogram form. You can find the form by clicking [here](#). The instructor will speak a radiogram message over the air to another station on the same net. That receiving station, and all other students, will transcribe that message onto their blank radiogram form. The instructor will then describe how the message should have been properly transcribed onto the radiogram form. The SCARES NTS Liaison will be present to address any questions.

Part-4, Emailed Scenario

Students should have already completed Part-1, as well as Part-2 and/or Part-3. For this part of the training, we will not be using Winlink or its radiogram template. A scenario in paragraph form will be emailed by the instructor to all SCARES members. It will be up to each student to complete a radiogram form using the details in the email. The student will then arrange a date and time to send the radiogram message over the air by phone (voice) to the instructor using any of the following methods:

- During the monthly SCARES radio net; or
- On any VHF or UHF simplex frequency outside of the SCARES radio net; or
- On an HF frequency appropriate for the distance and time of day.

The message received by the instructor will NOT pass the message any further. Off the air if the student prefers, the instructor will critique how the message was transmitted and provide feedback to the student.

Conclusion

Students should regularly practice sending and receiving radiograms whether it is through an HF traffic net or simply between local amateurs. I have included here a short list of HF traffic nets that are popular in Florida. I would first suggest that you listen to these nets to become familiar with their procedures and then try sending your own message through any one of these nets.

- [Northern Florida ARES Net \(NFAN\)](#)
Daily, 9:00 AM EDT/8:00 CDT, Monday through Saturday, 7.265 MHz, alternate frequency is 7.242 MHz
- [Northern Florida Phone Net \(NFPN\)](#)
Daily, 7:30 PM ET, 3.950 MHz, alternate frequency is 7.242 MHz and 7.247 MHz
- [Florida Phone Traffic Net \(FPTN\)](#)
Daily, 7:00 AM ET, 3.950 MHz
The FPTN is a combined-section net that maintains daily liaison with the National Traffic System, handles formal written traffic and trains for emergencies.

Sincerely,

Mark Newby, KX4LEO
Emergency Coordinator
Sumter County