County of Plumas
Emergency Operations Plan

FUNCTIONAL ANNEX J

RACES/ARES Communications Plan

BACKGROUND

RACES stands for Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) part 97 section 407.

ARES stands for Amateur Radio Emergency Service and is organized under the American Radio Relay League (ARRL).

These two organizations are made up of the same members but differ based on the governing organization. Members of both groups are licensed amateur radio operators that donate their time and use of their equipment to support the community in times of an emergency.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this plan is to ensure activation of RACES/ARES resources as needed to enhance, support, or supplement existing communications systems during an emergency. This plan is a guideline to be used during an emergency (or drill) when additional radio communication is required. Typically RACES/ARES will handle non-tactical communications freeing up traffic on the official channels. Also, due to the mobility and coverage of local ham radio repeaters, RACES/ARES members can provide communication where other agencies may not.

ACTIVATION

During Plumas County emergency operations including partial Emergency Operating Center activation, RACES reports to the local Office of Emergency Services (OES). During full-scale EOC activation, a RACES representative (operator) would report to the Communications Unit within the Logistics Branch.

ARES does not have this constraint and can be activated and report to any responding agency such as, but not limited to, the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Public Health, Forest Service, etc..

The County Office of Emergency Services and Sheriffs' dispatch center will maintain an-up-to date phone contact roster to be used for activation. RACES/ARES members will be notified and deploy per their internal emergency plan. The minimum information required is nature of the emergency, what locations need to be staffed, anticipated length of the activation, and any special considerations (hazardous materials incident, traffic control, fire, etc.) that might affect the deployment. Once the RACES/ARES operators have been deployed and the radio net established, the RACES/ARES director will notify the activating agency of their operational status.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

RACES/ARES provides ham radio communications when and where necessary during an emergency. A base communications station is located adjacent to the Plumas County Emergency Operations Center located on the second floor of the Health and Human Services Building, 270 County Hospital Road, Quincy. The Net Control Station is located at Quincy Fire Station #1, 505 Lawrence Street, Quincy. Mobile field communications stations can be provided as needed based on the nature, scope and scale of the emergency. Typical field communications stations are located at emergency shelters, local hospitals, incident command posts and staging areas as defined in the internal emergency plan.

RACES has complete radio stations permanently installed at Plumas District Hospital, Public Health/Emergency Operating Center, Quincy Fire Station/Net Control, Seneca Hospital, and an antenna at Eastern Plumas Healthcare. RACES/ARES members will provide their own personal radio equipment when required at other locations. Battery power can be used for a limited time if AC power or backup generator power is interrupted or not available.

DEACTIVATION

The Incident Commander or Emergency Operating Center Manager (or designee) is responsible to deactivate RACES/ARES. This must be done via RACES/ARES radio communications to the net control station. It is the responsibility of the net control station to deactivate part, or all of the net as requested.