Communications Emergency Amateur Radio Operator

Mission: To provide a plan for emergency communications support in the field and to integrate with the Incident Command System when in use.

Several references are made to roles (in italics) that are part of the Incident Command System. The ICS may or may not be in use in a particular event, or the full ICS structure may not be used at some locations. This document assumes that ICS is in use, but if that is not the case the references can be disregarded. ICS forms always should be used regardless.

Actions to take when activated for a field communications emergency assignment:

Take with you to assigned location

- Safety vest, preferably with "Radio Communications" identification

- HT, spare batteries and adapter (HT to coax with PL259 connector, to mate with SO239 female connector). HT should be dual band type and have a gain antenna if possible. Bring headphones, ear buds, speaker mike, etc. for noisy environment.

- If digital communications capable, bring a fully charged laptop computer (or equivalent), with fldigi and flmsg installed, and digital interface device (or use acoustic coupling)

- FCARES ID

- Photo ID depending upon destination.

- Copies of ICS-213 and ICS-214 forms, downloadable from www.fcohares.org (it is good practice to make copies of these forms and place them in your go kit). Include pen and pencils.

- A copy of this document

- A mag mount antenna and/or a portable J-pole antenna

- In addition to an HT it is good practice to take along another radio such as a dual band mobile, antenna and power supply, and/or a large storage battery, if these are available.

Upon arrival at assigned location

- Park in an area that will not interfere with operations.

- Check in with security (if applicable) to alert them of your presence and the reason for your being there. Obtain necessary credentials.

- Contact *Communications Unit Leader* in the *Logistics Section* to inform who you are and what services you can provide.

- Obtain a briefing from the *Logistics Section Chief*, *Communications Unit Leader* or other incident management team personnel on:

  o Size and complexity of incident

  o Expectations of the *Incident Commander*

  o Incident Objectives

  o The situation, incident activities, and any special concerns

- o Set up your radio and antenna as directed by the *Communications Unit Leader* or other incident management team personnel, and prepare to operate equipment to provide ongoing communications support. It is possible that you will be asked to operate their non-amateur equipment instead of, or in addition to, your own equipment
- Check into FCOHARES or FCEM&HS emergency net with your callsign, then also use a tactical call sign based on location.

Activities at assigned location

- Participate in briefings and meetings as requested
- Remember that we do <u>not</u> provide any information regarding our role or the situation at hand, to any reporters who may be on the scene looking for information, quotes, etc. Always refer such persons to the *PIO* designated by the *Incident Commander*.
- Do not leave radio position without coordination with Net Control; notify Net Control upon return. If two operators are present, leave an operator at radio position when attending briefings, etc.
- When requested, relay status reports to Net Control.
- Request a designated *Runner* to be assigned, if appropriate.
- Communicate directly with the *Logistics Section Chief, Communications Unit Leader*, or designee via radio or designated *Runner* for all urgent communications per Incident Command System procedures.
- Advise designated personnel immediately of any operational issue you are not able to correct or resolve.
- Record all notable communications sent or received, and individual notable activities, in the ICS-214 Activity Log.
- Use ICS-213 Message Form for all formal messages.
  - o When receiving a message verbally over the air, carefully enter all required message information on the form and assign a message number.
  - o If you, and the station sending the message, are both equipped for digital communications, use fldigi/flmsg to receive the message. (Use acoustic coupling if no interface is available) Assign a message number.
  - o Obtain a runner to carry the message to the recipient.

    The runner should wait for the recipient to enter the reply and their signature (printed and written). Then return the form to the ham operator.
  - o The ham operator should then transmit the message reply, verbatim, to the originator, using either voice or digital communications.
- Ensure messages requiring follow-up are so noted and tracked according to message precedence (message number assigned in the order received) and importance.
- Receive and archive all formal ICS-213 Messages.

- When completing a shift and turning over communications to another amateur radio operator:
  - Brief your replacement on the current situation, response actions, available resources, and the role of external agencies in support of the incident.
  - Insure the new operator is introduced to appropriate personnel.
  - Address equipment needs and setup, including frequencies used and documentation practices (ICS-213 Message Forms and ICS-214 Activity Log).
  - Address any health, medical, and safety concerns.
 - Address political sensitivities, when appropriate.

Special Communications Requests

- You may be requested to provide communications in a scenario that you are not familiar with. Use your ingenuity and knowledge to find a way to meet the request. If necessary, contact net control for suggestions. Always display a "can do" attitude and find a way to meet every request, if possible.

Demobilization

- Do not leave post until released by your supervisor.
- When relieved, inform Net Control and sign off from net(s).
- Deliver completed forms to your supervisor or to the *Documentation Unit (in Planning Section).* If there is no one to take the forms, then keep them in your possession, as the forms likely will be requested later.
- Secure radio equipment.
- Notify the *Planning Section Chief* when demobilization is complete.
- Brief your supervisor on current problems, outstanding issues, and follow up requirements.
- Debrief personnel in issues, strengths, areas of improvement, lessons learned, and procedural or equipment changes as needed.
- Submit comments to the *Planning Section Chief* for discussion and possible inclusion in an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan.

Incident Command System Structure
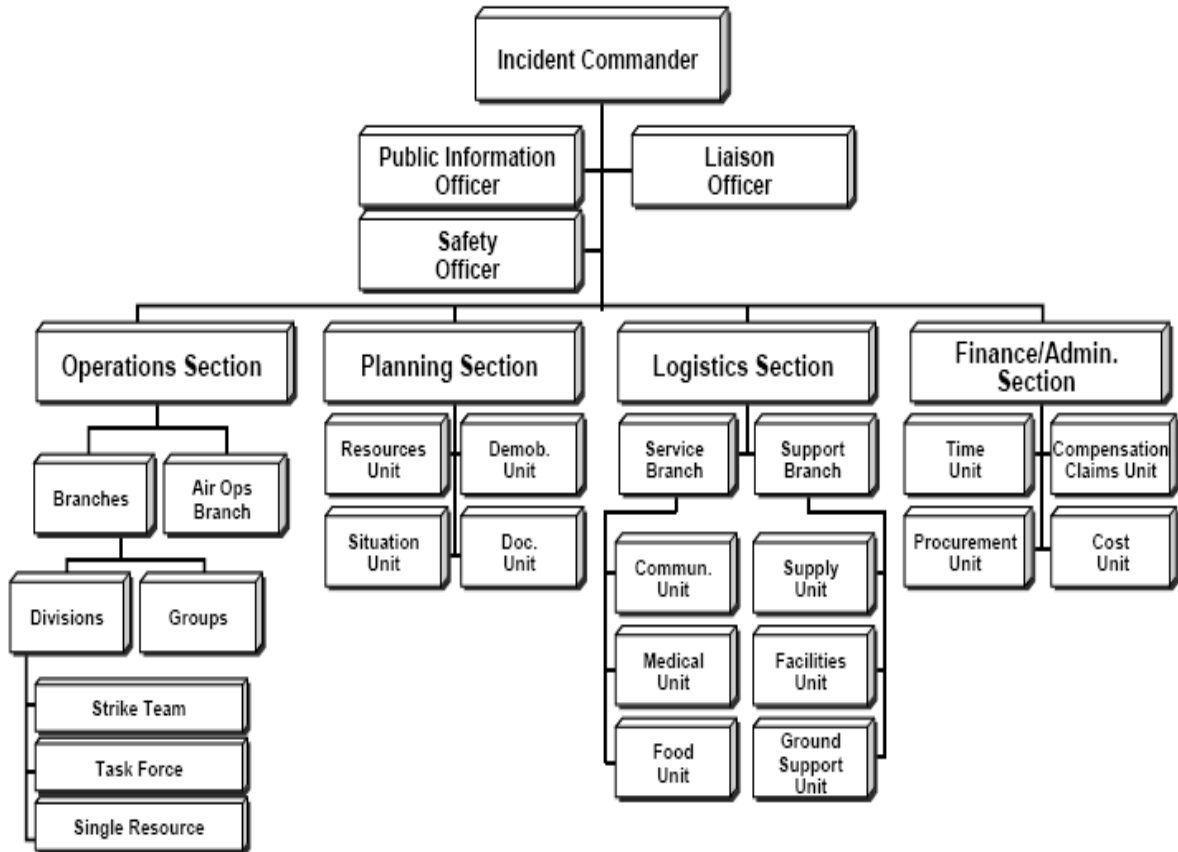
This document is loosely based upon Job Action Sheet for the Emergency Amateur Radio Operator from Kaiser Permanente Amateur Radio Network.

Andy Elliott – K8LE, 01-01-2019