

Understanding Memoranda of Understanding

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I. MOU PHILOSOPHY

A major part of our emergency communication activity is conducted within the context of ARRL's formal agreements with seven key agencies in the national emergency management community. These include, not in order of importance, the American Red Cross, the National Weather Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Homeland Security's Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International, the National Communications System, and the Salvation Army.

These national-level agreements are called either a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) or "Statement of Understanding" (SOU), depending on the agency.

An MOU provides a simplified framework for cooperation and coordination with agencies to which we as Radio Amateurs may provide communication services. The idea is to get to know one another on a face-to-face basis so that when an actual emergency occurs each knows who to call and whom to count on. At the local level, an MOU serves two purposes. First, it is a "door opener." A new ARES group is more likely to be heard and taken seriously by a local NWS office when accompanied by the agreement document signed by the national head of the agency. The agency says, in effect, "We have examined this organization of Radio Amateurs and have found them to be trustworthy and able to render needed services for our field operations in times of emergency." The agency head is telling its field offices, "work with them - they are good for us."

Second, the provisions of the MOU document spell out the capabilities and organization of the serving agency (ARES), the organization and needs of the served agency (them), and the methods of cooperation. These are broad guidelines that should lead to the establishment of a local MOU or similar document that sets forth the more detailed operational plans and policies to be subscribed to by both parties during drills, and actual events.

The most important step here is to ensure that both parties to the local agreement have a realistic assessment of the resources brought to the table by ARES, and the needs of the served agency. Fanciful expectations lead to breaches of trust and a breakdown of relations, with each party going away unhappy and demoralized. Rifts develop and once in place, become more or less permanent. Worst of all, the public - the clientele of both Amateur Radio and the agency - is not served.

From: ARECC Level 3, Learning Unit Five - ARRL Memoranda of Understanding

II. WHAT IS AN MOU?

It is a statement signed in good faith by two or more parties, which spells out the ways that they will cooperate to meet the needs of a specific community or constituency. An MOU can have no legally binding clauses or requirements, promise no specific resources or personnel, nor create any partnerships or joint ventures. Using the attached ARRL template will help meet those requirements, and will help speed the required ARRL approval process.

III. WHY DO YOU NEED AN MOU?

The MOU is an agreement between NH-ARES and the served agency. It makes clear the needs and capabilities of both organizations, and helps prevent misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations that can damage or end the relationship.

An MOU helps define the information you need to write or implement an emergency communications plan that includes support to a served agency.

IV. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU CAN DEVELOP AN MOU?

- ? Who are the organizations signing the document?
- ? Who will sign for each organization?
- ? What are the goals of the ARES organization?
- ? What are the goals of the other agencies in the agreement?
- ? What knowledge, skills or abilities do we bring to the MOU?
- ? What knowledge, skills or abilities do the other agencies bring to the MOU?
- ? What are the limitations of our organization?
- ? What are the limitations of the other agencies?

V. HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH AN MOU IN NH-ARES?

As the Local Emergency Coordinator, you are the starting point and action agent for MOUs. You will be a signatory on the MOU, but the final approving authority is the NH-ARES SEC. The SEC and SM will review the document, obtain a legal review of the MOU from ARRL Headquarters and then sign and return the final document to you for signatures from you and the local served agency/ies. *Do not get local signatures before obtaining approvals from the SM and ARRL HQ.*

VI. REFERENCES

MOU/SOUs at the National level can be door openers to build relationships with the local counterpart to these agencies. The links and references below can be used to start a conversation on mutual support and agreements.

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/pscm/index.html>

ARRL Operating Manual - chapter on emergency communications

ARRL ARES Field Manual

Links to National MOUs between ARRL and Served Agencies:

American Red Cross

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/redcro.html>

National Weather Service

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/weather.html>

Federal Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/femamem.html>

Department of Homeland Security's Corporation for National and Community Service

Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/apco.html>

National Communications System

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/ncsmem.html>

Salvation Army

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/salarmy.html>

Citizen Corps

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/FEMA-ARRL-SOA1.pdf>

REACT International, Inc

<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/react.html>

VII. SAMPLE LOCAL MOU (FROM ARRL)

Local Memorandum of Understanding
Between the
Amateur Radio Emergency Service®
a voluntary emergency and public service communications organization sponsored by the
American Radio Relay League, Inc.
and
(other organization's name)

Introduction

The _____
(other organization's name)
and the Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES®) group, responsible for
_____ and representing public-service oriented radio
(area of jurisdiction)
amateurs with this area, have agreed to enter into these local agreements which have formed the basis for
this memorandum.

Purpose

This agreement between the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service group and
_____ establishes a framework of cooperation and a close working
relationship with volunteer radio amateurs organized under the authority of the ARRL Emergency
Coordinator and officials of the _____.
(organization)

It is intended through joint cooperation of the local resources available to both signees, the public will best
be served under disaster, emergency or public-service related situations. This document is not meant to be
considered legally binding; it is a statement of cooperation between the two parties.

Organization

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service consists of federally licensed radio amateurs who have
voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communication duty in the public service when
disaster strikes pursuant to Federal Communications Commission Rule 97.1 (a) which states that a
fundamental purpose of the Amateur Radio Service is: Recognition and enhancement of the value of the
amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communication service, particularly with
respect to providing emergency communications. ”

The American Radio Relay League, Inc, comprising more than 156,000 radio amateurs in the U.S.
sponsors the ARRL Field Organization. More than 8,900 amateurs are registered as members of this
national field organization which is divided into 71 geographical sections. The Amateur Radio Emergency
Service (ARES) is one segment of the ARRL's commitment to service the public in time of need. Local
ARES groups are established components within ARES. ARES and Amateur Radio Emergency
Service are registered servicemarks of the American Radio Relay League, Incorporated, and are used by
permission.

The ARRL New Hampshire Section leadership within the Amateur Radio Emergency Service is
exercised by the Section Emergency Coordinator (appointed by the elected ARRL Section Manager) with
the Section Emergency Coordinator appointing District Emergency Coordinators and Emergency
Coordinators within the section.

The local Emergency Coordinator is the key person within the ARRL Field Organization to
provide an ARES response in a given locale.

The _____ is organized in the following manner:
(Organization's name)

Recognition

The _____ recognizes that the Amateur Radio
(Organization's name)

Emergency Service is the ARRL sponsored emergency/public service oriented communications organization. ARES serves more than 35,000 licensed U.S. radio amateurs nationwide and can be of valuable assistance in providing critical communications during emergencies and disasters when normal lines of communication are disrupted.

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service recognizes _____ (background and purpose of other organization).

Principles of Cooperation

So that communications resources of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service may be coordinated and utilized to the fullest advantage during disasters, emergencies and public-service related situations, and to the extent permitted or required by law and regulation, the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service group and the _____ have agreed that each organization will:
(Organization s name)

1. Encourage on-going liaison with the other, urging members of both organizations to develop increasingly effective communications and cooperation.
2. Work with each other for developing emergency plans, training exercises, and a heightened state of preparedness.
3. Work with each other in times of disaster or emergency to meet the needs of the public.
4. Each party will, at the same time, work within its own lines of authority and respect the lines of authority of the other.
5. Distribute copies of and publicize this agreement through channels to its own members, and to other organizations, both public and private, which may have an active interest in disaster relief.
6. Establish a mutually acceptable means of identification for volunteers under this agreement which is honored by local law enforcement agencies during disasters and emergencies.
7. Understand that either signee to this document may have similar local agreements with other disaster assistance-related agencies/organizations.

Implementation

This memorandum shall take effect upon its signing by authorized representatives of the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service group (and their ARRL Section Manager) and representatives of the _____.
(Organization s name)

This memorandum may be amended by mutual agreement of both parties, and it is understood by both parties that at any time this Memorandum of Understanding may be terminated by written notification from either party to the other.

Six months prior to termination, the parties shall meet to review the progress and success of the MOU and determine whether it shall be extended for an additional five years. In no event shall any single extension of this MOU be for a term exceeding five years.

Miscellaneous

This Statement of Understanding does not create a partnership or a joint venture, and neither party has the authority to bind the other.

Date _____

_____ Title

Date _____

_____ Title

Date _____

ARRL Emergency Coordinator

Date _____

ARRL District Emergency Coordinator

Date _____

ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator

Date _____

ARRL Section Manager (Required for
Recognition by ARRL Field Organization)