

Forsyth County AuxComm / ARES

Traffic Handling Part 1

This is a 3 week series explaining the aspects of passing formal traffic during emergency / disaster and public service operations.

Part 1, covers the ICS-213 form, how to fill it out and the basics tools for traffic handling.

Part 2, will review the procedures for passing traffic, including the proper use of prowords / prosigns.

Part 3, will have a brief review of the first two sessions and everyone will be given the opportunity to practice sending and receiving traffic.

Basic tools for traffic handling

- Radio
- Message Forms and the directions to properly fill out the form.
- Pen or Pencil to fill in the message forms
- Log Book to record all of the incoming and outgoing message traffic (ICS-214).
- Training in net procedures and how to send traffic.
- Phonetic Alphabet
- Prowords

The ICS-213 form came into being following a review of the response to the 9/11 attacks. Based upon this review, the Federal Government required all local, state and Federal agencies, across the entire country, to adopt a single message form. Prior to that time each town, city, state and agency had their own unique message forms. It caused a lot of confusion and wasted a lot of time converting messages from one form to another.

The standard form is now the ICS-213 form, which is available thousands of places on the net. It is also available on the Forsyth County AuxComm / ARES Documents page on the W4NC website. It is recommended that personnel download this form because it will be used on this Net over the next 3 weeks as well as during emergency / disaster and public service events.

The ICS-213 form is very simple to fill out. In a lot of ways it is very similar to emails basic setup.

1. Incident Name (optional) – (Named by the agency in charge of the event if used)
2. To: - The name and position of the official who will receive the message
3. From: - The name and position of the official who is sending the message
4. Subject: -
5. Date:
6. Time: - Regular clock time including AM/PM
7. Message: -
8. Approved by: Name, signature and position of the person
9. Reply – Any reply to the original message
10. Replied by Name, signature and position of the person
11. Date / time: of the reply

The form has several fields in addition to what you would normally see in an e-mail like position names and signatures.

Net Etiquette

Traffic nets are directed nets similar to this net and all of the daily nets in our region. Each net is called by a Net Control Station, who directs all of the communication during the net. Their job is to ensure the net runs smoothly and traffic is passed efficiently.

The first step in handling formal traffic is to check in to the net. While we may do this daily, here is a quick review of that procedure.

After the Net Control Station (NCS) calls for check-in (which may be open meaning anyone or limited group meaning for example call sign suffixes A-G), let the repeater drop, LISTEN, state "This is", let repeater drop to ensure you are not doubling, then state your call sign (including tactical call if first check-in) and list your traffic (I.E. 1 Priority and 2 Routine.). Net control will recognize your station. Only provide your location if you are deployed during an emergency; then your location will be the name of the shelter or incident where you are assigned.

Examples:

No Traffic:

"This is" (repeater drop and listen) "W4ABC, over"

With Traffic:

"This is" (repeater drop and listen) "W4ABC, one priority for N4CDE, over"

Deployed:

"This is" (repeater drop and listen) "W4ABC, King Street Shelter, over"

If you have traffic to send when you check in to the net then also tell net control that you have traffic, how many pieces of traffic, the traffic precedence and the destination where the traffic needs to be sent.

If you are already checked into a net and are given a message to send then call net control, ensure the frequency is not in use, give net control your call sign (FCC or Tactical depending on the net), wait for the NCS to acknowledge your call then provide the number of messages to be sent and the destination(s) where the traffic needs to be sent. If the frequency is in use, wait until the frequency is clear unless the traffic is Operational Immediate or Priority,

Net control will advise you to "Call your station and pass your traffic". Once you have completed passing the message and the receiving station has acknowledged receipt, notify NCS that your transmission is complete by stating "(NCS Call Sign) this is (your call – FCC or tactical) traffic complete, out)

Alternately net control may elect to have you and the other operator to go to a different frequency / repeater to send messages if the Net frequency is very busy. In this case, go to the other frequency / repeater send your traffic then report back into the net and confirm with Net Control that the message has been sent. It is the sending operator's responsibility to confirm with Net Control because the receiving station will be delivering the message.

Be sure when you send or receive a message to log it. A copy of this log will have to be provided to the person who relieves you at the end of your shift. As a matter of internal policy and for consistency since we will be required to use the ICS-214 form anytime we work with a governmental agency, we use the ICS-214 Activity Report form as our log.

Remember to bring plenty of ICS-213 message forms, extra paper and writing implements when you are deployed. Along with your radio equipment they will be your chief tools.

In the next session, we will briefly review Part 1 and then introduce you to the procedures for actually passing traffic including the proper use of prowords / prosigns. Be sure to review the NATO – ITU Phonetic alphabet, prowords and prosigns documents on the AuxComm / ARES page on the W4NC website. These will be used heavily during future AuxComm / ARES nets.

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