

**BELLA VISTA,  
ARKANSAS**

**EMERGENCY  
COMMUNICATIONS  
HANDBOOK**

**STANDARD OPERATING  
GUIDELINES (SOG)**





December 22, 2016

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **FORWARD**

Our primary function is to assist communications in our local community for normal and emergency events.

As directed by our local leaders this communication network may be asked to assist other public service agencies. These include Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES). These personnel provide service to the community, which is coordinated through the Bella Vista Police Department and other local County, State and Federal authorities.

### **INTENT**

The intent of this handbook and Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG), is for it to be used as a guide for those involved in Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC). The following document is not meant to be detailed or comprehensive. Nor should it be considered the final word in Amateur Radio Emergency Communications. Nothing in this manual should ever be permitted to jeopardize the accurate and timely delivery of a message. Each incident is different. Let common sense prevail.

### **HISTORY**

As emergency backup communications in the 1970s and 1980s emerged, Amateur radio became the "tool" of choice. Today Amateur radio plays an important part in emergency backup communications. As time has passed many new forms of communication have developed. We do not discourage any of these other forms of communication. It does, however, use as its backbone for emergency communication amateur radio. It is with this in mind that this handbook was prepared.

## **AMATEUR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During some phase of a City, County or Statewide emergency, it can be assumed that the existing communications used every day by the public safety agencies may fail or become severely overloaded. Public safety communication systems are designed to handle daily emergencies and but not to meet the demands of a major disaster. The ARES and RACES provide backup communications in times of disaster to all requesting agencies within our City boundaries. In virtually all cases, emergency communications provides support and logistical communications, rather than life and death communications. As the Emergency Communications Team (ECT), we as members and trained emergency communicators may be asked to provide additional communications during, but not necessarily limited to the following events;

1. Weather spotting.
2. Special community events such as bicycle races, running marathons, etc.
3. Communication between shelters in the event of a severe weather event.

### **ORGANIZATION**

#### **BELLA VISTA EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SUPPORT TEAM (BVECST)**

**BVECST** members are able to respond with their personal equipment to set up communications most anywhere in Bella Vista to support our local leaders. When so instructed by our local City officials, we may also support other civil emergency groups, such as ARES and RACES. The City encourages its members to first take care of themselves, family and neighbors during an emergency, and then to think about the larger picture. We want to involve communicators who look beyond their hobby as amateur radio operators and wish to serve their community by committing to serving our leaders when, where, and how they may ask.

## **OPERATOR DUTIES**

### **CONDITIONS**

Emergency communicators operations may include, but are not limited to:

1. Communications may be either voice or digital modes.
2. Communication locations may be in fixed buildings, field sites, or mobile.
3. Working conditions may be in all types of crowded sites, with high noise levels and various external environmental situations.
4. Initially responders may have to provide their own radios, power source, antennas, tools, food, medical supplies, maps, and transportation.
5. Communications may be provided for, local government agencies, public service organizations, hospitals or shelters.
6. Communicators working at a specific site shall be under the supervision of that leadership or designated authority but must be part of an ICS system that provides for their safety, welfare, and accountability.
7. External operations during activation shall be under the supervision of the designated Local Authorities.

### **COMMUNICATION DUTIES**

To be determined by local authority and as outlined in this SOG.

### **COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES**

All BVECST members should have their own handheld and/or mobile VHF, 2-meter radios. A dual band amateur transceiver would be preferred. Simplex frequencies should be used as needed. The availability of these radio frequencies provides excellent coverage over most of the City of Bella Vista. This helps to relieve the overloading of the limited number of public safety frequencies. The exact frequencies are noted within this document.

### **FREQUENCIES**

1. Communicators may work on Amateur Radio frequencies or channel/frequencies assigned by their authorized leader.
2. Designated local amateur Radio frequencies used include, but are not limited to, those found on Page **11** in this Handbook.
3. Emergency communicators are not authorized to use non-amateur frequencies or channels without prior approval by the Net Control Station.
4. Communications with the amateur Net Control Station (NCS) and/or the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be held on the approved list of frequencies listed in the SOG.

## **COMMUNICATOR REQUIREMENTS**

### **PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS/APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOR**

During emergencies, you could be working alongside public agency professionals. Some may be in uniform. In most cases, they will look and act very businesslike. You are expected to do the same. Drive the speed limit and obey all signals. You have no emergency vehicle or law enforcement status. Agency professionals may not understand or know about your special training and communications skills. They may perceive you as just another "Wanna-be" getting in their way. Demonstrate that you are a professional communicator, there to provide a vital service to the community. All BVECST members shall wear an I.D. badge provided by the City of Bella Police Department. Other attire may include an OSHA approved reflective safety vest, if you are positioned within any public right of way and other attire as deemed necessary by the governing agency and shall also comply with OSHA requirements.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any message given or received by an operator, to include any information concerning the internal operations in that organization during an exercise or emergency, shall not be released to anyone without prior approval of

their designated authority. Under no circumstances should the death of individuals be discussed on or relayed by radio, unless so authorized by the designated authority.

## **SECURITY**

All operators should be aware of the lack of security at any site from which they are transmitting. Operators should leave all unnecessary valuables locked out of sight in their vehicles. Operators should not loan out any equipment without prior approval of the designated representative. Operators are not authorized nor permitted to carry any type of firearm or weapon during any exercise or emergency.

## **TRAINING**

At least one Simulated Emergency Test (SET) shall be conducted each year. BVECST members may also be asked to help with various exercises and additional training as designated by the City throughout the year.

**Operators intending to participate in the BVECST are encouraged to take part in weekly communication nets held in this area to keep their equipment and capabilities current.**

# **SAFETY**

## **COMMUNICATIONS SAFETY**

The priority of every participant must be personal safety and the safety of others. No activity is so important to justify risking the life of anyone. Each person must remain alert to potential hazards in their area. If a situation appears hazardous, the individual(s) should first leave and then radio NET Control or Base when there is an opportunity. Of course, personnel should not engage in hazardous activities or create hazards for others. It is up to you, the individual, to report any concerns before being sent on an assignment. If at any time it appears that a particular assignment is inappropriate, personnel should immediately request a reassignment.

## **AMATEUR COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVATION**

### **System Activation**

The Net will be activated when normal communications are not possible with the loss of power due to weather or other natural or man-made disaster. It also may be activated to relieve pressure on normal means of communication. Anytime there is sufficient weather or damage to disrupt normal power distribution or communication all emergency communicators should tune to the primary repeater frequency of 147.255 MHz duplex and monitor for further instructions. If the repeater is non-operable, this same frequency should be used for simplex communications to receive instructions.

## **ACTIVATION PROCEDURES**

1. WEATHER SPOTTERS
  - a. Activate NET whenever severe weather watches or warnings are issued.
  - b. Listen first on the BVRC repeater for instructions.
  - c. BVRC Net control will monitor the Benton County repeater and operators may be asked to switch to Benton Country for further operations.
  
2. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SHELTERS
  - a. Activate individual members, as needed, to staff shelters.
  - b. Factors include:
    1. Other available communication
    2. Amount of time shelter is open

# **SPECIAL EVENTS**

The planning process for special events shall include BVECST members. The amount of BVECST members participating will depend on the size of the event, special needs and include contingency or backup members.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Duties will be assigned by local authorities.

Communications personnel are expected to "survive" on their own by bringing their own emergency kits, which may include their ID card, radio, antennas, coax, food, water, suitable clothing and shoes, etc. At times, you may be asked to meet at a staging area for carpooling, as access to the disaster site is usually limited. An amateur should monitor NET control before leaving and while in route. Notify the Net that you are in route and when you arrive.

### **COMMUNICATING DURING AN EMERGENCY**

Plan all of your transmissions. Know what you are going to say before pressing the mic button. Keep all transmission brief. Transmit ONLY facts. If there is a need to make an educated guess or deduction about a situation, then make this very clear. Scanners are everywhere, and we do not want to start rumors. Make accuracy of communication a priority and communicate information you are TOLD to communicate. You are not there to make decisions about what to communicate. Do not complain or criticize on the air.

Keep a good sense of humor. There is no such thing as "common spelling." Send all groups of numbers as individual numbers, i.e., "104" would be "one, zero, four" NOT "one hundred and four."

"Q" signals are not for voice transmissions. Do not use "10" codes. SPEAK IN PLAIN LANGUAGE. When necessary to spell out a word or names, use a standard phonetic alphabet; however, if you were talking to "public agency" listeners, they may prefer that you use the "Law\SAR" phonetic alphabet.

If you need to have the message repeated, use "SAY AGAIN" or "CONFIRM." Acknowledge receipt of all information or formal traffic by saying, "received." Do NOT say "QSL." Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing traffic. Make copies of the log found in the appendix of this handbook or on a blank sheet. Please be neat. You may have to refer back to your logs later or, in a rare instance, the logs may be used in court.

Return all logs to a Communications Coordinator. Do not allow yourself to become the spokesperson for the agency you are assisting. Some news media people might attempt to put you in that position. Refer them to the Incident Commander (IC) or the Public Information Officer (PIO).

## **NETS AND TACTICAL CALLS**

### **NETS AND TRAFFIC PROCEDURES**

Emergency radio communications will nearly always use directed (controlled) nets.

Controlled nets are a means of ensuring orderly use of limited frequency resources. This organization makes for efficient operations and helps ensure that urgent matters are handled first. The Net Control Operator (NCO) is the net's traffic cop. If it is a directed net, the NCO will exercise strict control, requiring every station to receive permission before using the net. If operations are slow, the net control may declare the net free or open, and you then may call anyone you wish. Be prepared, however, for the NCO to change back to a directed net without any notice.

In any event, the net control is responsible for the operation of the net, and you are responsible for following instructions. Traffic on the net is handled in order of the requests, depending on the priority of the message. NET CONTROL DOES NOT PRIORITIZE MESSAGES. The "official" or his designee at the specific location determines the priority of the message. The priorities are as follows:

1. **EMERGENCY** - Traffic with life and death urgency.
2. **PRIORITY** - Traffic used for official messages with a specific time limit.
3. **ROUTINE** - Traffic used for official and personal messages with no time limit.

If you come into a net late, listen for the procedures being used and then follow them.

Keep the frequency available for interruptions. Keep your transmissions short. Stop transmitting if you stop talking. If on the repeater, WAIT for the courtesy tone and then just a bit longer to allow another operator with higher priority information to break in.

Another reason for keeping transmissions short is that less time is lost if the transmission was only partly readable. Brief transmissions also allow other stations to interrupt if they have urgent traffic. Use the shortest message to get the point across. Do not transmit needlessly; do not take an extra turn just to say that you are "clear." If no one answers a call you are making, saying "nothing heard," (your call sign) "clear" wastes times and accomplishes nothing. If no one answers, simply identify yourself with your call sign (FCC) and leave the air. It is not improper to interrupt a net for emergency traffic, i.e., to transmit when Net Control has not given you permission. If you interrupt, key very briefly, only enough to say your, ID. If others are observing proper

transmission breaks, they will usually hear you and relinquish it to you for your emergency traffic. If the traffic load is very light, then net control might announce that stations no longer need to ask for permission to contact other stations. In this case, simply call the other station. If traffic picks up again, the net control will step back in and start controlling the flow of traffic.

### **TACTICAL CALL SIGNS**

In an emergency, location TACTICAL CALL SIGNS may be used. The use of tactical call signs greatly reduces the confusion when various operators use the same station. Their use promotes efficiency and coordination with all individuals or agencies that are monitoring the net.

These are short, easily remembered names, which either identify a location, agency or function. Examples are "Bella Vista Main Unit," "Village Bible Church," Team 1, or Relay 1.

When operators change shifts or locations, the set of tactical calls remains the same. Always keep your volume turned up but not at the expense of others nearby. Use your earphones. If you must leave the net frequency or your location, inform net control. When you return, check back in.

### **TACTICAL AND NET IDENTIFICATION**

During an emergency, the use of station identification should be kept to an absolute minimum as it consumes valuable airtime. Do NOT use the typical HF Ham exchange of both "parties" call sign after every transmission. Whatever type of NET you are using, you are not required to check-in every ten minutes for the duration of the incident.

The NET is a series of individual contacts, coordinated by a net control station. Only those in active contact must ID. The ID rule applies to each individual contact. Stations need to ID only because of their own actual transmission; at the end of each contact, or each ten minutes of continuous contact. As an example, at the end of a contact using tactical calls with the Amateur call, you might say..."EOC, this is OAB, KR6BA out". Now, let us say you have a longer formal message to be passed on. Contact with the EOC is made at 2003 hours and you finish at 2025 hours. In this example, you would have needed to have ID'd three times - at 2013 and 2023, under the ten minute rules, and 2025 under the end-of-contact rule. Those listening do not ID at all nor does the Net control ID on their behalf.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH A 911 EMERGENCY OPERATOR**

All communications will be through a base station located at the Bella Vista Police Station. It is located within the immediate proximity of the 911 Dispatch Center and can be heard by the members of the 911 Dispatch team.

DO NOT precede any transmissions with your call sign or the fact that you are an Amateur radio operator. Always use good judgment. Keep calm, speak clearly, provide accurate information and be courteous. Give and relay essential details to 911 Dispatch.

Keep in mind that you are talking to a trained dispatcher who deals daily with providing the correct response and has the necessary knowledge of available resources.

In certain instances, you may allow 911 Dispatch to communicate directly from the base station on the allocated amateur radio frequency, if you, as a licensed amateur operator, are present.

## **OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

### **OPERATIONAL DOs and DON'Ts**

#### Do's

1. Listen for your tactical call sign. Answer promptly.
2. Log all calls, incoming and outgoing, if possible.
3. Keep the frequency available for others.
4. Keep transmissions short.
5. Use simplex frequencies for personal uses if feasible. Stay off Repeaters if possible.
6. Use short, simple phrases. Try for five words per line, maximum of five lines (25 words).
7. Establish contact before sending messages which are longer than just a few words.
8. Answer questions directly. Do not explain unless asked for a clarification.



9. Don't have items repeated unless you just did not get them the first time. Don't repeat items unless you are asked to.
10. Ask for whom the message is intended if not obvious.
11. Allow third parties to speak over your radio.
12. Shield your microphone from the wind.
13. Consider using an earphone unless someone else has to hear.
14. Bring spare batteries.
15. Bring a high gain antenna for your HT (mag mount).
16. Should the repeater be down know how to use its output frequency in simplex
17. Use special handling for sensitive messages.

#### Don'ts

18. Use VOX or a locking PTT switch.
19. Try to wear an HT on your belt and try to transmit.
20. Leave a net without permission and checking out.
21. Make unnecessary transmissions.
22. Do not use CW or CB shorthand jargon. Instead say, "I copy" or "yes."
23. Talk louder in a noisy environment.
24. Under, no conditions DO NOT PANIC !

#### **BVERC Net Preamble**

QST, QST, QST... this is ( Callsign ), net control for the *Bella Vista Emergency Communications Support Team*. My name is (name) and I will be your net control operator. This net has been activated due to (pick one):

1. Severe weather in the area
2. Special event (describe)
3. Communications between emergency shelters
4. Other ( as required)

You should be a duly trained and trained BVECST member to check into this net. However, anyone can monitor these communications and any other duly licensed operators may participate if requested by the NCO.

At this time, if there are any stations with **emergency traffic**, please call now...

**At this time I will hold for general check-ins of BVECST members.** Please call now one at a time giving your call sign, name and location.... (Acknowledge all stations, afterwards and ask if there are any comments from BVECST check-ins)

*After going through the check-in list for comments, ask if there are any other stations wishing to check-in.*

*Start net operations as required.*

## BELLA VISTA RADIO CLUB – EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS ROSTER

Evans, Ron	<b>K5XK</b>	479-270-5584	<a href="mailto:QRZtheDX@gmail.com">QRZtheDX@gmail.com</a>	2 Pembroke Dr.	Bella Vista
Farmer, Ken	<b>KD5UFY</b>	479-636-7083	<a href="mailto:kfarmer@sbcglobal.net">kfarmer@sbcglobal.net</a>	715 E. Sumac	Rogers
Fellenzer, Jack	<b>KG5MCF</b>	479-426-0342	<a href="mailto:KG5MCF@cox.net">KG5MCF@cox.net</a>	9 Fountainhall Dr.	Bella Vista
Gaspord, Walt	<b>AF5XY</b>	479-855-0552	<a href="mailto:ondcs@sncglobal.net">ondcs@sncglobal.net</a>	22 Penrith Dr.	Bella Vista
Johnston, Devon	<b>KG5KTD</b>	479-420-0667	<a href="mailto:DEVOKG5KTD@gmail.com">DEVOKG5KTD@gmail.com</a>	25 Wimbleton Way	Bella Vista
Kessler, Will	<b>K5ITM</b>	479-295-4859	<a href="mailto:K5ITM@live.com">K5ITM@live.com</a>	7 Bascombe Ln.	Bella Vista
Majdan, Frank	<b>KG5ANT</b>	479-696-8990	<a href="mailto:fmmajdan@msn.com">fmmajdan@msn.com</a>	32 Dunipace Dr.	Bella Vista
Mummery, Ken	<b>K6RLA</b>	479-855-8716	<a href="mailto:kenm@kenmummery.com">kenm@kenmummery.com</a>	13 Frackleton Ln	Bella Vista
Werner, Steve	<b>K5SAW</b>	479-268-5703	<a href="mailto:Steve.Werner@cox.net">Steve.Werner@cox.net</a>	24 Hallock Drive	Bella Vista
Whittlesey, Marc	<b>W0KYZ</b>	479-876-1128	<a href="mailto:almarc11@yahoo.com">almarc11@yahoo.com</a>	1 Radcliffe Dr.	Bella Vista
Wright, Phil	<b>AF5XH</b>	479-553-7733	<a href="mailto:phils123art@yahoo.com">phils123art@yahoo.com</a>	33 Cullen Hills Dr.	Bella Vista

## **RADIO FREQUENCIES**

### **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

BCRO Repeater - 147.255 Simplex

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

## Notes/Appendix