



The Amateur in You, Part 1

What have you been pondering?



Getting involved with emergency communication

One of the reasons you got your ham radio license is for preparedness, because you probably heard that this form of communication is more reliable and less expensive off-grid than others. But now that you've come this far, your goal is to not only help yourself, but others in your community, and maybe even your state. So, is there some organized way for you to put your new-found skills to work, and be of help in your community? Will those in charge actually feel they can confidently call upon *you* to provide essential emergency services?

Yes

It's indeed possible for us amateurs to get called upon as *volunteer* emergency services communicators. However, there is an *organized* way for you to get involved and help.



1. ARES

Sign up and become certified by your local [ARES](#) group, which in most cases is at the county level. They are likely working with your [AUXCOMM](#) team, if you even have one (most places do not yet), to help train you in procedure and protocol, and *will let you know when and where to help* in an official capacity, if needed.

2. RACES

Sign up and become accredited with your

state's [RACES](#) organization, which in most cases is at the state level. They are also likely working with your AUXCOMM team, again, if you have one. The RACES folks tend to leave much of the training up to the AUXCOMM folks, but if you're new to emergency communication, you should start with your local ARES team.

3. Area

Get involved in your local (religious, community, area) [net](#), and volunteer to help out as a communicator. Their leaders will likely keep a list of volunteers, along with their skill levels, and *call upon your help as they see the need*.

4. Family

You are free to help out your own family and neighbors without any sort of training, position, or direction, as long as you're a) representing yourself (not any organization), and b) your self-deployment activities don't interfere with emergency coordination efforts being done by other groups.

5. Volunteer

Volunteer your services in the ARES and local (religious, community, area) groups by offering to run their nets, present a [training topic](#), or host a simulated exercise (a *tabletop exercise*, not a mock disaster). If you don't volunteer your time and services, the organization leaders might not realize that you want to help out at all.

Related to volunteering, stay up-to-date. Get on the ARES mailing list, and make sure you're getting their updates. Keep informed on upcoming events, such as meetings, training, simulated exercises, callouts, and more. Find out how to increase your expertise by advancing your certification level.