

Three Ham Radio Policies

16 June 2020

From time to time, three topics regarding amateur radio seem to surface often enough, that I thought I'd summarize some online statements made about them by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm hoping that this training will save a few from a little heartburn, going forward.

1. MARA is not associated with the Church

Prompted by the Teton Dam disaster of 1976, the Church created an emergency communication network known as MARA, or Mercury Amateur Radio Association. After it was discovered that hosting and funding such an organization could have violated Part 97.113(a)(3) and 97.113(b), the LDS Church in 1990 decided to divorce itself from MARA, and create another emergency communication team called ERRS, which was renamed in 1995 to ERC, the Emergency Response Communications we have today, often located at bishops' storehouses in many parts of the US.

MARA was a highly organized group of skilled hams, who also had a lot of knowledge, with memberships in local emergency teams as well. The problem is, a few still hold on to the notion that MARA is a radio arm of the LDS Church, and pass that idea on to new hams. MARA is still a good, active, and worthwhile organization to be involved with today, especially if you're interested in improving emergency communication skills. The point is, MARA is not associated with the LDS Church in any way, and I personally invite all LDS amateurs, especially those with Emergency Preparedness callings, to embrace the ERC as the LDS Church emergency response communication arm, like most are doing already.

[Link to the MARA website](#)

2. Amateur radio associations are not permitted to use Church property

The LDS Church does not permit amateur radio clubs or associations, including MARA, to use Church meetinghouses or grounds to hold meetings or events, according to a published statement. This includes ARES, UVARC, TERT, RACES, and others. However, when the LDS Church cooperates with an external entity, such as Utah County or the City of Lindon for example, church members can use Church property for the purpose of drills and emergency exercises in conjunction with those events, if approved by the stake that oversees the property.

[Link to the Church statement](#)

3. Wards and stakes are not permitted to purchase or install amateur radio equipment on Church property

A number of people have told me that their bishop or stake president has outfitted their wards with ham radios, for use in drills and emergencies. I'm fairly certain that much of that was done out of ignorance to the policies. LDS Church wards and stakes are not permitted to purchase or accept donated satellite phone equipment or amateur radio equipment of any kind, for emergency use or for installation in or on a meetinghouse. Furthermore, no amateur radio equipment or antennas may be permanently installed in any Church meetinghouse or on Church property, according to another published statement.

There are a few hams who have noted that their stakes have grandfathered-in some equipment allowance, by virtue of some previous arrangement. I don't know enough about the applicable law, or the Church's policy on that, to have an opinion; I only know of the current official policy, which I can provide. Also, it's been noted that the Church itself does indeed purchase and

install amateur radio equipment, such as repeaters and antennas. This is true, but all falls under the direction of the ERC and Welfare arms of the Church, not individual wards and stakes.

[Link to the Church statement](#)

In summary, MARA is not associated with the LDS Church, we're not allowed to hold ham radio meetings on LDS Church property, and wards and stakes are not permitted to purchase or install ham radio equipment, or even accept donations of them.