

# Amateur Radio Emergency Service Mutual Assistance Teams

## What are Amateur Radio Emergency Service Mutual Assistance Teams (ARES/MAT)?

Amateur Radio Emergency Service Mutual Assistance Teams consist of a group of voluntary operators who are willing and able to provide mutual assistance when another team become overwhelmed during a disaster.

During a disaster, an ARES group can quickly become overwhelmed. Local ARES members in an affected area may have to be focused on their own personal/family situations, such as protection of property, evacuation of family, or medical issues. Thus, depleting the availability of local operators within the team.

ARES/MAT volunteers from other areas who can be spared are requested to provide mutual operating assistance. However, the ARES/MAT process requires advanced planning, coordination, and training to ensure the needs of the local team being supported are achieved.

## Why establishing ARES/MAT within the Section and Mid-Atlantic Region?

The idea for ARES/MAT team establishment has been created by past disaster events. The most recent examples have been Hurricane Michaels impact to Southern Florida and Hurricane Maria that left the devastation of Puerto Rico. During these events' local teams as well as their entire Section were overwhelmed. There were not enough operators, and they lacked specific operating skills, and in some situations lacked equipment. ARES/MAT for Hurricane Michael was coordinated by other adjacent Sections, plus the ARRL sent "Ham Aid Go-Kits". The Maria mutual assistance effect was more extensive and longer to implement since the adjacent Section of US Virgin Islands was also overwhelmed.

Some leaders of the emergency communication teams have some misconceptions of mutual assistance:

- They believe mutual assistance only requires providing operators or equipment.
  - Unfortunately, operators who assist others may need different skills and operating protocols.
  - Additionally, equipment needs, and operating frequencies may be different even within a Section.
  - There is little or no planning and coordination that permits mutual assistance teams to access disaster areas and specific operating locations.
- They believe ARES/MAT will disrupt local team's positive relations with served agencies.
  - ARES/MAT teams report directly to the receiving ARES team Emergency Coordinator who is responsible for their assignments and leadership throughout the event.
  - The Section ARES/MAT leader's primary focus on the recruiting, training, coordination, and the deployment of the team.

The Section ARES/MAT team's first priority would be to support overwhelmed County ARES teams within their Section. If an adjacent Mid-Atlantic Section became overwhelmed while your Section was not, then voluntary mutual assistance could be provided to the Section in need.

However, all applications of mutual assistance require advanced planning, coordination, and training to ensure the needs of the local team being supported are achieved.

**Where would Section ARESMAT member be recruited?**

ARESMAT volunteers would be recruited from various local teams. While their priority is to their County team, they would be prepared through training to assist others when the local team needs permit. Caution would be utilized limit volunteers from a local team to ensure availability of enough local operators.

**How would ARESMAT benefit the County Teams?**

The County team providing a Section ARESMAT member would benefit from some of their members being trained in skills that could form a County Rapid Response group. The local Rapid Response group could be used to initially establish emergency communications sites during a local emergency event.

Another benefit will be expanding the local team's understanding on how it can utilize ARESMAT to support them in a disaster.

**How could ARESMAT assistance be requested?**

ARESMAT and HAM Aid equipment assistance can be requested by local Emergency Coordinators simply by contacting the Section Emergency Coordinator or Section Manager.

The Mid-Atlantic ARESMAT working group has established inter-section leadership contact lists for requesting assistance. The Mid-Atlantic ARESMAT working group plans to expand participating Sections/Counties database with;

- 1) operating frequencies,
- 2) skills & special training needs,
- 3) deployment checklist/procedure, receiving team's checklist/procedure, and a repository of other resources to support the sharing of mutual assistance resources.

**Who leads ARESMAT when assisting your local teams?**

The local Emergency Coordinator will oversee any ARESMAT assigned. Local ECs are the best to lead since they know the territory, server providers, and needs.

**Summary**

The ARESMAT process is a planning and preparation for a situation that hopefully never happens. However, past events have demonstrated that our Section and Mid-Atlantic region has a responsibility to prepare for providing and receiving mutual assistance. This ARESMAT preparation process cannot be accomplished without support from all.

SNJ ARES member interested in participating on the SNJ ARESMAT should contact NJ2N – Tim at [NJ2N@arrl.net](mailto:NJ2N@arrl.net) or [NJ2N@winlink.org](mailto:NJ2N@winlink.org)