ARES Communications Guide

Saluda County, South Carolina
rev. 2025-08-05

1. INTRODUCTION

The Saluda County ARES group serves in various county operations at the pleasure of the Saluda County Emergency Services Director. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) sponsored by the Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL). ARES is a functional implementation of the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Part 97, Section 407. The Saluda County ARES functions under the current edition of the South Carolina Amateur Radio Emergency Service and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service Auxiliary Communication Tactical Communications Guide which is posted on the ARES-SC.ORG website. This emergency guide is a supplement to define key items as they relate directly to Saluda County.

Emergency responses are conducted in accordance with the above guides and under the direction of the Saluda County Emergency Coordinator (EC), who is appointed by the ARRL South Carolina Section Manager. The EC may appoint Assistant Emergency Coordinator's (AEC) as needed for the ARES to function efficiently. However, when invited to support one of the served agencies ARES members work under their direction.

The success of the organization is dependent on the individual ARES members. ARES members demonstrate a willingness to get involved, to learn new operating skills and prepare to use their equipment in challenging emergency situations. The State of South Carolina includes Amateur Radio in its emergency communications planning documents and standard operating procedures and has a signed Memorandum of Understanding with SC ARES for providing radio operators during emergencies.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide a written guide containing the basic information that would be needed by the Saluda County ARES members to respond in an emergency. Each emergency is different, and flexibility is necessary to provide an appropriate response to each situation.

The primary responsibility of the Saluda County ARES is to assist in providing communications in the event of a disaster, or any situation where normal communications are disrupted.

Saluda ARES members may provide communications support to various government and NGO groups during an emergency. In that capacity they are to be prepared for a sustained deployment of up to 72 hours.

Typical ARES Support Missions:
Local Communities – Through ARES Activation
State Emergency Operation Center (SCEMD) – Through AUXCOM
Saluda County Emergency Operation Center (SalCoEOC) – Through Saluda ARES
DHEC Area Command Center (SCDPH) – Through PHRC
Healthcare Facility (Hospitals, SCDPH/specific facility) – Through PHRC / SalCoEOC
Mobile Communication Teams – Through Requesting Agency / PHRC
Shelter Operation – Through the American Red Cross or SalCoEOC
National Weather Service – SKYWARN program (NOAA) – Through SKYWARN

Supported agencies operate under the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system provides consistency between Counties, State, Federal Agencies, as well as other responding organizations. It creates a common operational structure and language, standardizing the operational period and documentation. Saluda ARES Emergency Operations will comply by operating within the guidelines of this standard.

3. EMERGENCY PREPARATION (EXERCISES, TESTS AND ALERTS)

Exercises, training, and instruction shall be conducted regularly to ensure readiness to respond quickly and provide effective and efficient Amateur Radio communications whenever the need may arise.

The Saluda County ARES will periodically provide public service communications in conjunction with local events. These events must be for the benefit of the general public.

Members are encouraged to participate in the following to test gear and practice emergency response skills:

1) Bi-Monthly Nets to share information concerning ARES and Amateur Radio news, build team comradery, and to provide/receive training.
2) Periodic activation exercises to validate contact process and response processes.
3) Other events, such as the annual SC state COMMEX, that provides the ability to practice emergency response in specific scenarios.
4) Respond to actual alerts and emergencies to experience real-world events.
5) Members should work towards learning and obtaining proficiency in the following areas and keep their ARES STANDARDIZED TRAINING PLAN TASK BOOK current on their progress:
6) HF Voice Communications (minimum of the 40 and 80 meter bands)
7) VHF / UHF Voice Communications (Simplex and Repeaters)
8) Winlink (Telnet/ VARA VHF/HF)
9) ICS and necessary Forms
10)   Serving as Net Control
11)   SKYWARN Spotter Certification
12)   Courses IS-100 and IS-700 (ICS-200 and ICS-800 are encouraged)

4. ACTIVATION AND RESPONSE

Any member of the Saluda County ARES, who for any reason suspects that an emergency is imminent or has occurred, should prepare for possible activation as follows:

> Be familiar with this plan as well as the South Carolina ARES Tactical Plan.
> Inventory personal comm gear and verify serviceability.
> Evaluate personal impact by the event.
> Verify all persons in your care are unharmed.
> Verify all persons in your care are in a safe environment.
> Verify all persons in your care are provisioned for 72 hours.
> Evaluate impact to your immediate surrounding area.
> Evaluate your circumstances and resources to determine availability to support an ARES mission.
> Verify cell service availability and monitor.
> Verify Saluda ARES Primary repeater (146.910) is functional and monitor.
> Verify SCHeart Edgefield VHF Repeater (146.850 – T91.5) is functional and monitor.
> Verify Zello connectivity and monitor if applicable.
> Monitor public news.
> Prepare to respond to and follow the SC and Saluda ARES activation Plan.

Saluda ARES response activities will fall within 3 categories or Operational Condition (OpCon) levels. These levels are determined and announced by Saluda ARES leadership and may not reflect the same level as the county or state emergency services at the time.

OPCON 3 (Think Normal Operations) (Blue Sky)
> Normal operating condition where there is no immediate threat or emergency. Operations are functioning as usual with no significant events or disruptions.
This is the period for planning and training.

OPCON 2 (Think Increased Readiness) (think Watch)
> There is a potential threat or hazard that requires heightened awareness and preparation. It poses a serious risk that requires active monitoring and increased preparation for mobilization of resources.
At this level all ARES volunteers should be monitoring emergency information sources as well as designated frequencies.

OPCON 1 (Think Active Response) (think Warning)
> An emergency is imminent or ongoing, and response efforts are underway.
This is the highest level of alert and response.
All ARES volunteers should respond according to the appropriate emergency plan and as directed by leadership.

Upon awareness or notification that an emergency exists, members of Saluda County ARES will be contacted as follows: (Listed by priority based on availability of service following the P.A.C.E strategy.)
A – Cell phone text message

B – Phone voice call
C – Saluda ARES – Primary Repeater (146.910 MHz (-) 123.0 Hz
    SCHeart Edgefield VHF Repeater WRF4EC (146.850 – T91.5)
    BL Repeater W4RRC 147.255+ T123.0
D – Saluda ARES – Designated simplex (147.510)
E – Runner
F – Personal Contact

As directed, members will call into the designated repeater or simplex frequency and establish an Emergency Net.

A Saluda County ARES Emergency Net will be established for coordinating ARES emergency response activities.

Emergency Nets are triggered by an event that creates a need to establish a controlled communication net. Other than the personal safety of an ARES member, the establishment of a control net should be the top priority. The first station to initiate the net becomes the control operator.

The control operator has the following responsibilities:
    Alert all stations listening to the frequency that a directed net is being implemented and the reason and all traffic must go through Net Control.

    Provide stations with information about checking into the net such as who should check in, how to check in to the net, i.e., call sign; name, location, and availability to help or if they are already supporting an agency or organization.

    Document all stations checking into the net, where they are located and what organization they are supporting,

    Assist stations in passing traffic essential to the communication objectives, Develop an overview of the situation and provide relevant data to stations, as it becomes known,

    Continue net control duties until relieved by another station or the emergency is over,

    Remain calm and focused on the primary duty of passing accurate information in a timely manner.

As any member of the ARES team could be tasked with establishing and handling a net, all must be trained and prepared to function in the role of Net Control.

The EC, or designated representative, will assume net control which may be set up at the Saluda County Emergency Operation Center (EOC) or where best feasible for the communications emergency. This station will be extensively utilized during the emergency. It will have full emergency power capability and relief operators assigned

to ensure continuous operation. A minimum of a two-person team is optimal (operator and runner/note taker/logger).

If needed mobile/qualified members will be dispatched to augment communications or other operations for supported organizations.

Note:
1   *In an emergency where Amateur Radio may be needed, Amateur Radio operators may be alerted by a served agency. This alert should be shared immediately with the EC and/or AECs, or their representatives who will then coordinate the deployment.*

1   *It is essential that all ARES volunteers remember the following three rules:*

1. *You never self-deploy except under the direction of the emergency plan of the organization you are authorized and trained to support. An example is SKYWARN where you are to evaluate weather conditions and activate accordingly. Also, AUXCOMM members are authorized, without notification, to report to the SEOC in the event of a 5.0 or greater earthquake.*
2. *You are a volunteer at the event where you serve, and you must follow the supported organizations procedures and rules as instructed. (This includes completing their required paperwork.)*
3. *As a volunteer, you are not there to direct the organization nor instruct them on how they should be doing their mission.*

5. OPERATIONS

For most emergencies Saluda County ARES will utilize communication means and frequencies that are preassigned. These may be assigned directly by South Carolina ARES, or those designated for use by a supported organization. A listing of those most likely to be used will be maintained on the Saluda County Standing ICS-205.

- Normally, the means and frequencies needed to support a specific emergency will be taken from this listing as guided by the response requirements. The specific requirements will be documented on an Incident Specific ICS-205 form provided to all response personnel.
- Formal communications will utilize standard ICS forms except for the Winlink Palmetto Resource Request form which was developed to comply with the Palmetto WebEOC input format.
- All formal messages must be signed by the official who originates them, with his/her title, taking responsibility for the content.
- During a directed emergency net stations must not transmit unless directed to do so by the NCS. The exception is that a station may break into an existing conversation to call Net Control with EMERGENCY traffic. However, with NCS permission, short tactical messages may be authorized for transmission.
- Information obtained or overheard by Amateur Radio operators assisting served agencies should be treated as FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
- Operators should refer information queries to the served agency.
- All operators should be familiar with the South Carolina Tactical Communications Plan. This plan may be found at https://ares-sc.org/. It is recommended that you print two copies, keep one at your shack and one in your mobile vehicle. Additionally, the Tactical Communications Plan can be found on the South Carolina Interoperability Field Operations Guide (SCIFOG). This is a free downloadable application for Apple and Android smartphones. All personnel are encouraged to install the app on their phones for ready reference.
- All operators should be familiar with the basic ICS forms that will normally be used by ARES in an emergency response.

ICS-205
Saluda County Standing ICS-205
FM
Primary Repeater (146.910 MHz (-0.6) 123.0 Hz
Saluda Designated simplex (147.510)
SCHeart Edgefield VHF Repeater WRF4EC (146.850 – 0.6 T91.5)
BL Repeater W4RRC 147.255 +0.6 T123.0
Greenwood UHF (441.625 +5.0 T91.5
Little Mountain 147.210 MHz +0.6 T156.7

DMR (All are color code 1)
Columbia West (LTL MTN)   **443.5375**   **448.5375**

Greenwood   **443.8375**   **448.8375**

SC HEART DMR Emergency Operational Mode

Talk Group Name	Talk Group Code	Time Slot
Local	27500	1
PRN -SC Statewide only *	2	2
Data	36102	1
Statewide Mutual Aid **	36104	2
SC Call	27510	1
Chat 1	27501	1
Chat 2	27502	1
Clear Timeslot	27000	2

* PRN wide area traffic restricted to repeaters within SC.

HF

2   +/- 3.9935/3.9900 MHz LSB
3   +/- 7.232 MHz LSB.
+/-   = near these frequencies
LSB = Lower Side Band

APPENDIX
This is a sample script that can be used to establish an emergency net.
Adapt this script as necessary based on requirements of the specific emergency.
Always prioritize safety and effective communication during emergency situations.

Opening Announcement:
Call out 'Emergency' followed by your call sign phonetically.
Identify the emergency, net identification name and frequency.
Begin net control.
"This is [Name and Your Callsign], net control for the emergency net. This net has been activated to coordinate emergency communications in [Location/City]. This is a directed net, all stations are requested to check in with their name and callsign and standby until acknowledged. Priority traffic will take precedence over routine traffic. This is [Your Callsign], standing by."
Check-In Procedure:
"Stations, please check in with your name and callsigns only. I will acknowledge each station as they check in. Please wait for acknowledgment before speaking further."
(Net control acknowledges each station as they check in.)
Handling Priority Traffic:
"If there is any station with priority traffic, please come now. Priority traffic takes precedence over routine traffic. Please state your emergency or priority message clearly."
(Net control handles priority traffic, ensuring necessary actions are taken.)
Routine Traffic:
"Stations with routine traffic, please wait until priority traffic has been handled. Once clear, I will call for routine traffic. Please be ready to relay your message."
(Net control manages routine traffic efficiently, ensuring all messages are relayed as needed.)

Closing the Net:
"We are closing the emergency net at this time. Thank you to all stations for your participation. Please monitor this frequency for further updates or instructions. This is [NCS Callsign], net control, returning the frequency to normal amateur use. 73s."

Additional Tips:
Clarity and Brevity: Encourage operators to keep messages clear and concise to avoid confusion.
Control Traffic Flow: Ensure that all communications flow through net control to maintain order.
Emergency Protocols: Remind operators of emergency protocols and procedures specific to your region or organization.

PLAN REVISIONS
The Saluda County ARES Plan will be reviewed annually to evaluate the needs and requirements of served agencies, as well as plans and procedures. Critical information will be updated as it changes to keep plan effective for emergency needs. The current revision of the plan will be identified by date following the title of the plan.
Address comments/questions to:

1. Shuler Burton, KF4NQN, EC Saluda County
2. , AEC Saluda County
3., AEC Saluda County