

A.R.E.S. - It's About Communicating Effectively

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At some point, you became interested in Amateur Radio. Excellent!!! And.... you became interested in A.R.E.S..... even better!!!! But, let's consider communications over the Amateur Radio frequencies.

Generally speaking (pun intended), only one person can speak on an amateur radio frequency at a time. Everyone else on that same exact frequency needs to wait until the other person stops speaking (transmitting). This means that if the person speaking goes on and on and on, everybody else doesn't get a chance to speak. Therefore, under normal circumstances, we need to be polite in our transmitting, and keep our transmissions relatively short and get our thoughts across (communicate) without being overly wordy. This same concept is CRITICAL for A.R.E.S. / R.A.C.E.S and emergency communications.

A CRITICAL element to emergency communications is for us to choose our words carefully as to have the most effective communication using the shortest amount of time transmitting. This is critical not only because others may have information to transmit which is just as important as what you need to say, but also that in an emergency.... time is of the essence and there is frequently little time to waste.

Highly effective communications in emergency situations does not mean one needs to talk at auctioneer speed. Communications is not effective if you have to repeat your message several times. That takes up much more time on the radio frequency and means less chance for others to get their message through.

Highly effective communications does not mean using lots and lots of words. Again, this takes up a lot of time on the radio frequency and means less chance for others to get their message through.

Highly effective communications does not mean using so few words that the person receiving the message doesn't understand what you were trying to convey.

Highly effective communications over amateur radio means you get your message/communication across to the intended person(s) in a well thought out, fairly briefly worded message, using minimal transmit time. Take a second or two to think out what you need to say and the best way to say it. Transmit what you need to say in a normal voice at a reasonable speed and then release the transmit.

Finally, the time to PRACTICE highly effective amateur radio communications is LONG before a true emergency or disaster. Practice, practice, practice!!!! Do communications drills frequently, so that speaking in short but highly effective sentences over the radio is how you speak without even trying.

Find another person to help you practice. It doesn't even have to be another amateur radio operator. Turn your radio off. Hold your microphone or hand held radio in your hand. Think of an emergency situation you need to communicate. Pretend to press the microphone or transmit button on the hand held radio. Say out loud what you would transmit over the radio (if it had been on). Ask the other person what they understood you to say/want/need (KEY POINT HERE!!!! both you and the other person need to speak the same language if the other person speaks Swahili only and you speak only English, this will not work well!!!)

I hope this information has inspired you to think about highly effective communications over amateur radio. I hope that some day, if you ever have to use highly effective communications over amateur radio, you will look back and be glad you took the time to prepare for it NOW. 73