



State of Texas
State Amateur Radio Operator Service
(SAROS)

Standard Operating Procedures

September 2014



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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September 23, 2014

To all Recipients:

Transmitted herewith is the Texas State Amateur Radio Operator Service (SAROS) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). This SOP provides direction and guidance for initiating and conducting a SAROS program in support of emergency communications operations for both the state and local governments.

These documents are hereby approved and will be revised and updated as required. Changes will be transmitted to all addressees on the distribution list and posted to the Texas Division of Emergency Management's web site at www.dps.texas.gov/dem

Sincerely,

W. Nim Kidd, CEM ®
Assistant Director
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Chief
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WNK: kl

This document is intended to provide guidance and is not prescriptive or comprehensive. Use judgment and discretion to determine the most appropriate actions at the time of an incident. These guidelines do not override local or regional plans, but are designed to complement those planning activities.

This document does not prohibit any jurisdiction from implementing additional requirements or operating procedures within that jurisdiction.

9/23/14

(Date)



Assistant Director/Chief

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Preface

The State of Texas is susceptible to the effects of both natural and man-made disasters. The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), as directed by the Governor, is responsible for coordinating state resources in response to these threats and for advising local governments in their preparations toward meeting these situations. At times, state and/or local government resources are inadequate to effectively respond to such incidents. This can be especially true in the area of communications when normal day-to-day systems are used in support of widespread emergencies or disasters. Because of system outages or overcrowding by emergency traffic, normal communications systems may become unusable or inadequate to meet emergency or disaster needs.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has authorized emergency management organizations to officially organize and employ radio amateurs to supplement state and local government communications systems in emergencies or disaster operations. The FCC advocates the principle that a fundamental basis and purpose of the Amateur Radio Service is to provide voluntary noncommercial emergency communications to the public. Senate Bill 11, Article 2, directed by the 81st Texas Legislature, authorized state employees who are Amateur Radio Operators, with some limitations, to take paid leave to support disaster relief operations within the State of Texas. The State Amateur Radio Operator Service (SAROS) was created to facilitate and manage the Amateur Radio Operators that wish to participate during disaster relief operations.

The State of Texas, through TDEM, manages the SAROS program as an official resource of the State in support of emergency or disaster operations. The TDEM Chief tasked the State Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Radio Officer (SRO), to be responsible for organizing and managing the SAROS program and for providing guidance to state agencies that have employees who wish to participate in the SAROS program.

This Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) provides direction and guidance for state agencies and their employees who wish to serve in the SAROS program.

Overview

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is applicable to employees of the State of Texas who are licensed as Amateur Radio Operators, by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

These procedures are under the authority of and in accordance with the following documents:

- Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations, Part 97.
- Texas Disaster Act of 1975, V.T.C.A. Government Code Title 4, Chapter 418.
- Senate Bill 11, Article 2, 81st Texas Legislature, Amateur Radio Operators
- Texas Labor Code, Section 409.001, Notice of Injury to Employer; Section 501.026, Coverage of Certain Services Provided by Volunteers.

Purpose

Amateur radio operators are often needed to assist in communications during an emergency. There was no mechanism to allow state employees who are amateur radio operators to take paid leave in order to assist in disaster response emergency communications as there is for other needed state employees. In response, Senate Bill 11 authorized state employees who are amateur radio operators to, with certain limitations, take paid leave in order to participate in disaster relief operations with the approval of their supervisor and the governor. A maximum of 350 state employees may be granted a maximum of (10) days of leave with pay per year to participate in disaster eligible response operations, within the State of Texas.

The purpose of these procedures is to establish standard operating procedures for use in managing the State Employee Amateur Radio Operators Service (SAROS).

Positions, Descriptions and Responsibilities

This section explains SAROS' administrative roles and requirements.

The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) will administer the program. Program management is delegated to the State RACES Officer (SRO).

1. The Assistant Director/Chief of TDEM is responsible for certifying all members of the program.
2. The SRO will be responsible for:
 - Planning and coordinating the activities of the program.
 - Coordinating the List of Authorized State employees that possess current Amateur Radio Operator Licenses.
 - Preparing, maintaining and distributing this SOP.
 - Co-certifying all State Employees who are eligible and authorized to participate in the program.
 - Maintaining and distributing a current membership roster.
 - Accomplishing related duties as may be required for the program.

Membership

State employees who maintain a valid Amateur Radio Operators License issued by the FCC may apply for membership in the program. Applicants must hold at least a Technicians License in order to be eligible. All personnel are encouraged to participate in other organizations and programs which will further their knowledge and understanding of emergency radio communications. This may include, but is not limited to, membership in the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS), the State RACES program or local amateur radio clubs. Attendance at local, regional or national Amateur Radio conventions and any other activity that would be helpful in furthering the individuals' knowledge in emergency communications is recommended. It is understood and agreed that acceptance into this program is with the permission of the individual's agency. Participation in the program cannot have an operational impact on the operations of the individual's agency.

Eligibility

Individuals applying for membership must meet some minimum requirements:

- Possess a current and valid, Technician Class or higher, Amateur Radio License issued by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC).
- Has not had an Amateur Radio License suspended or revoked.
- Has not been denied membership in, or had membership revoked for just cause, in another Amateur Radio emergency communications program.
- Has not been convicted of a felony.
- Be physically and mentally able to perform the duties of the position.
- Be a citizen of the United States.

- Be a legal resident of Texas.
- Be willing to cooperate harmoniously with members of other organizations.
- Be willing to act as an example for other amateur operators.
- Must be a current state employee.

Application

Individuals wishing to apply for membership certification shall complete the following application process:

1. Obtain a copy of the Application form. Applications are available from the TDEM Website, www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem, scroll down to Volunteers in Texas, then select "State Employee Amateur Radio Operator Registry." Individual may also call or email the State RACES Radio Officer or the State Operations Center (SOC) at (512) 424-2208 / soc@dps.texas.gov or write to the Texas Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management, Attn: State RACES Radio Officer, P. O. Box 4087, Austin, Texas 78773.
2. Complete the application in full with the exception of the bottom recommendation section. The recommendation section is to be completed by the individual's supervisor and should include point of contact (POC) information for the supervisor. Entries must be legibly written in pen or must be typed.
3. Attach a copy of the applicant's current FCC license.
4. Forward the application, with the attached copy of the license, to the Texas Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management, Attn: State RACES Radio Officer, P. O. Box 4087, Austin, Texas 78773. Scanned copies of the required documents can be emailed to the SOC at soc@dps.texas.gov.
5. The application will be reviewed for completeness and legibility. If the applicant's agency is confirmed as a state agency and the application is correct, the SRO or the Technical Operations Officer (TOO) will then complete the appropriate certification documents.

Certification

The Federal Communications Commission requires that all personnel be certified by the emergency management organization the individual supports. The TDEM Chief is the certifying official for the State Amateur Radio programs. Procedures for certification are as follows:

1. The SRO will forward an applicant's completed Certificate and Identification Card to the TDEM Chief. The SRO's signature on these documents will confirm that the applicant has been recommended and approved for certification. After certification applicant's name and pertinent information

will be included in the State Employee Amateur Radio Operator personnel roster. The certification documents will be forwarded directly to the applicant.

2. Certification will be for a three-year period. Applicants will resubmit applications at the conclusion of the three-year period. If the maximum number of 350 employees has been reached, renewals will be on a "first come, first served" basis.

Each year the SRO will verify the employee is still employed by the granting state agency. Upon request by the applicant's agency, or for cause, membership can be revoked. Reasons for revocation include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- Fraudulent representation on the application.
- Failure to maintain current personal information.
- Failure to maintain the standards of the eligibility requirements.
- Failure to perform response duties when the time has been granted.

Assignments, Participation and Pay

Once hired, SAROS members can expect the following standards to apply.

Call Sign Assignment

Members will use their FCC Amateur call sign or the call sign of the licensed station they are supporting.

Participation

This is a voluntary program and members may resign if they no longer wish to participate. Members should become familiar with local agencies that would be helped by their service. Members should not self deploy to disasters without prior approval of the agency or jurisdiction being supported.

Pay and Benefits

A state employee who is a member of the program may be granted leave not to exceed a maximum of (10) days per fiscal year to participate in specialized disaster relief services without a deduction in salary or loss of vacation time, sick leave, earned overtime credit or state compensatory time if the leave is taken.

The following actions are required for the employee to use the granted leave:

- The employee must have the authorization of their agency/ supervisor.
- The Governor has issued a declaration of a State of Disaster or Emergency, under Chapter 418, Government Code, or another occurrence that initiates the State Emergency Management Plan.
- State employees will use the Radio Operator Leave code, to account for time taken to support an authorized event.

Termination

If a member does not actively participate in the program or whose conduct does not reflect positively upon the program, they will be removed from the program for cause. The SRO or member's supervisor, as applicable will provide documentation detailing the lack of participation or negative conduct. Termination also occurs when the applicant leaves their state position or job. Applicant may re-apply if they join another applicable state agency or upon approval of their new reporting supervisor.

Liability/Workers' Compensation Coverage

The Texas Labor Code, section 501.026, Coverage For Certain Services Provided by Volunteers, states the requirements that must be met in order for a person working as a volunteer to be eligible to claim Workers Compensation benefits.

- A. The Governor has declared a State of Disaster or Emergency, or the State Emergency Management plan has been initiated.
- B. Medical attention must be sought within 48 hours after the occurrence of the injury or after the date the person knew the injury occurred.

- C. The person must notify their division or the state agency management in which they are employed.

Reports

In order to manage the program and to better inform the personnel of activities affecting them, a scheduled reporting system is necessary. The original report will be mailed to DPS or emailed to soc@dps.texas.gov.

The mailing address is:

Texas Department of Public Safety,
Division of Emergency Management
PO Box 4087
Attn: Operations
Austin, TX. 78773-0001

The following reports should be submitted as follows:

Support Verification Report

- Submitted by state employee participating in the program.
- Initial report will be submitted to employee's agency within (2) days of returning to work. Agency will review and submit the original report to DPS within (5) days of receiving the report. One copy will be retained by the employee and one copy by the employee's agency.

The following reports should be submitted on a semiannual basis (Jan 15 and July 15):

State Agency Report:

- Submitted by participating employee's state agency. Agency can consolidate the report to include all employees actively participating in the program.
- Period covered.
- Agency Name
- Name and telephone number of individual submitting the report.
- Names of agency employees participating in the program.
- Brief description of emergencies/disasters to which the employee(s) has responded.

SRO Report:

This will be a consolidation of the State Agency reports.

- Period covered
- Agency names
- Names and telephone numbers of agency POCs submitting the Agency reports.
- Names of agency employees participating in the program.
- Brief description of emergencies/disasters to which the employee(s) has responded.

Distribution List

DISTRIBUTION LIST	
JURISDICTION / AGENCY	NUMBER OF COPIES
FEMA Region VI	2
FCC Field Office – Dallas	2
FCC Field office – Houston	2
TDEM Field Operations Staff (SC/DC)	31
RACES Regional Officers (RRO)	7
RACES District Officers (DRO)	24
Texas State Agencies (2 per Agency)	100
SAROS Certified Radio Officers	350*
Volunteer Agencies Assisting in Disasters (VOAD): See below agencies and quantities	
American Red Cross	10
The Texas Salvation Army	10
Others	41
TOTAL	575

*The Legislature limits the maximum number of active State Employees allowed in the program simultaneously to 350. A sufficient quantity of copies will be maintained to support operational requirements.

Record of Changes

This section describes changes made to this document: when they were made, what they were, and who authorized them.

Use this table to record the following information:

- Change number, in sequence, beginning with 1
- Date change was made to the document
- Description of change and rationale if applicable
- Initials of person who made the change

Number	Date	Description	Initials