

## NET-106 OPERATING AT YOUR NEXT EVENT

### Used with permission of the Harris County TX ARES Group

#### **OPERATIONS**

**Arrival** - Plan to arrive early. Your location or staging area may be unfamiliar and you will need the extra time. This will also give you time to set-up and checkout your equipment before the event starts. There are also times when your location may have limited access after a certain time. Being early gets you in before the roads are closed. In most cases the event communications coordinator will announce a time for you to be on site.

**Check-In** - Check in with net control when you arrive at your location. This lets the net control know you are on site and the quality of your communications. In some cases moving about improves communications. If this is the case, remember the spot and use it when you need to communicate with net control.

**Traffic Control** - Most, if not all, special events are run as controlled nets. This means that all communications are directed through net control. The net is generally very busy handling traffic. If you need to contact another station, make the request through net control. Net control will hold traffic and give you permission to contact your party. At some events a secondary communication frequency is set up for this very thing. Always give the net control plenty of time to respond, as net control is usually a very busy place.

Keep your traffic to a minimum. Give all the details and be precise at the same time. Think about what you are going to say before you transmit. This will maximize the net to emergency traffic if needed and at the same time maximize your battery life. Always be sure to contact net control before you pass your traffic. You want to make sure net control hears and understands your message.

As we have heard many times before, listen, listen, listen. If an emergency occurs, the net becomes congested, or the noise level at your location increases, listening becomes ever so important. You do not want to miss a call from net control.

**Tactical Calls** - A number of special event nets use tactical calls. These allow an easy identification of a location or function. "Lost and Found," "Sag 1," "Aid 2," are typical of tactical calls used at events. Know your tactical call and listen for it. In closing your transmission always use your FCC call sign. (See information on Tactical Calls elsewhere.)

**Equipment Use** - Choose equipment that works well for public service events. Ease of use should be a prime consideration. Will it provide the communications capability to support the event? The event is not the place to try out that new radio or set-up. Try it out before the event to iron out all the bugs and get the operation down pat. Create a "cheat sheet" to help remember key features for your radio.

#### **EQUIPMENT**

**Batteries** - Do you have a spare battery? Is it charged? If you have the alkaline battery case, do you have extra batteries for it? If you use gel-cell to power your base set-up will it run for the entire event? Make sure your batteries are charged up at the start of the event. You may never know when the event may become longer than anticipated.

**Power Cords** - Various power cords and adapters can turn a bad situation into a good one. Anderson Power Poles are preferred on all equipment. Make sure you kit is up to the situation. A cable with 'gator' clips on one end is very handy for connecting to the car battery in a pinch. The cigarette lighter adapter is very handy if your position suddenly needs to become mobile.

**Antennas** - That standard rubber duckie is not necessarily the best antenna for the task. Your favorite repeater may not be the one used for the event. In fact, a number of events are run simplex. Invest in one of the extended performance duckies or a telescoping antenna. If your mobile or a fixed station invest in a 5/8 magnetic mount or pole mounted antenna. A good antenna does more than more watts in most cases.

**Headsets** - At a number of events the noise level is very high. The event sponsors like a lot of loud music, bands and other methods of making noise to enhance the participant's enjoyment. However, this is counter-productive to the communicator. In situations like this the headset is a necessity. Make sure it works with your equipment.

**Note Taking** - Net control is not always the one who needs writing materials to keep track of things. All positions need writing materials. Remember the description of the missing runner? A pencil is preferred over a pen (remember the weather) and a note pad should be a staple in your equipment kit. The 4" by 8" "reporters notebook" is one of the handiest due to its size. Mechanical pencils don't need sharpening and are preferred over wood-lead pencils. At some events, various forms are provided. These range from missing person's reports to log sheets.

**Niceties** - Dress for the weather. Carry wet weather gear or additional outer garments if needed to suit the conditions.

Aspirin, antacid tablets, prescription medicine, sunscreen and insect repellent should be part of everyone's personal support kit. Drinks, especially water, and snacks should be included since it may be a long time to lunch. A small, insulated container is handy to carry your snacks and don't forget the lawn chair!