



Virginia AUXCOMM

TRG-AUXCOMM: Auxiliary Communications Workshop

Description

This class is designed for those auxiliary emergency communicators and groups who volunteer to provide backup emergency radio communications support to public safety agencies. Typically, this includes amateur radio and Radio Emergency Associated Communications Team (REACT) communicators, but may include other volunteer emergency communicators.

Volunteer emergency communications operators/groups, using amateur radio, have been providing backup communications to public safety for nearly 100 years. Event planners, public safety officials, and emergency managers at all levels of government utilize their services. Often, amateur radio services have been used when other forms of communications have failed or have been disrupted.

Today, nearly all the states/territories have incorporated some level of participation by amateur radio auxiliary communication operators into their TICPs and SCIPs.

This course focuses on auxiliary communications interoperability, the relationship between the COML and the volunteer, emergency operations center (EOC) etiquette, on-the-air etiquette, FCC rules and regulations, auxiliary communications training and planning, and emergency communications deployment. It is intended to supplement and standardize an operator's experience and knowledge of emergency amateur radio communications in a public safety context.

Prerequisites for attendance are:

- Completion of IS-100.b, IS-200.b, IS-700.a, and IS-800.b prior to the workshop
- An active FCC General class and above Amateur Radio license.
- Past experience in auxiliary emergency communications
- A desire to work with COMLs in a NIMS/ICS environment.

Virginia AUXCOMM:

Within Virginia, as is true with all states there is a multitude of Amateur Radio teams that are dedicated to emergency communications. In the Commonwealth, these include groups such as the Southern Baptist, SBEARS, SATURN the Salvation Army, ARES, RACES, the Mennonet, the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Virginia Defense Force, the EmComm Association, the Civil Air Patrol,

and a number of hospital EmComm groups, etc.

None of these groups alone have the resources to provide auxiliary communications for major disaster events to all agencies that might need our assistance. Without the AUXCOMM training model, there is no norm for all Amateur Radio groups. Some have no stated training expectations beyond a ham license. This is in the backdrop of agencies having higher training certifications for all phases of their responders. Hams often advertise their emergency response groups as being "well trained", but yet have no training requirements and with some groups, having top leadership with no formal training.

With our possible task being greater than our single group resources, we need to be united by training and agreement. The government has provided training and structure that moves away from multiple identities and mission to a training vehicle and philosophy that provides for our working together.

This requires a listing of an interactive database that allow leadership to know available hams, their training, equipment, availability and willingness to serve within their area and at distant locations.

We have such a database at; <http://www.vaemcommdb.org/> and a site with instructions on how to register and maintain your contact information can be found at; <http://www.w4ghs.org/VAEmComm.html>.

Where We Have Been in Virginia!

In the past, EmComm groups have operated on the principal that a large listing of membership insures success in being able to respond in emergencies. Two of the larger groups in our state have boasted of membership of 1,000 or more on the part of each organization. Many of these recruits were given an application at a hamfest and were ask to fill it out and return it.

How did this approach work for us? Many of these “names on a form” never participated in local training or nets. When calls were issued for volunteers that were needed, these paper members never responded. Years later these “members” continue to be carried on the roster in spite of the fact they had become “silent keys” moved out of the state or became inactive in Amateur Radio. A number of people continue to be listed as communications organizational officers for years after they have become inactive for reasons listed above. Some of those in leadership roles have contact information that is incorrect.

To have 100 to 400 members that are well trained, respected by the agencies they serve and dedicated to a level that when needed they will respond is a far better model.

They also assist in keeping their records of training, license upgrades and availability updated so that their information is of value.

If you want to just be a joiner or a title hunter, emergency communications is not a role for

you. Every person that puts his or her name on the line is not going to be available for every activation or public service event. This is understood but to never be available is a “horse of a different color”. Ham radio is a hobby but emergency communications is a commitment.” This also means taking training seriously.

The “quad four”, (ICS 100, 200, 700 and 800) requires about one long afternoon to complete online and the courses are free. This is a non-negotiable prerequisite for those that wish to register for the Department of Homeland Security AUXCOMM training. You must also have a copy of these certificates as validation.

If you wish to serve, taking the time and energy to take the prerequisite courses is an important first step. You will find it helpful and it will ensure that we have a well-trained membership that can work within the ICS structure and under the COML leadership.

Beyond the government-required courses, we need training in the practical skills used by Amateur Radio operators. This can be achieved by taking the ARRL courses of EC-001 and if you plan to be involved in management you should take EC-016. There is a cost for taking the ARRL courses so if this presents a hardship for you, consider taking the KY ARES Courses that are offered online to anyone at no charge. When you become a member of AUXCOMM, you will want to continue to take additional training such as SKYWARN and other related training opportunities. AUXCOMM members should

participate in nets on a regular basis. You need to ask to serve as net control to increase your usefulness. Members should be a part of simulated emergency test (SET) when they are offered. Volunteer for public service events. This will give you an opportunity to get to know those that you will be working with during an EmComm activation.

For questions contact;

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<http://www.w4ghs.org/EmComm-AUXCOM.html>