

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP OPERATIONS MANUAL

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

THE SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP AND SUSSEX COUNTY RACES DO NOT AND SHALL NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION (CREED), GENDER, GENDER EXPRESSION, AGE, NATIONAL ORIGIN (ANCESTRY), DISABILITY, MARITAL STATUS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR MILITARY STATUS, IN ANY OF ITS ACTIVITIES OR OPERATIONS. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT IN THE SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY AND DISASTER COMMUNICATION RESPONSE, *DIVERSITY IS A STRENGTH!*

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP OPERATIONS MANUAL

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SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

INTRODUCTION

The Sussex County Emergency Operations Department adopted the *Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services* (RACES) program as an *Auxiliary Communication Service* (ACS) entity to provide the county authorities with direct control of the amateur radio resource during emergencies and disasters. In the Post 9-11 era, the *Department of Homeland Security* (DHS) and the *Federal Emergency Management Agency* (FEMA) regulations and directives, along with the *National Incident Management System* (NIMS), direct how the agencies responsible for disaster services now operate and respond. The incorporation of a permanent amateur station in the new county Emergency Operations Center (EOC), dictated the need for direct control of the amateur radio operators that would staff the facility. Joseph Thomas, Director of Emergency Operations for Sussex County, initiated the Sussex County RACES Group in March of 2007 to fulfill that need.

The continuing change and evolution in the field of Emergency Management, and the requirement that all such agencies adopt and operate under the tenets of the *Incident Command System* (ICS), and adhere to the requirements of NIMS, has brought a change in the ACS programs previously developed. *AUXCOMM* is now the acronym used by DHS and the FEMA to identify adjunct and volunteer communication resources that augment the full time paid staff. Individuals can perform any communication related task that their training and experience has prepared them for. The ICS structure recognizes and places AUXCOMM personnel as applicable.

AUXCOMM could be considered the new *Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service* (RACES) because of similarities in the core requirements of the programs. However, AUXCOMM provides a more flexible and inclusive program for the management of auxiliary communication assets under the “government authority of competent jurisdiction”. This document provides for the development and management of an ICS compliant ACS function. A viable and legally constituted RACES entity, pursuant to U.S. Code Part 97.407, will also be maintained.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

MISSION STATEMENT

The Sussex County AUXCOMM Group is tasked with providing flexible auxiliary communication support at the direction of the Sussex County ***Emergency Operations Director*** (EOD) or other designated county official. The AUXCOMM program is directed by the county EOD designated ***Auxiliary Communications Leader*** (ACL), who reports to the County EOD or his/her designee. Members of this group may perform communications related tasks in support of the Department of Emergency Operations as needed.

There are two distinctly different missions of auxiliary communication support assigned. The normal day to day operation includes administrative tasks, maintenance of equipment, training, and operating in public service events with the ***Mobile Command Unit*** (MCU). These comprise the daily routine when “*the lights are on*”. The second mission, the one that is planned for, trained for, and exercised for; is when “*the lights don’t work*”. All resources are focused on supporting the Emergency Operations Center, the ***Sussex County Emergency Operations Plan*** (SCEOP) and responding to the changing priorities of response and recovery operations. This is the primary mission, providing communication support for disaster response and recovery.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

OPERATIONS STATEMENT

The operations performed by volunteer amateur radio operators and others as participants in the Sussex County AUXCOMM program are in support of the communication needs of the Sussex County Department of Emergency Operations, operating as an *Auxiliary Communication Service* (ACS) under the AUXCOMM program concept. The ACL, or his/her designee, is responsible for the operation of the AUXCOMM Program.

AUXCOMM personnel must meet designated training and acceptability standards. These individuals can be assigned to various tasks, within the level of their training and experience, at the direction of the ACL, the EOD or their designee. Licensed, and non-licensed individuals with specific skills, may participate in AUXCOMM related operations.

Training and participation requirements for the Sussex County AUXCOMM Group, beyond the minimum ICS requirements, are established by the ACL in cooperation with the Management Team and the County EOD. Local training, on-line courses from recognized agencies, and other approved resources, may be required. Standards of Acceptability are determined by the county authorities.

Operations in support of an event or incident are instituted by an *Activation Order*. The term is specific to the Incident Command System (ICS). The order to Activate is given by the EOD, or other designated county authority, to respond to specific incidents and events. Mobilized AUXCOMM personnel now operate as agents of the county, and are extended certain benefits and protection as provided by DHS/FEMA directives and county authority. The order to *Demobilize* indicates the end of the authorized operation.

The Sussex County RACES Group as part of the Sussex County AUXCOMM Group will remain as a viable, legally constituted, RACES entity, for service as may be required, under USC Chapter 47 Part 97.407.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

THE EOC / AMATEUR RADIO INTERFACE

The Sussex County AUXCOMM ACL, by the direction of the Sussex County EOD, and the SCEOP, is the official Point of Contact for Sussex County Emergency Management utilization of the amateur radio resources in Sussex County. This includes affiliated, as registered with the Sussex County Department of Emergency Operations, and non-affiliated amateur radio operators

To augment and support communication needs during unusual situations, the Sussex County AUXCOMM Group will be activated by responsible authority (EOD / AUXCOMM ACL). The operational period and response will be determined on a case by case basis for each event or incident. As appropriate for the situation, AUXCOMM personnel will be operational on predetermined frequencies, from directed locations, to interact with, and receive reports from other communication sources. AUXCOMM personnel and the amateur community at large, given their distribution across the county, state, and peninsula, are a valuable resource in the ability to provide “ground truth” reports on conditions in their immediate area.

Assignment and utilization of resources, as provided in the *National Support Framework* (NSF), is to be managed by the delegation of the Incident Commander (IC/EOD) through the established ICS structure. The utilization of the amateur radio resource is provided under *Emergency Support Function 2* (ESF 2) of the NIMS, the state of *Delaware Emergency Operations Plan* (DEOP), and the SCEOP.

For this relationship to work effectively, it requires group interaction, joint exercises, and mutual support of public service events, in order to effect a smooth and efficient interoperation. Through the practice and application of communication skills during scheduled, managed events, those skills, applicable in an emergency situation, are developed and strengthened. Relationships developed in exercises and public service events are critical to smooth functioning under the pace and stress of disasters.

The joint service *Military Auxiliary Radio System* (MARS) interoperability guidelines may be utilized, as applicable, by any MARS Service member, from any Sussex County AUXCOMM station, using the individual member’s MARS call sign. The individual member is responsible for assuring operational compliance with the guidelines of their respective branch of service. The initiative to effect MARS interoperation with AUXCOMM is to be supported, particularly in the generation of *County Status Reports*, utilizing the “ground truth” reports compiled through AUXCOMM.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

PROGRAM REGISTRATION

Registration is a core requirement of the AUXCOMM program. Registration is simply that -- a listing of the individual's personal information and qualifications with the Emergency Operations Department of Sussex County. It is not a membership in an organization. This data provides county emergency management with a listing of known available Auxiliary Communication Assets.

Registration is open to any individual possessing skills applicable in communication related tasks. This applies to licensed and non-licensed individuals. The two most important attributes are *interest* and *commitment*.

Registration provides for county coverage of the individual in mobilizations, exercises, and training activities of the Sussex County AUXCOMM program. AUXCOMM personnel are required to complete the basic Incident Command System (ICS) training.

A registered participant, possessing the minimum acceptable ICS training, can be deployed as needed, within the limits of their skill and training, in public service events and disaster communication incidents with appropriate supervision. During an event or incident mobilization under an Activation order, all participants in the county directed communications support effort must be registered with Sussex County Emergency Management. This is a mandatory requirement of the AUXCOMM program.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

PARTICIPATION AND PLACEMENT

REGISTERED AUXILIARY COMMUNICATION SERVICE INDIVIDUAL

Participation in the AUXCOMM program for a registered individual is as a *Technical Specialist* (THSP). They can be assigned to communication related tasks as supported by their training and experience. The FEMA online courses, IS 100, IS 200, IS 700, and IS 800 are a requirement of DHS and FEMA for an understanding of the Incident Command System (ICS) and should be completed within thirty days of registration.

Newly registered ACS individuals may participate in any AUXCOMM activity that is not under an emergency EOC Activation or AUXCOMM Activation order. Examples where registered individuals may participate are meetings, exercises, and training sessions.

Only those individuals that have successfully completed the minimum ICS training (IS 100, IS 700), with certificates on file, and have completed, or have been granted credit for, the appropriate introductory emergency communication course work, may participate in events and incidents under an EOC Activation or AUXCOMM Activation Order, and then only if teamed with a competent mentor.

The AUXCOMM model is an inclusive program for the utilization of any communication related asset. An individual does not have to hold an amateur radio license to participate at a level of responsibility in the program.

Given the technical nature of Auxiliary Communication Service requirements, and for appropriate placement of licensed individuals based on knowledge and skills, there are three levels of licensed operator classifications.

1. MANAGEMENT LEVEL OPERATOR. Strong technical background, Additional FEMA IS and Emergency Management courses, knowledge of the county operations and experience with EOC operations. Able to work well with volunteers and county personnel. This would be the level of the Auxiliary Communication Leader (ACL) and RACES Radio Officer (RO), the senior Deputy ACL's and assistant RO's, with a minimum of a General Class license, Extra Class preferred.
2. EOC/MCU OPERATOR level. EOC/MCU certification. Good technical knowledge. Additional FEMA IS and Emergency Management courses. This level would be for individuals being developed as Deputy ACL's and Assistant RO's. Could be assigned as Shift Supervisors in long duration mobilizations. Minimum of a General Class license, Extra Class preferred.

3. FIELD OPERATOR level. Minimum, a Technician Class license, the four basic ICS courses, and basic disaster/emergency communication training. The experienced operator, at this level, would have more in depth theory and emergency operation detail, additional ICS training, and additional FEMA IS courses. An upgrade to a General Class license is encouraged.
4. AUXILIARY PERSONNEL, (non-licensed) registered, and with the required ICS courses, may be assigned in accordance with their skills and experience.

For newly registered licensed operators and non-licensed individuals at an entry level, Registration form filled out, submitted and accepted, there would be an application evaluation and initial orientation. This is a Trainee level. The individual is cordially encouraged to attend meetings, training sessions and exercises not under an Activation Order. These individuals are not deployable in emergency activations/mobilizations. They can operate in training exercises, and with the minimum ICS training maybe teamed with a competent mentor in public service events. The trainee level provides the opportunity to bring a new ham in, and get them involved immediately in training and exercises.

Non-licensed individuals with relevant skills will be placed, as appropriate, for their training and experience. Participation in emergency activations will be on a case by case basis.

Licensed operators with acceptable and equivalent qualifications and experience, as decided by Management Team action, could be placed at an appropriate level for the individual.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

Auxiliary Communications Leader.

The designated ACL is appointed by the EOD to direct the combined AUXCOMM and RACES program. The appointed individual will be an amateur operator with experience and training in emergency and disaster communications. A minimum license class of General is required. His or her resume should have both formal training and experience in emergency and disaster communications. The individual should understand the ICS, have demonstrated technical knowledge and demonstrated volunteer management skills. The ACL reports to the county EOD, or his/her designee.

Deputy Auxiliary Communication Leader

A Management Level operator appointed by the ACL, as necessary to support the needs of the program, with the approval of the county EOD. Similar qualifications as those for the ACL should be required for appointment, as a **Deputy ACL** (DACL) as they may be required to function as the ACL in his or her absence with all rights and privileges. The DACL's are directly responsible to the ACL. The individual DACL's may be assigned specific responsibilities. An individual may be appointed as a DACL to serve a designated function, with rights and privileges assigned on a case by case basis. Appointment and promotion is processed in accordance with administrative guidelines. The appointed individual(s), on approval by the EOD, will be issued a county produced EOC access ID.

Public Information Officer (PIO) and Deputy PIO's

An individual appointed by the ACL with the approval of the EOD, to manage the public relations, publicity and news media interface of the AUXCOMM and RACES Programs. The individual appointed should have media and or public relations experience. The appointed individual(s), on approval by the EOD, will be issued a county produced EOC access ID.

Safety Officer (SO)

An individual appointed by the ACL to advise and assist the management team with safety issues in events and incidents that could affect the well-being of the AUXCOMM and RACES personnel responding. The individual should have demonstrated knowledge in the Safety Management field. During AUXCOMM mobilizations he/she can function the same as a Safety Officer in the ICS

MANAGEMENT POSITIONS cont.

structure for the AUXCOMM group. The appointed individual, on approval by the EOD, will be issued a county produced EOC access ID.

Operations Section Leader

A Management Level Operator appointed by the ACL In cooperation with the ACL, plan and direct the Activation Operations of the group, directing the response to meet the changing priorities To work with the Training Section Leader in developing meaningful exercises for training purposes.

Administrative Section Leader

An individual with strong office management skills, and strong computer skills.. This person may or may not be a licensed operator, but must have the motivation, commitment, and attitude to work at the team management level.

Training Section Leader

A Management Level Operator, preferably with field experience, appointed by the ACL, to direct the training activities of the group working in cooperation with the ACL and the Operations Section Leader. Must have strong computer skills and capable of developing Power Point and similar presentations.

Logistics Section Leader

A Management Level Operator responsible for managing the technical portion of operational preparedness. Maintaining an accurate inventory, identifying equipment deficiencies, and arranging for their repair. Works with the ACL and Operations Section Leader to plan for equipment acquisitions.

Administrative Officer (AO)

An individual appointed by the ACL to the Management Team as a non-voting member to advise on matters relating to administration and serve as the de facto Parliamentarian. This individual may or may not be a licensed radio amateur. The individual appointed should have strong office management skills, be computer literate, and have experience in working with government agencies. The appointed individual, on approval by the EOD, will be issued a county produced EOC access ID.

AUXCOMM MANAGEMENT TEAM

The AUXCOMM Management Team is chaired by the Auxiliary Communication Leader (ACL), and includes all Deputy ACL's, the **Public Information Officer** (PIO), all Deputy PIO's and the **Safety Officer** (SO). The Management Team, as the title implies, is responsible, as a team, for the direction and success of the AUXCOMM program. Individual members of the team may have specific responsibilities delegated to them by the ACL.

The concept of team management is based on the simple phrase, "*no one of us is as smart as all of us*". Given the wealth of diverse knowledge among members of the amateur radio community at large, and then selecting and appointing those individuals with exemplary knowledge and skill to the team, gives the Sussex County AUXCOMM Group an outstanding management advantage. This leadership provides for the ability of the group to respond to those rapidly changing situations normally encountered in disaster response and recovery scenarios.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING PROCEDURES

REGISTERED AUXILIARY COMMUNICATION INDIVIDUALS

Registration form is reviewed for completeness, and the data is spot checked by the ACL/RO, the Administrative Section Leader, or other designated personnel. The form is dated when added to the database and initialed by person reviewing the form. The registrant is notified that the application has been received and is added to the email distribution list. Any documentation of claimed certifications and basic ICS courses should be submitted with the Registration Form.

AUXCOMM participants are required to have a basic knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS) so they can function proficiently within that system.

APPOINTMENT AS A “FIELD OPERATOR”

The individual’s file and submitted material will be reviewed by the ACL and three DACL’s according to the then current training, skills and experience list. If three of the four reviewers agree, the appointment is approved.

APPLICATION FOR “AUXCOMM THSP” with EOC ID (non-access)

Registration form is used as the Application Form. The ACL and at least three DACL’s review and rate the applicant using the following criteria:

1. AUXCOMM Registration Form on file.
2. Interest in becoming a member of the group.
3. Operation in at least three AUXCOMM managed events or incidents.
5. Meet AUXCOMM Field Operator requirements.
6. Specific skills applicable to communication related tasks.
7. Able to work well with the group.
8. Will be an asset to the program.
9. Additional skills and knowledge.

If three of the four agree, the ACL makes a recommendation to the EOD. If he/she accepts the recommendation, the applicant is accepted as a AUXCOMM THSP /with ID in a probationary status for one year.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS cont.

APPLICATION FOR “AUXCOMM THSP” with EOC ID (access)

An updated Registration Form is used as the Application Form. The ACL and at least three DACL’s review and rate the applicant using the following criteria:

1. Updated AUXCOMM Registration Form on file.
2. Interest in promotion with more responsibility.
3. Operation in at least three AUXCOMM managed events or incidents at the non-access EOC level.
4. Demonstrated specific skills applicable to critical communication related tasks.
5. Able to work well with the group.
6. Prior participation has shown the individual will be an asset to the program.
7. Development of additional skills and knowledge as an AUXCOMM participant, particularly advanced ICS courses.

If three of the four agree, the ACL makes a recommendation to the EOD. If he/she accepts the recommendation, the applicant is promoted to an AUXCOMM THSP /with an access ID in a probationary status for one year. During that year the individual is expected to continue development of their skills, supervisory ability, and knowledge.

APPOINTMENT AS AN “EOC/MCU OPERATOR”

The individual shall be a previously approved THSP with EOC access. The individual’s file and submitted material will be reviewed by the ACL and three DACL’s according to the then current training, skills, and experience list. If three of the four reviewers agree, the promotion request is forwarded to the EOD for his/her approval.

APPOINTMENT AS A “MANAGEMENT LEVEL OPERATOR”

The individual shall be a previously approved EOC/MCU Operator. The individual’s file and submitted material will be reviewed by the ACL and three DACL’s according to the then current training, skills, and experience list. If three of the four reviewers agree, the promotion request is forwarded to the EOD for his/her approval.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS cont.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSE

Management team members, currently serving as of March 15, 2021, will be considered as Management Level Operators, and may continue serving in their current capacities. All other operator and auxiliary personnel levels will be reviewed by the Management Team and assigned an appropriate level or may be reprocessed under the new guidelines.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

Participation Requirements

It is well understood that the regular practice and continued training in the art and craft of radio communication is necessary to maintain proficiency. The Sussex County AUXCOMM Group is dedicated to the support of the Sussex County Department of Emergency Operations. This critical assignment must be executed efficiently under the disruptive conditions in response and recovery operations. There are many ways the individual volunteer can maintain a ready and responsive level of preparedness.

1. Participation in planned public service events.
2. Operation in AUXCOMM Activations.
3. Participation in scheduled operations, exercises, etc.
4. Attending regularly scheduled meetings.
5. Taking on-line courses, such as those offered through FEMA's Independent Study Institute and the Department of Homeland Security.
6. Pursuing certification through ARRL on-line course offerings.
7. Taking courses offered by DEMA.
8. Take advantage of opportunities to operate in public service events away from your local area.
9. Make the effort to upgrade your license.
10. Advance your training level and increase your participation level.

The Sussex County AUXCOMM Group Management Team can establish minimum participation requirements for Sussex County AUXCOMM Group participation if they determine it is in the best interest of the group for the maintenance of preparedness and proficiency.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

Volunteer Time Reporting

Your participation and contribution of volunteer hours is important in two ways. First it makes you a better operator, and second, the recording and reporting of that time contributed helps support the Sussex County AUXCOMM Program. It is to your benefit and the benefit of the program that you get credit for the volunteer hours you contribute. The accounting and reporting of volunteer hours is important in presenting the value of the AUXCOMM program to the County Administration.

Volunteer Time Reporting Guidelines

All Registered AUXCOMM personnel are eligible to be included in the accounting of volunteer time contributed to the AUXCOMM program in the overall support of the mission. The items below are the guidelines for time reporting.

1. All time in direct support of an EOC or AUXCOMM Mobilization, or RACES Activation.
2. All time in direct support of a public service event.
3. Attendance at a regular monthly meeting.
4. Participation in work parties, exercises, drills, etc. in support of the EOC or AUXCOMM.
5. Training activities related to emergency /disaster preparation and communication.
6. Time on the air in an AUXCOMM sponsored activity.
7. Time on the air in a formal net as an NCS / Alt. NCS, or *actively* handling traffic.
8. Time spent installing, maintaining and repairing your personal station equipment.
9. The hours you spend in taking on-line or class room courses related to amateur radio and disaster communications.
10. Time spent in administrative activities, recordkeeping, preparing presentations for meetings and training sessions.
11. Travel time from your residence to and from the activity is reportable in most cases. When in doubt refer to the Internal Revenue Service guidelines on volunteer mileage. If it is an allowable deduction for your situation, the time counts.

An accurate accounting of the time you contribute to the AUXCOMM program is going to require some effort by you and by AUXCOMM management. For directed activities, Mobilizations, etc., your time for the event is logged. The sign in sheet for a meeting reports your time for that. However, travel time, station maintenance, and continuing education are your responsibility to track and report. A Volunteer Time Report form, as well as an on line app on the website, is available for your use in tracking and reporting your time.

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

RADIO AMATEUR CIVIL EMERGENCY SERVICE

The *Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service* (RACES), was originally developed in the Cold War era of the 1950's to allow local Civil Defense organizations to take advantage of the amateur radio resource in their communities. Pursuant to United States Code, Chapter 47 Part 97.407, the RACES registered amateur radio operators are the only radio amateurs allowed to operate if the President of the United States has invoked the Emergency War Powers Act, which suspends normal operations in the Amateur radio Service as described in Part 97. The core requirements of "prior registration" and "direction by an agency responsible for disaster recovery" are also core requirements to AUXCOMM.

The Sussex County AUXCOMM Group licensed operators, registered with the Sussex County Emergency Management, will be the RACES Operators in the event that the President invokes the War Powers Act.

1. The Sussex County Department of Emergency Operations, as "a government agency of competent jurisdiction", will maintain and direct a legally constituted RACES program, to provide for continued auxiliary communication support under a Presidential Declaration of the Emergency War Powers Act.
2. The "prior registration" of individual FCC licensed amateur operators as AUXCOMM personnel with the Sussex County Emergency Operations Department meets the RACES Requirement of "prior registration".
3. Unless the current RACES Radio Officer has been separately appointed by the EOD, The Auxiliary Communications Leader (ACL), is the de facto RACES Radio Officer (RO), as a previous EOD appointee. A Deputy ACL, is a de facto Assistant Radio Officer (ARO).

SUSSEX COUNTY AUXCOMM GROUP

RACES MANAGEMENT POSITION DESCRIPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

RACES Radio Officer ((RO)

The designated County *RACES Radio Officer* (RO) is appointed by the EOD to direct the RACES program. The appointed individual will be an amateur operator with experience and training in emergency and disaster communications. A minimum license class of General is required. His or her resume should have both formal training and experience in emergency and disaster communications. The individual should understand the ICS, have demonstrated technical knowledge and demonstrated volunteer management skills. The RO reports to the EOD or his/her designee.

RACES Assistant Radio Officer (ARO)

Assistant Radio Officers (ARO's) are appointed by the RO, as necessary to support the needs of the program, with the approval of the EOD. Similar qualifications as those for the Radio Officer should be required for appointment, as an Assistant Radio Officer may be required to function as the Radio Officer in his or her absence with all rights and privileges. The ARO's are directly responsible to the RO. The individual ARO's may be assigned specific responsibilities. An individual may be appointed as an ARO to serve a designated function, with rights and privileges assigned on a case by case basis. Deputy ACL's in the AUXCOMM program are considered ARO's

RACES Public Information Officer (PIO) and Deputy PIO's

An individual appointed by the County RACES Radio Officer with the approval of the EOD, to manage the public relations, publicity and news media interface of the AUXCOMM and RACES Programs. The individual appointed should have media and or public relations experience.