**Changes Coming to the Amateur Radio Emergency Service**

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service® (ARES) has been the public service communications program of the ARRL since 1935. Over the program’s eight decades it has occasionally undergone updates to make sure it meets the needs of partners at all levels, adjusts to changes in the Amateur Radio Service, and incorporate lessons learned from emergency and disaster activations. However, the last major update to ARES occurred more than 40 years ago, and it is quite clear that a lot has changed since then.

So, two years ago, the ARRL board of directors created the Public Service Enhancement Working Group to study the ARRL’s public service offerings and recommend changes and improvements. The working group focused on many areas including training, volunteer management, field organization positions, and mission – all areas of concern brought to the board and staff’s attention from those in the field. The recommendations were vetted through a peer review group of field organization volunteers and readied for implementation.

In the months ahead, you will receive information on enhancements coming to the ARES program, including:

* A new national mission statement for ARES
* New national training requirements and local training resources for ARES
* Updated field organization job descriptions
* Improved ARES operating guidelines
* New ARES group benefits
* A new volunteer management system – *ARES Connect*

The first step in the next evolution of ARES is group identification. Currently there is no way to identify ARES groups or their associated volunteers with a searchable unique designator, which makes reporting and accountability difficult. Beginning January 1, 2018 ARES groups will need to sign up for their unique ARES identification number. This number will be utilized by the *ARES Connect* system and provide ARES groups with unique benefits (think club affiliation, but for ARES!).

Once ARES groups receive their identification numbers they will be eligible for benefits including:

* ARES book sets (great for the EOC or Red Cross radio room)
* New ham referral
* Early access to the annual ARES Report
* Email forwarding, which will provide ARES groups that have a club callsign with a uniform "call sign@arrl.net"
* More to come!

Groups that will need an ARES identification number include local level (city/county/district) and section level. Information about the ARES identification application process will be sent out the week before the application system opens.

If you have any questions, please contact ARRL Emergency Preparedness Manager Mike Corey, KI1U, ki1u@arrl.org

ARRL Public Service Enhancement Working Group

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