

Kitsap County ARES/RACES/ACS
Message Handling Training

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Message Preamble Information to Track the Message

All messages must have a preamble. This information is not part of the message text and is not delivered to the recipient. Its purpose is for tracking and mitigating possible errors as the message is relayed from origination to destination.

Parts of the Preamble

- A) Number
- B) Precedence
- C) HX --Handling Instructions (optional)
- D) Station of Origin
- E) Check
- F) Place of Origin
- G) Time Filed (optional)
- H) Date Filed

A) Number

The number is selected by the station originating the message. It must be on all messages. For an activation of the ACS, message numbers can start at 1 (one). Message numbers must be unique for each message from the station of origin. Message number plus station of origin uniquely identifies every message.

B) Precedence

The precedence indicates the priority and urgency of the message. The precedence in the preamble defines how the message will be handled in the Amateur Radio system; it is not the same as the precedence used by the served agency for they have their own criteria for prioritizing data in their management process. The definition and order of handling priority of the precedence used in the Amateur Radio system are:

EMERGENCY (always spelled out)

Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons. EMERGENCY messages have immediate urgency and take priority over all other activities.

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P (Priority)

Important messages having a specific time limit and official messages not covered in the emergency category.

W (Welfare)

Either an inquiry as to the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area or an advisory from the disaster area that indicates all is well.

R (Routine)

Most traffic in normal times will bear this designation. In disaster situations, traffic labeled routine should be handled last, or not at all when circuits are busy with higher precedence traffic.

Note that there is no prohibition on handling lower precedence traffic until all higher precedence are passed, but common sense dictates handling higher precedence traffic before lower when possible. When circuits are not busy with higher precedence traffic, lower precedence traffic may be handled.

C) HX -Handling Instructions (optional)

Handling instructions are optional. Do not use handling instructions unless a particular need is present. More than one handling instructions may be used on a single message. Handling instructions are used to instruct the relaying and/or delivering operator to handle the message according to the following codes:

HXA__

(Followed by number.) Collect landline delivery authorized by addressee within [number] miles, (If no number, authorization is unlimited.).

HXB__

(Followed by number.) Cancel message if not delivered within [number] hours of filing time, service originating station.

HXC

Report to the originating station the time and date of delivery of the message.

HXD

Report to the originating station the identity of station from which received, plus time and date. Report identity of station to which relayed, plus time and date, or if delivered, report time and date and method of delivery.

HXE

Delivering station get reply from addressee. Originate a return message.

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HXF__

(Followed by a date.) Hold delivery until [date].

HXG

Delivery by mail or landline toll call not required. If toll call or other expense involved, cancel message and send service message back to originating station.

D) Station of Origin

The call sign or tactical call sign of the Amateur Radio station originating the message. Service and response messages go to this station. Message number plus station of origin uniquely identifies every message.

E) Check

The number of character "groups" in the text of the message. This number is used by operators to verify that the text has been copied with the correct number of character groups. If the message text includes ARRL Numbered Radiograms, "ARL" precedes the check.

A character "group" is any sequence of one or more consecutive characters with no interrupting spaces.

F) Place of Origin

The geographic location (city and state) of the party for whom the message is created, not necessarily the location of the station of origin. The place of origin relates to the signature and should make sense to the addressee as the place the signing party is located.

G) Time Filed (optional)

The time filed is optional and is used when filing time has some importance relative to the precedence, handling instructions, or meaning in the text. In ACS operations, the time field can add context to the message by indicating how old it is. It never hurts to use it. For ACS activations, use local time. The time is written in 24-hour format as four digits with no colon between the hours and minutes (i.e., 1526L). To avoid ambiguity, mark the time with a "Z" for UTC time, the time zone designator such as "PDT" or "PST" for Pacific Daylight Saving Time or Pacific Standard Time respectively, or "L" for local time. Time and date must agree as to the same time zone.

H) Date Filed

The date the message is created. Should be month-day (i.e., May 31) with year being optional for ACS operations. The month abbreviations are JAN, FEB, MAR, APR, MAY, JUN, JUL, AUG, SEP, OCT, NOV, DEC. Speak the full name of the month when transmitting the preamble on voice. In digital and CW modes, use only the three-letter abbreviations.

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Example Preambles

1 R AB7Y 9 POULSBO WA MAY 28

20 R HXE AB7Y 10 POULSBO WA 2315L MAY 30 2013

36 P HXCE AB7Y 16 POULSBO WA 0919L MAY 31

459 R AB7Y ARL 2 POULSBO WA 1230L MAY 30

712 EMERGENCY HXC AB7Y 16 POULSBO WA 0919L MAY 31

Message Addressee Information to Deliver the Message

All messages must have an addressee. The addressee of the message contains information about to whom to deliver the message. Except for indicating the message recipient, the information in the addressee is not typically delivered to the recipient. The addressee information needs to be as complete as possible to ensure that the message can be relayed to its destination and delivered to its recipient.

A well-written addressee contains name, address, city, state, zip, and telephone number of the addressee.

Example

JESSIE A SHEPPARD
495 EAST FIRST STREET NW
BREMERTON WA 98310
360 555 2745

- The originating operator is responsible for getting as much information from the originator as is possible.
- The name of the addressee should be as it is most likely to be found in the local telephone directory at the point of delivery.
- Spell out east, west, north, and south for clarity.
- Directions such as NE, NW, SE, and SW are usually abbreviated.
- Apartment or suit numbers are usually included at the end of the street address.
- Punctuation is not used.

Messages handled during an ACS activation are often a special case and the addressee may only contain the name or title and location of the recipient. This situation is most likely when an ACS station is active at the destination site. If the message will need to be delivered by any other means than by hand at the destination, the addressee information needs to be complete. If the message is going outside of the ACS activation area, the addressee information needs to be complete.

Examples of Possible Addressees for In-county ACS Messages

INCIDENT COMMANDER
KITSAP COUNTY EOC
BREMERTON WA

FIRE CHIEF
NORTH KITSAP FIRE AND RESCUE
KINGSTON WA

Message Text

The Actual Message

All messages must have text. The text is the actual message content. Of all the information used to relay a message, the text is what must be delivered to the recipient (along with signature).

Never originate a message for a person without permission from that person.

The message text is the third section in message process, with the first being the preamble and the second being the addressee.

When transmitting the message, the text is separated from the addressee before it and the signature that follows it by the use of the prosign word "BREAK" on voice or <BT> on CW. This allows the receiving operator to know when the message text begins and ends.

The message text is usually limited to 25 words or less, but can be as many words as is needed. Keeping the number of words to a minimum reduces the risk of an error as the message is relayed from station to station.

The text is typically written in word "groups" of five or ten to a line for easy counting.

The purpose of the following recommendations is to reduce the risk of errors or misinterpretations of the text in the message as the message is relayed from station to station.

Example message text

ARL	FORTY	SIX	X	DO
YOU	WANT	THE	304/BA	EQUIPMENT
QUERY	THE	SIX	DASH	B
TYPE	IS	NO	LONGER	AVAILABLE
X	CU	ON	145R43	73

Note the use of "X", "/", "QUERY", "DASH", "R".

Punctuation Considerations

Punctuation characters are not used in the text except as follows:

X (said as x-ray)	Period. The "X" is never used at the end of the message text. If the meaning of the message is clear with an "X," the "X" may be omitted.
/	Separate characters within a group, as in 304/BA.
QUERY	Question mark "?".
DASH	Dash or hyphen "-".

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R (said as romeo)	In place of a decimal in mixed figure groups, as in 145R43 (145.43).
EXCLAMATION	Exclamation point "!".
COMMA	Comma ",".
DECIMAL	Decimal point ".".
COLON	Colon ":".
SEMICOLON	Semicolon ";".
ATSIGN	The at sign "@" such as in an e-mail address.
SLASH	Forward slash "/" such as in an Internet address.
BACKSLASH	Backslash "\".
TILDE	Tilde "~".
UNDERSCORE	Underscore "_"
POUNDSIGN	Pound sign "#".
DOT	Dot "." such as in an e-mail or Internet address.
SPACE	Where it is an integral part of an address group.
UPPERCASE	Specify upper case characters.
LOWERCASE	Specify lower case characters.

Any other punctuation encountered should be spelled out.

E-mail and Internet Addresses

The plethora of characters and formats of e-mail and Internet address are at high risk for errors and misunderstandings as they are relayed from station to station. To mitigate this risk, all of the parts of the addresses should be spelled out.

Examples

www.happy.net/birthday_wish.html

WWW	DOT	HAPPY	DOT	NET
SLASH	BIRTHDAY	UNDERSCORE	WISH	DOT
HTML				

ab7y-emcom@comcast.net

AB7Y	DASH	EMCOM	ATSIGN	COMCAST
DOT	NET			

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Telephone Numbers

Hyphens are not used in telephone numbers. Each part of the telephone number is a separate character group.

Examples

360-697-2982

PLEASE CALL 360 697 2982

Numbered Radiograms

ARRL Numbered Radiograms are messages encoded as one or two numbers, some with option blanks to be filled out in the text. They allow many words to be condensed into a few. The message numbers are always spelled out and are always preceded by the letters "ARL", as in "ARL FORTY SIX".

Message number sixty two reads "Greetings and best wishes to you for a pleasant [____] holiday season". In the message text this is written as "ARL SIXTY TWO SUMMER" where the word "summer" fills in the blank. Some blanks may require multiple words. Some messages have multiple blanks. The character groups completing such multiple blanks may usually flow after the numbers, but they may be separated with an "X" if required for clarity.

More than one ARL message may be placed in the message text. Each one is preceded by "ARL". The CHECK must contain "ARL" ahead of the character group count if these radiograms are used in the text. An "X" may be used to prevent ambiguity at the end of the numbered radiogram, with or without a blank; otherwise it is not required to separate subsequent text.

Counting Character Groups for the Check

The number value to be entered in the "CHECK" in the preamble of the message is the total number of character groups in the text between the "BREAK" prosigns that indicate the start and end of the message text (the prosigns themselves are not counted).

An easy rule to remember about counting character groups:

Any group of one or more consecutive characters with no interrupting spaces, with a space before it and after it, is counted as one group.

Character groups may be all letters, all numbers, or any mix of numbers, letters, or slashes (/), so long as there are no spaces within the group. Each word, group of connected digits, connected mixed characters, spelled punctuation word, "X", or ARL constitutes one group for calculating the total count to enter in the CHECK in the preamble.

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Example

ONE GROUP	TWO GROUPS	THREE GROUPS
X	X 73	THANKS X 73
145R43	555 5678	301 555 3456
34TH	34 TH	55 DASH 56XA
34TH/CMD	34TH CMD	34 TH CMD
SIXTY	ARL SIXTY	ARL SIXTY SEVEN
FIFTEEN	FIFTY SIXTH	THREE ZERO SIX
7268R5KHZ	7268R5 KHZ	7268 DECIMAL 5

Prosigns for Clarity

To help ensure clarity as the message is transmitted on voice use the following.

- I SPELL** For words, common spelling is assumed. If a word has an unusual spelling, or the word might not be clear, precede the word with "I SPELL", then spell the word using standard phonetics.
- FIGURES** For number groups, precede the group with "FIGURES" so the receiving operator knows the next group will be number digits.
- MIXED GROUP** For a mixed group, precede the group with "MIXED GROUP" so the receiving operator knows to expect a mixture of numbers and letters, with the letters being given using standard phonetics.

Message Signature Information about the Sender

All messages must have a signature. The signature of the message is the name of the person for whom the message is created along with any other information, such as title, address, telephone number, etc. that the person wishes to include, especially to allow for originating a return message. The Place of Origin given in the Preamble is the location of this individual. The signature can contain all of the same information as is found in the Addressee block to facilitate originating a return message. The information in the Signature is typically delivered to the recipient.

The originating stations should get the full information about the person for whom the message is originated, even if that information is not used in the signature, in order to be able to re-contact them should a problem arise in the delivery of their message, or if a reply is received.

Example Signatures

LESTER AB7Y

SAM ROBERTS STATION 99 BATTALION CHIEF

JESSIE A SHEPPARD
495 EAST FIRST STREET NW
BREMERTON WA 98310
360 555 2745

Message Operator Notes

Information to Help the Operator Handle the Message

Operator notes (Op Notes) are optional. There are times when extra information or explanation is needed in a message. Op Notes provide a way to include this information with the message.

Addressee Op Note

An Op Note may be inserted at the end of the Addressee information, typically after the telephone figures, to provide information related to handling or delivering the message.

Example

JESSIE A SHEPPARD
495 EAST FIRST STREET NW
BREMERTON WA 98310
360 555 2745 OP NOTE EVENINGS ONLY

Signature Op Note

An Op Note may be inserted after the Signature, before the end of the message, relating to reply and/or servicing matters or for any extra explanatory information to help ensure the accuracy of the message.

Example

OP NOTE SEND REPLY TO KCEOC AT KD7WDG-4 BBS 223.58 MHZ OR 145.63 MHZ

Notice

- Op Notes never appear in the text portion of the message.
- Pro-word "OP NOTE" is used to indicate operator notes when transmitting the message.
- Op Notes are not considered part of the message and are not delivered to the addressee.

Message Records

Information Recorded about Message Handling

Information about the results of handling a message needs to be recorded. This information allows for auditing and tracing messages. In addition, information about the operator is noted. The following information is to be record.

Received From / Time / Date

This data identifies from whom the message was received. This might be the originating person for whom the message is being sent, or it might be the identity of the station from whom the message was received for either delivery or relay.

Sent To / Time / Date

This data identifies to whom the message is delivered or to whom it is sent for relay. This might be the Addressee or representative of the Addressee to whom the message is delivered or another station to whom the message is sent for delivery or relay.

Example Message Records Received and Sent

(Message type: Originated)

RECEIVED:	CHIEF BECKMANN	TIME 1433	DATE 3 MAY 2013
SENT:	SKFR	TIME 1455	DATE 3 MAY 2013

(Message type: Delivered)

RECEIVED:	KB7FAN	TIME 0945	DATE 16 JUNE 2013
SENT:	DR GREENLY	TIME 1001	DATE 16 JUNE 2013

(Message type: Relayed)

RECEIVED:	NKFR	TIME 1245	DATE 12 JULY 2013
SENT:	PFD	TIME 1249	DATE 12 JULY 2013

(Message type: Relayed)

RECEIVED:	W7XXY	TIME 1310	DATE 1 APRIL 2013
SENT:	W7YYX	TIME 1515	DATE 1 APRIL 2013

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Name or Call Sign of Operator

This data identifies the person handling the message. The purpose of this data is to know whom to contact if there are questions about the handling of the message. This is very important when using tactical call signs or the call sign of a control operator. We must know who actually handled the message.

Example Name or Call Sign of Operator

NAME OR CALL SIGN OF OPERATOR: DARRYL JONASON

NAME OR CALL SIGN OF OPERATOR: W7XIR

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Number	Precedence	HX	Station of Origin		
Check	Place of Origin		Time Filed	Date Filed	
					Radio Operator Only

Addressee:

<BREAK>

<BREAK>

Signature:

				Radio Operator Only	
Operator Notes:			Name or Call Sign of Operator		
From	Time	Date	To	Time	Date
Received:			Sent:		

<END-OF-MESSAGE>

AB7Y20090602

Kitsap County Alternate Communications System Message Form Instructions

I. Preamble

Number

Precedence (R, W, P or EMERGENCY) (see below)

HX (Handling Instructions) (optional) (see below)

Station of Origin (tactical call sign)

Check (number of words/groups in text only)

Place of Origin (where message originated, not location of station of origin)

Time Filed

Date Filed

II. Addressee (To)

As complete as possible. Must provide enough information to deliver the message to its intended recipient. Include telephone number if available.

III. Text

Limit to 25 words or less, if possible. If necessary, use as many words as needed. Try to split large messages into multiple smaller messages to reduce possibility of errors in long texts.

IV. Signature

Authority responsible for originating message and to whom responses and inquiries should be directed. Include telephone number if available.

Precedences

R (Routine)	Most normal traffic uses this designation. Use the abbreviation "R". Should be handled last, or not at all, when circuits are busy with Emergency, Priority or Welfare traffic.
W (Welfare)	A message that either is an inquiry as to the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area, or an advisory or reply from the disaster area that indicates all is well. Use the abbreviation "W". These messages are handled after Emergency and Priority traffic but before Routine.
P (Priority)	Important messages having a specific time limit. Official messages not covered in the EMERGENCY category. Press dispatches and other emergency-related traffic not of the utmost urgency. Notifications of death or injury in a disaster area, personal or official. Use the abbreviation "P".
EMERGENCY	Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons. This includes official messages of welfare agencies during emergencies requesting supplies, materials, or instructions vital to relief of a stricken populace in emergency areas. Always spelled out EMERGENCY. When in doubt, do not use it.

Handling Instructions (optional) (sub-set of total list)

B number	Cancel message if not delivered within indicated number of hours of filing time. Service originating station.
C	Report date and time of delivery to originating station.
D	Report to originating station the identity of station, date, and time from which received, the identity of station, date, and time to which relayed, or if delivered, report date, time and method of delivery.
E	Delivering station get reply from addresses and return a message back to originating station.