

ARESMAP - MDEC FAQ

What is ARESMAP?

The ARES Mutual Assistance Program is a new term to describe all levels of outside support provided to local ARES groups during a major communications emergency.

Is ARESMAP the same thing as ARESMAT?

No. ARESMAT has been used to describe responding mutual aid teams for many years. We're proposing that it be replaced with a new term, ARES Disaster Field Team (ADFT). ARESMAP is the proposed name of the overall assistance program. The term ARESMAT would pass into history.

What is the MDEC?

A Major Disaster Emergency Coordinator will provide national-level support coordination during large-scale disasters. ARRL HQ will activate at least one MDEC and an assistant MDEC for each disaster, based on who is available and best suited for the assignment, location, and on the size of the anticipated response. Several MDECs will be vetted and appointed from each ARRL Division on a stand-by basis to ensure that someone will be available when needed.

Why are MDECs distributed according to ARRL Divisions and not FEMA Regions?

We spent a great deal of time discussing this one. Since an MDEC will be assigned to a disaster area without regard to political boundaries of any kind, using FEMA regions offered no particular advantage. (Disasters don't recognize boundaries either.) For the most part, local ARES organizations have little direct contact with FEMA. In the end, we decided that it was more important to stay with our own organizational structure.

Do the MDEC or outside teams take over control from local leadership?

The short answer is "no." This program is designed to provide supplemental resources to existing ARES groups. However, in the event that the local organization is unable to operate (or doesn't exist), the assigned MDEC and ARRL Emergency Preparedness Manager may opt to place one or more outside ARES officials temporarily in charge until local groups can get their feet under them again. This would only be done in consultation with local ARRL leadership. Serving the public has to be our over-riding concern, and flexibility is key.

What tasks does the MDEC take on?

It depends on what has been requested. It might entail coordinating regional net frequencies and hot-line circuits, creating and organizing deployment of ADFTs, or handling requests for equipment from the ARRL National Equipment Cache. In short, the MDEC is the go-to person for local and Section ARES leadership, as well as national served agencies like the Red Cross or FEMA.

Can Red Cross or other national served agencies make direct support requests?

Yes, but if they do, the MDEC's first job will be to confer with ARES leadership in the affected area. If they are unable to do so for any reason, the MDEC and HQ staff will have to decide if they should just send in outside help, how much, and where.

Where will ADFT members be drawn from?

From the National ARES Database. The MDEC will confer with Section ARES officials in areas outside the disaster zone to put together appropriate ADFTs using members from the database.

Who will appoint the MDECs, and how many will there be?

The ARRL Emergency Preparedness Manager will consult with Section Managers and SECs to identify qualified MDEC candidates. If they agree to serve, they will be appointed to the national MDEC team by their Section Manager. Not every ARRL Section will have an MDEC appointment, since this is a very difficult job to fill. To achieve some measure of geographic distribution, up to four will be selected from each ARRL Division.

What is a Disaster Response Manager (DRM)?

The ARRL HQ staffer that handles day-to-day ARES issues is known as the Emergency Preparedness Manager (EPM). When a disaster requiring national support or coordination occurs, a temporary position called the Disaster Response Manager is created. In theory, the primary DRM is the EPM. Just like a job title in the Incident Command System, though, the person holding this title could be the EPM, another staffer, or a volunteer, and might change several times a day.

Why do we need both a DRM and an MDEC?

The staff at ARRL HQ doesn't have the contacts, knowledge, or resources to effectively build and coordinate a supportive response. It requires someone closer to the field organization to handle those tasks. The DRM will act as a single point of contact for national served agencies, and may work to provide other support resources, such as teleconferencing facilities to aid in response coordination.