



COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINE NUMBER 25-02

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) in New York State

Effective: Immediately

Date issued: May 21, 2025

Valid: Until revoked or superseded

Revision: 1.0

SUMMARY:

This guideline establishes the best practice for establishing RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service), a protocol created by the Federal Communications Commission (47 C.F.R. Part 97, Section 407) regarding the use of amateur radio (“ham radio”) for emergency communications. Many local governments train Auxiliary Communications Service (AUXCOMM) volunteers using the RACES protocol. The volunteers serve their respective jurisdictions pursuant to guidelines, directives, and mandates established by local emergency management officials.

ARES & RACES – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

The Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) is the national emergency preparedness organization sponsored by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). This organization is different from RACES in that it is a privately run public service organization. ARES also supports non-emergency events such as parades, foot or bicycle races, and other community events.

RACES is specifically called out in the FCC rules and is solely organized under a state or local government, generally under county Emergency Management which is responsible for RACES personnel. RACES operates under an activation by the local government and is typically used during large scale emergencies or disasters. Specific RACES operations may also continue after the invocation of the President’s War Emergency Powers (47 U.S.C. 606) on the frequency segments authorized pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Part 214.

JUSTIFICATION:

RACES brings trained auxiliary communications service (AUXCOMM) personnel into a large-scale emergency or disaster enhancing communications resources already in place. Most importantly, RACES allows for backup communications when other communications infrastructure may be compromised or unavailable because of a disaster.

DESCRIPTION:

RACES programs in New York State are organized under county or local government Emergency Management. The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communication (OIEC) manages and operates the New York State RACES program and OIEC supports county and local government RACES

during activations, drills, and training.

All amateur radio operators interested in RACES should join the RACES program established by their respective county or local government's Emergency Management office. RACES is only activated by government officials, generally Emergency Management.

LICENSING:

- RACES members must be licensed amateur radio operators and be able to operate on frequencies and modes under their respective amateur radio license privileges. See *47 C.F.R. Part 97, Section 407 (Appendix A of this document)*.

PERMITTED USES:

- An operation is only a RACES operation if it has been authorized by the State or a local emergency management office. There is no self-selection or self-activation of RACES. Authorizations can be for:
 - Emergency Communications during large scale emergencies or disasters.
 - Auxiliary Communications in relation to emergencies or disasters.
 - Training such as nets and passing of radio traffic as authorized by the local Emergency Management office and following FCC rules and RACES guidelines.

PROHIBITED USES:

- Routine or general day-to-day communications, not related to an emergency or RACES training exercise.
- Communications not related directly to the RACES activation by a governmental entity.

TRAINING:

- It is recommended that all RACES personnel should have the following minimum FEMA training:
 - FEMA IS-100 - Introduction of Incident Command System (ICS)
 - FEMA IS-200 - ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents
 - FEMA IS-700 - Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
 - FEMA IS-800 – Introduction to the National Response Framework

The above FEMA courses are available on-line. The most current version of the course should be taken.

- The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications, manages certain New York statewide amateur radio training radio nets, which are available to qualified Amateur Radio Operators who are interested in learning about emergency communications. Local RACES organizations may hold their own local nets that will be managed locally and separate from New York State.
- Local governments are solely responsible for their respective RACES personnel and must authorize their attendance in any in-person NYS sponsored trainings, courses, or exercises and attendees must follow DHSES's training requirements and instructions.

NEW YORK STATE RACES PROGRAM:

- New York State RACES, as the State agency program, is solely under the control of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications.
- In New York State, RACES is typically organized under county or local Emergency Management. For RACES at the *State* level, you must be a current New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) employee and with agency approval. Membership in a county or local RACES program is not membership in the New York State RACES program.
- DHSES - OIEC provides additional support through trainings from statewide radio nets and through the NYS Communications Unit (COMU) training courses and exercises. The Communications Unit (COMU), a role within the Logistics Section of the Incident Command System (ICS), is designed to support the operable and interoperable communications needs for planned events, unplanned events, and exercises. COMU training courses include:
 - Communications Unit Leader (COML)
 - Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)
 - Communications Technician (COMT)
 - Incident Tactical Dispatcher (INTD)
 - Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) (**highly recommended for RACES members**)
 - IT Service Unit Leader (ITSL)
- The Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications can assist local RACES with development of trainings and exercises at the regional or local level. This request should originate from a county or local government agency.

LOCAL OR COUNTY RACES ORGANIZATION:

- Local Emergency Management should have a process in place to vet and appoint RACES members and a RACES Radio Officer or Emergency Communications Officer who will act as the leader of the local RACES organization. Part of the vetting process should include verifying the amateur radio operator meets *47 C.F.R. Part 97, Section 407* regulations (see APPENDIX A of this guideline).
- Only those Amateur Radio Operators that are recognized by the Local Emergency Management office can be considered part of RACES. Local Emergency Management should maintain a roster of authorized RACES volunteers.
- Local Emergency Management should have a policy and procedure in place for RACES activations, assignments, and deployments.
- Local Emergency Management should have policies and procedures in place to deal with disciplinary issues with RACES personnel.
- Local Emergency Management should involve their respective county or local government legal departments about procedures, policies, workers compensation, and other issues when RACES personnel are deployed to an incident or acting under a RACES activation.
- See APPENDIX A, 47 C.F.R. Part 97, Section 407 for additional requirements.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS:

- Questions regarding RACES or concerns regarding this document should be reported to the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications by Email: NYS.RACES@dhses.ny.gov or Phone: 518-322-4911.

APPENDIX A

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 47, Part 97

§ 97.407 Radio amateur civil emergency service.

(a) No station may transmit in RACES unless it is an FCC-licensed primary, club, or military recreation station and it is certified by a civil defense organization as registered with that organization. No person may be the control operator of an amateur station transmitting in RACES unless that person holds an FCC-issued amateur operator license and is certified by a civil defense organization as enrolled in that organization.

(b) The frequency bands and segments and emissions authorized to the control operator are available to stations transmitting communications in RACES on a shared basis with the amateur service. In the event of an emergency which necessitates invoking the President's War Emergency Powers under the provisions of section 706 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. 606, amateur stations participating in RACES may only transmit on the frequency segments authorized pursuant to part 214 of this chapter.

(c) An amateur station registered with a civil defense organization may only communicate with the following stations upon authorization of the responsible civil defense official for the organization with which the amateur station is registered:

- (1) An amateur station registered with the same or another civil defense organization; and
- (2) A station in a service regulated by the FCC whenever such communication is authorized by the FCC.

(d) All communications transmitted in RACES must be specifically authorized by the civil defense organization for the area served. Only civil defense communications of the following types may be transmitted:

- (1) Messages concerning impending or actual conditions jeopardizing the public safety, or affecting the national defense or security during periods of local, regional, or national civil emergencies;
- (2) Messages directly concerning the immediate safety of life of individuals, the immediate protection of property, maintenance of law and order, alleviation of human suffering and need, and the combating of armed attack or sabotage;
- (3) Messages directly concerning the accumulation and dissemination of public information or instructions to the civilian population essential to the activities of the civil defense organization or other authorized governmental or relief agencies; and
- (4) Communications for RACES training drills and tests necessary to ensure the establishment and maintenance of orderly and efficient operation of the RACES as ordered by the responsible civil defense organization served. Such drills and tests may not exceed a total time of 1 hour per week. With the approval of the chief officer for emergency planning in the applicable State, Commonwealth,

District, or territory, however, such tests and drills may be conducted for a period not to exceed 72 hours no more than twice in any calendar year.

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/section-97.407>