



# Amateur Radio Emergency Service

## "Go-Kits"



## Introduction

It's impossible to know what challenges an actual emergency will bring. Sometimes you may know in advance what your assignment will be, but in most cases you will need to be flexible and ready for nearly anything. Being prepared for an emergency deployment involves more than just attending ARES training sessions, you must also spend some time considering: equipment you may need, useful and appropriate clothing, emergency contact information, etc. The last thing you want to do after ARES has been activated is spend time thinking about and locating equipment you will need, this wastes precious time. While you will certainly need to do some last minute scrambling after an activation, you can minimize some of this chaos by planning ahead.

Before we discuss some of the Emergency Communications (ECOM) planning you should do, it is important to remember that one of the most crucial preparations you need to complete starts in your house. Before you even think about responding to an emergency activation, you need to talk with your family members and make sure they are comfortable with you being gone. If they have any concerns, these should be addressed before you ever step foot out the door. Their safety should always be foremost in your mind and if you or your

family members have lingering concerns, then you can not be an effective ECOM response team member.

## Go-Kits

A go-kit is a term often used to describe a collection of gear and information that is available at moments notice. Since all emergencies are different, you may well end up with a variety of predefined go-kits, capable of dealing with different deployment constraints. Ideally, you would have all of these go-kits prepackaged and ready to go. However, most of us don't have the luxury of many levels of redundant equipment, so we must rely on "virtual" go-kits, or lists of equipment, we would need for a variety of deployments. Without a go-kit, it is likely that you will leave something critical at home.

When preparing for a deployment, some of the basic questions you should have answers for are:

- How long will the deployment be?
- How long will an average shift be?
- What type of communications will we be providing and what networks (HF, VHF, etc.) will be used?
- Are there any specific communications requirements or limitations?
- Will the assignment be fixed, mobile, or on foot? If fixed, will there be AC power available?
- Will you need to be able to relocate quickly?
- What sort of weather or other conditions might be encountered?
- Are you responsible for providing your own food?
- Will there be a place to sleep?
- Will there be sanitary facilities available?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions you may have, but answers to these questions will help you determine which go-kit(s) are most appropriate for this particular deployment.

Many people prepare at least two different go-kits: one for deployments under 24 hours and another for deployments over 24 hours. In the case of a real emergency, most people are able to operate effectively for up to 24 hours with

only the clothing they arrived wearing, "snack" type meals, and power naps. Anything longer than this, most people find they really need good hearty meals and some quality sleep. As the length of the deployment continues to grow longer than 24 hours, most people will just add more of the items which they will use up, such as clothing, food, water, and batteries.

## Go-Kit Suggestions

The following are some lists of items you may want to include in a go-kit(s). You should adapt these lists to your equipment, resources, and the potential deployments you may be involved with.

### Basics

- The first item you will need is something to put your go-kit(s) in -- This can include one or more of the following: backpacks, suitcases, tote cases, etc. Remember that you may well need to move your equipment frequently and that you should pack accordingly.
- ID cards or other authorized credentials
- Frequency lists and net schedules
- Contact information -- This should include emergency contact information for your family and relatives as well as contact information for members of the ARES leadership, including: ASM EC, SEC, and DECs.
- A personal item -- Emergency deployments can often be stressful. If you can pack a familiar item, something that makes you think of home and brings back happy memories, it can often help give you extra strength when you need a lift.
- Maps -- If you are responsible for driving, you need to know not only where you are going and multiple ways to get out in case of an emergency.

### Radios and Accessories

- Handheld Radio
  - If possible, this should be a dual band HT
  - Spare rechargeable batteries
  - Alkaline battery packs
  - Spare alkaline batteries
  - Battery changers, AC and DC
  - Speaker microphone and earphone
  - Adaptors to allow the HT to connect with an external antenna
  - Roll-up J-Pole antenna and/or 1/4 wave or antenna
  - DC power cord

- Mobile Radio
  - If possible, this should be a dual band radio
  - Antenna (mobile magnetic mount, portable gain antenna, etc.)
  - Coax -- typically you should use at least RG-8x
  
- HF Radio
  - Radio capable of covering all amateur HF bands
  - Multi-band HF antenna
  - Antenna tuner
  - Coax -- typically you should use at least RG-8x
  
- General
  - Headphones -- almost always necessary in an emergency operation where there is likely to be commotion
  - Photocopies of all radio manuals
  - AC power supply -- assuming you will have AC power, bring a supply that is large enough to run all of your equipment
  - Batteries -- even if you have AC power, you should try and bring a battery or batteries that can power your HF/Mobile radio. Remember to bring some way of charging the battery also.
  - All other radio related connectors and cords
  - Spare parts and tools
    - multi-meter
    - fuses
    - adaptors
    - multi-tool -- like a Leatherman or Swiss Army knife
  
  - Rope -- for securing antenna installations
  - Duct-tape
  - Paper, pens, pencils, paper clips, rubber bands
  - Cell phone

## **Clothing and Other Personal Items**

- Clothing, which is appropriate for the season, weather, and length of deployment
- Toiletries
  - soap
  - shampoo
  - deodorant
  - toilet paper

- Prescription medication -- enough to last a week longer than the expected deployment. Remember that medications do expire, so you want to rotate through the medication which is contained in any go-kit
- Prescription glasses or contact lenses -- make sure that you bring an extra set of glasses or contact lenses
- Foul weather gear and/or protective gear
  - rain gear -- you can almost always use rain gear, regardless of the season
  - protective gear -- including hard hat, respirator, tyvek suit, etc.
- Drinking containers
- Money -- remember to bring some change for tolls, vending machines, etc.
- Personal shelter and/or sleeping items
  - Sleeping bag
  - Tent
  - Tarps
- First Aid kit
- Sani-Clean or some other kind of hand sanitizer

## Sub-Dividing your Go-Kits

You may want to spend some time thinking about how you can sub-divide your equipment so that you can make your deployment easier. Some ways you may want to think about sub-dividing your kits are:

- A quick or mobile deployment kit -- equipment that could be used for very fast response or highly mobile deployments
- A fixed location kit -- equipment that could be used from a fixed location, such as a command center or shelter
- An emergency power kit -- equipment that could be used to power your station for an extended period of time
- Short and long term personal kits -- any personal items
- Field kitchen kit -- including any items necessary for feeding yourself and others during the deployment
- Field shelter kit -- including any items necessary for shelter during the deployment