

Washington State Emergency Management Division

Logistics Section

Communications Annex

(This document supersedes all preceding State RACES Plans)

UNIT MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the Logistics Communications Unit (LCU) is to provide uninterrupted communication channels between AHJs, critical infrastructure and response partners supporting disaster-related operations with Washington State Emergency Management. The LCU coordinates and operates key elements of the statewide alternate, contingency and emergency communications infrastructure.

The LCU operates a network of twelve DHS CISA SHARES Radio Messaging Service (RMS) stations 24 hours a day using Winlink®, a radio-based email service established for emergency communications purposes. These stations are available to tribal, county and large city emergency management agencies, certain NGOs and designated critical infrastructure partners licensed with DHS CISA SHARES. WA EMD's SHARES RMS stations serve all of Washington State as well as our partners across FEMA Region X, the western United States, Alaska and Hawaii.

The goals of the LCU are to provide:

- **Tactical voice communications**, for coordination of personnel and resource movement(s) as needed.
- **Voice message traffic** when passing message traffic via digital means is not available.
- **Data communications through Winlink®** in the form of email and document attachments. Examples include but are not limited to: situation reports (SITREPs), staffing schedules, requests for resources (ICS-213RR), general message traffic (ICS-231 General Message), ICS forms/ documents and ISNAP reports. Templates of these forms can be found in the Winlink program.
- **Redundant communications**, giving WA EMD and AHJs both alternate and additional forms of communication when systems are overtaxed or impaired.

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM REDUNDANCY PLAN

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, communications usage through primary providers (phone and Internet) spikes. The sheer volume of traffic alone can degrade emergency communications capabilities. Primary communications infrastructure may suffer damage in some disaster scenarios. WA EMD Logistics established the **PACE Communications Plan** (described below). The PACE plan provides (1) both alternate and additional communications resources, minimizing the impact and potential bottlenecks due to primary providers exceeding

their maximum capacity, (2) communications not subject to single-point-of-failure challenges, and (3) communications services to areas that have experienced outages due to damage or other systemic failure that do not rely on primary communications infrastructure. The PACE plan outlines both how and what resources are available.

PACE is the acronym for Primary, Alternate, Contingency and Emergency Communications Channels:

- **Primary Communications Channels.** This includes commercial telephone services (tactical) and Internet providers (data). In many if not most disaster events, primary communications channels are more than sufficient to handle need. *Please click here to download primary phone, Internet information and email addresses.*

- **Alternate Communications Channels.** Implemented when primary voice and/or email is impacted/ interrupted, temporarily unavailable or overloaded and resources are needed.
 - Tactical (voice): Satellite phone; CEMNET.
 - Data: Winlink email. Email address via Internet: NNA0WA@winlink.org. Email address by Winlink radio: NNA0WA. Additional email addresses as per standing/ operational period ICS-205.

- **Contingency Communications Channels.** Implemented when primary and alternate communications channels are impacted or insufficient to handle the message load needed for mitigation and recovery.
 - Tactical: As per standing/ operational period ICS 205.
 - Data: Winlink email. Email address via Internet: NNA0WA@winlink.org. Email address by Winlink radio: NNA0WA. Additional email addresses as per standing/ operational period ICS 205.

- **Emergency Communications Channels.** Implemented when a disaster event has occurred and the scope may not be fully known. Emergency communications provides resources specific to the disaster response.
 - Tactical: As per standing/ operational period ICS 205.
 - Data: Winlink email. Email address via Internet: NNA0WA@winlink.org. Email address by Winlink radio: NNA0WA. Additional Winlink email addresses can be found on pre-event standing/ operational period ICS 205.

LOGISTICS COMMUNICATIONS UNIT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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The Logistics Communications Unit is organized under the Logistics Service Branch and is managed by the WA EMD Logistics Chief. The LCU has communications assets and teams on-site at Camp Murray and at locations across Washington State.

The LCU is coordinated by the Logistics Service Branch. The LCU consists of four teams:

- SEOC Radio Room Operations
- WA EMD/ DHS CISA SHARES RMS Station Operations
- HF Radio Net Operations on SHARES and 60 Meter Operations (Voice message traffic)
- WA EMD 220 MHz Amateur Radio Network Operations (Voice message traffic)

Specific information regarding transmit/ receive frequencies, function, and operational modes can be found on the preset standing/ operational ICS-205. For the current preset standing ICS-205, contact Scott.Dakers@mil.wa.gov

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS AND ACTIVATION PROCEDURE

Mobilization, staffing and demobilization of the LCU follows ICS procedures established as per any given operational period of an incident.

In the event the Logistics Communications Unit is activated, the Logistics Chief or his/her designee will be responsible to staff positions. In the event of a disaster incident, the standing ICS-205 will be in force throughout the first operational period of the event, or until the new ICS-201/ ICS-205 is released and is in full effect.

RADIO FREQUENCIES, OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

Both digital and tactical operational frequencies/ assignments can be found on the ICS-205. Operational practices will follow plain language procedures as per National Incident Command System/ Incident Command System (NICS/ ICS). Guidelines. Voice operations etiquette follow the [*National Coast Guard Radio Operations Guide*](#).

TRAINING OF COMMUNICATIONS TEAMS AND UNIT MEMBERS

The LCU helps coordinate training tools and guidelines for individual communications specialists (RADOs or "Radio Operators) and AHJ radio units in all aspects established PACE plan.

Training and training materials follow NIMS/ ICS procedures and protocols, using Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) guidelines. These support protocols and procedures used in responses throughout Washington State, FEMA Region X, the western United States, Alaska and Hawaii and will allow for the development of exercises and interoperability support with our partners across FEMA Region X and neighboring states.

Exercises and trainings focus on on-air protocols and procedures for the unit member and practical disaster radio unit exercises in which communications systems have suffered damage and radio units must practice reestablishing communications through alternate means. Individual unit members can be certified as WA State RADOs through the completion of Position Task Books (PTBs). Communications unit training will follow Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) guidelines by certified trainers. Training will be provided for both professional emergency management staff and volunteer staff specific to the roles each would fill. Information regarding trainings and PTBs can be found in training guidelines and the training schedule.

WA EMD has developed unit member training guidelines for the training of both professional and volunteer staff. The training guidelines are based upon Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) NIMS/ICS standards that are incremental in nature. This creates an environment in which personnel are guided incrementally through a process that leads to increasing levels of proficiency and greater unit capability. The intent of these trainings and certifications is standardize communications protocols and procedures as they pertain to responding large regional and catastrophic disaster events, but they will also serve as the standard for any communications practices that require contact with agencies outside of the local AHJ. As these practices and protocols are standardized around the National Incident Command Structure (NICS), it will also allow radio units around Washington State to support our regional partners across FEMA Region X, the western United States, Alaska and Hawaii with communications assistance should the need arise.

These guidelines are designed to address interagency operational practices and do not replace local trainings that support specific local needs and that are unique and specific to that agency. Local operations and training decisions regarding local operations remains entirely within the purview of the local AHJ.