

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) has been the public service communication program of the ARRL since 1935. Over many years and following many natural disasters, volunteers in our field organizations have provided us with a lot of valuable feedback about the ways we could improve and modernize (including adapting to new communication modes) to make this organization work more efficiently and effectively.

The ARRL Board of Directors created a working group to look at the input from volunteers in the field organization, as well as incorporating the work of previous committees studying improvements to ARRL public service programs, to develop strategies to enhance the professionalism and consistency of the ARES program and those who are part of it

The working group recognized that there is a strong need for a robust volunteer management system to connect field organizations to training, resources, and information from ARRL. Other improvements that will be rolled out in the months ahead include establishment of national training requirements and improved local training resources, updated ARES operating guidelines, and updated field organization job descriptions.

A few weeks ago, an announcement went out outlining the changes coming to the ARES program. The first of these changes, establishing ARES Group IDs, is now ready. Before we get into the instructions on how to register your ARES group, we first want to cover some basic questions on how the ID relates to this new volunteer management system ARES Connect.

What is ARES Connect?

ARES Connect is a volunteer management system that will allow each ARES group to manage their roster, create and staff events, and track nets and training. Each ARES group and ARRL Section will have a unique page on the platform with appropriate admin control given to the ARES Emergency Coordinator.

ARES members will be able to create a user profile that connects them to their local ARES group. Through their profile they can register for ARES (pending EC approval), sign up for events, log volunteer hours, and log training.

Reporting will be different through ARES Connect. As users log activity, data is created that allows ECs, DECs and SECs to run custom reports. The current ARES report forms will continue to be used through 2018 as the system is being built, but our current plan is to shift all reporting over to ARES Connect in January 2019.

Beta testing of the platform will begin in early 2018. Look for more information to be released about ARES Connect around midyear, once testing and initial build is complete.

Who applies for the ARES Group ID Number?

Most ARES groups are responsible for a local coverage area and are coordinated by an Emergency Coordinator. For this reason, the Emergency Coordinator will need to apply for the ID number. If your ARES group is operational at a district level the DEC may need to apply. All ARRL Sections will be provided a unique page on ARES Connect identified by their section abbreviation, so SECs will not need to apply for an ID.

How long will it take to get my group's ID?

We anticipate a high volume of requests initially, so there may be initial delays. Once demand levels off we expect a turnaround time of 7 business days.

Why does my group need the ID?

ARES groups now lack a *unique* identifier, like a call sign, and the similarity of names within a region or even across the country can cause confusion. For example, does the designated name "Montgomery County ARES" refer to Texas, Pennsylvania, or Ohio. All three states have a Montgomery County ARES group? A unique identifier will resolve this ambiguity.

The ID will be used for the ARES Connect system. Your group will not be able to participate without it; which will impact your ability to report and receive ARES group benefits.

Do not use this ID for your ARES members. When we open ARES Connect for users to create their profiles, they will use their call sign as their user ID.

How long do I have to apply for the ID?

The application process opened on January 2, 2018 and will remain open. You will need to have your ID to start your group's ARES Connect page. This will begin in mid-2018. By January 2, 2019 you will need to be signed in to ARES Connect to do all reporting.

How do I apply?

To register your ARES group, use the online form found at:

<http://www.arrl.org/ares-group-id-request-form>.

Instructions on how to complete this form can be found at:

http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Public%20Service/ARES/Form_ARES_006_instructions.pdf.

Registration must be completed by the Emergency Coordinator, District Emergency Coordinator or their designee.

What next?

Additional information on changes to the ARES program will be emailed to SMs and SECs soon. Beta testing of ARES Connect will begin shortly and once completed additional information will be sent out.

ARRL Public Service Enhancement Working Group

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