

VCACS
Rapid Response Team

Moving Forward

Question:

Why have a Rapid Response Team?

Answer:

Our primary reason for wanting to establish a Rapid Response Team stems from two situations or perspectives:

- We have witnessed recent emergency events where there has been an obvious communications gap that we could have filled.
- We want a team of members whose knowledge, skills, experience, resources and relational skills are known and demonstrated in such a way as to allow event leadership the flexibility to address both difficult and ordinary situations in more efficient and reliable ways.

Typical primary tasks might be:

- Establish reliable communications links as quickly as possible, including difficult locations.
- Ready the site so that those who relieve them can step in and continue providing excellent communications support without interruption.
- Repair or enhance communications in situations where communications has broken down, or has degraded.
- Respond to communication support needs outside the normal focus of ACS, and when unique conditions require the expertise and capabilities of the RRT.

which leads us to the

Mission Statement

- Definition of the mission: To form a group of ACS Members having skills necessary to be able to deploy at a virtual moment's notice to any foreseeable assignment in the initial minutes of an emergency, and carry out that assignment in a professional and competent way.

our approach will be through these

Major Areas of Discussion

- ① Selection Process
- ② Resources
- ③ Activation and use of the RRT
- ④ Training

Selection Process

The selection process will consist of a combination of collecting appropriate demographic and applicable information about an RRT applicant, combined with observable skills, traits, and performance of that individual, upon which the ACS EC Leadership Council will make the final acceptance decision.

Required Credentials and Experience

- Valid Ham license
- Valid DSW card
- Comfortable with basic Windows computer operations
- Successful completion of 3 required FEMA courses
- Completion of VCACS Basic Training
- Participated in at least 5 significant public service events and/or emergency activations
- Minimum 25 hours participation in public service events and/or emergency activations

Skills and Knowledge

● Required

- Reasonable understanding of mobile communications

● Desirable

- Facilities outside of the realm of local two-meter repeaters, e.g. membership in linked systems (Cactus, CalNet, Papa, etc.), HF, Packet/Winlink
- Red Cross courses, DART, CERT experience

Desired Personal Traits

- Ability to size up situations
- “Can-Do” attitude, problem-solving approach
- Remain cool under pressure
- Communicate well with others, professional demeanor
- Understand the needs of the served agencies
- Present well, i.e. will command respect from served agency personnel

Obtaining Candidates

- We'll provide an application form
- EC recommends individual
- EC Council reviews applications and determines suitability

Contents of Application Form

- Personal Information
- Communication capabilities
- Classes, training, etc.
- Interests – Likes / Dislikes
- Availability / Response time
- Equipment

Distribution across County

- Target: At least one member from each area
- Desire to have multiple RRT members who have quick availability, located in areas of the County deemed more critical, based on previous and on-going experience

Resources

Personal Resources

Required

- Availability - reasonably free of employment and/or family responsibilities that would ordinarily interfere with short-notice dispatch
- Mobility - commit to having operational vehicle and driver's license
- Two-meter handheld radio
- Two-meter mobile radio installed in vehicle

Desirable

- Two-meter mobile radio free to be transported into shelters, EOC's, etc.
- Portable antennas
- Power supplies, batteries
- Feedlines, cables, adapters
- Tools, supplies

Activation & Use of the RRT

As always...

- Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) becomes “activated” when an appropriate emergency organization such as OES or Red Cross requests our services with an assigned mission, and ACS Leadership accepts the responsibility of that mission.
- ACS members may be assigned tasks according to the accepted mission.
- The RRT members may be assigned tasks according to the accepted mission.

Under what Circumstances?

- Any time communications is needed ASAP and the staffing process has just begun.
- When uncertainty about the viability of a communications location exists or a known problem needs solving.
- Any other communications-related task that needs the unique capabilities of the RRT.
- When regular staffing is unable to respond to a specific need.

Who is the Decision Maker?

- The decision-making process as it relates to the RRT follows the ACS leadership line, with the event communications officer included in that line as follows:
 - District Emergency Coordinator (DEC)
 - Deputy District Emergency Coordinator(s) (DDEC)
 - Named Incident Communications Officer (ICO)
- Note that the RRT may be deployed multiple times during a mission, with each deployment coming from the ICO, or in the ICO's absence, from ACS leadership.

What to Expect in an Activation

When activation happens, and leadership gives a mission to RRT members, the RRT may expect any of the following:

- Leave on assignment immediately
- Go solo, in defined group, or self-staff
- Potentially be on assignment for a period of up to 24 hours
- Upon completion of first short assignment, be prepared for re-deployment
- Join other ACS staff in typical assignments at any time

Training

RRT Training

- Attend training sessions (usually about 2 hours each) held twice annually.
- Remain up-to-date with regards to the policies and procedures of ACS
- Discuss resources for improving personal complement of equipment
- Participate in team-specific specialized training sessions when available
- Review current technology as it would apply and benefit the RRT
- Hold drills as necessary to refine performance