DEPLOYMENT AWARENESS

A training course for REACT Teams and members

This is a new REACT course designed to give every REACT member a familiarity with deploying in response to a request for assistance in a major emergency or disaster. This knowledge will help you prepare to deploy in bad events that may impact both your community and neighboring ones.

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I. WHY?

It is a simple question. Why would you want to leave the comfort of your communications shack to go out into the wind, wet, and darkness to help others?

Because you are a member of REACT. The name tells you why – we are Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams. The reason we were founded was to help motorists with communications when they needed help. Our By-Laws make it clear that we are an emergency communications organization. When you joined, you accepted a duty to the people who rely upon us, a duty to respond to help when needed. There is no more pressing case of need than when a major emergency or disaster hits. There is no time when your fellow citizens need help more. This is your time and your duty to act.

II. WHAT IS A DEPLOYMENT?

A deployment is the movement of REACT members in a typed Team with their communications equipment to perform a task in a disaster or major emergency (1) in response to a mission assignment from a supported organization or emergency management agency, (2) to carry out a preplanned response function assigned in an emergency operations plan, or (3) to provide mutual aid to another REACT Team.

III. DEPLOYMENT – HOW FAR?

First, any time you leave your home base station to do a communications task, you are deploying. If your REACT Team sends you out to go 2 blocks away to watch a dry wash and report if it floods, you have deployed. Unless your Team members never leave their homes, you will do deployments.

Most team deployments will be such local deployments – to support a local Red Cross Chapter response to a fire, to observe and report weather impacts, to help staff the emergency operations center, etc. For planning and reporting purposes, we use a 25 mile radius as a criteria for local deployments. That radius should cover responses within your city or county. Local deployments will tend to be short term, one day or less.

Some Teams may be capable of deploying further away with at least one Type IV Team (one Communications Operator and one Team Boss). Further away may be the next county, across the state, or even across the country to assist another REACT

Team or an organization with which REACT has a memorandum of understanding or agreement. Deployments outside the local area will tend to be for larger, more destructive events, and, because of travel time and costs, be for longer periods of time from 72 hours to a week or more.

IV. DEPLOYMENT BY TYPED RESOURCES

The events of 11 September 2001 fundamentally changed how disaster response works in the United States. It used to be that, if you showed up in a uniform covered with patches and a radio in hand, you were welcomed. Over the past 17 years that simple approach has changed. Today emergency managers, public safety organizations, and major voluntary organizations want:

- Standard resources that can be plugged into the nationally mandated Incident Command System as a unit.

- Standard resources credentialled by their volunteer organizations as having completed standard, verifiable training.

- Standard resources that can reliably perform specific tasks that are needed at the particular incident.

- Standard resources that can be ordered when they are needed, will show up when they are needed, and will go home when they are demobilized.

Increasingly without the organization, credentials, training, and a request, you become part of the problem, not part of the solution. And that means REACT Teams have to be part of the system.

In 2011the REACT Board recognized this trend and started the process of typing resources. In simple terms this means that we have:

- A system of Typed Teams with increasing numbers of members and capabilities from Type IV (a team boss and communications operator) to Type I (a complete communications center.

- Teams that fill 3 specific types of communications needs:

Communications Teams – capable of deploying either locally or in a wider area to provide field communications
Base Station Teams – capable of proving coverage of a local area from fixed or portable stations
Message Teams – capable of managing formal message flow and the REACT Traffic System

- Standard training courses tailored to prepare members to perform specific major emergency and disaster communications jobs.

- A credentialing process to identify fully qualified Typed Teams and members capable of working as part of those teams.

For 2018 our priority is the development of Type IV Teams. In 2019 we roll out the training needed to develop Type III Teams. Most REACT teams should be able to qualify a locally deployable Type IV Communications Team. In future years we plan to roll out Type II and Type I qualifications for Typed Teams and individual members.

V. THE IMPACTS ON THE LOCALS

Major emergencies and disasters have profound impacts on the people who live in a community hit by the event. These impacts influence how you are received. It is to your advantage to understand what is shaping how the locals will work with you.

Expect communicators in the impact area to be stressed and exhausted by the event. It is not unusual for those who have been working the disaster to be defensive about what they have accomplished, to feel that people who are coming in to support them don't understand what they have been through, and they have to keep working because it is their community, not the outsiders'.

Personal loss – some of the people you will work with may have lost family members, friends and co-workers, beloved pets, their house, and/or their personal property. This creates a profound sense of loss, grief, and high stress levels.

Survivor guilt – those who have not suffered loss, or have suffered a minimal loss, often feel stress and guilt that they have not suffered as much as others in the community.

It is their community – there may be resentment of those who respond to help because of a sense of guilt that the people you are helping were not able to protect their community, a sense that because it is their community that they have to rescue it, a concern for their agency's place in the community after the disaster when they were seen to be so weak as to need outside help, and/or even a simple dislike of outsiders.

Resentment – that they have to waste time explaining where things are, what resources are working already, how to get things, and how to get things done. This is likely to be even worse if you come in needing food, water, a place to stay, someone to guide your team – now you become a consumer of resources they feel that are needed to help their citizens.

Race and ethnicity – some racial, ethnic, religious, or even economic communities may not want you in what they perceive as their territory. They may not want you helping one of the members of their community because you are not like them. These situations can become volatile rapidly. If the situation starts to become uncomfortable, apologize for the intrusion and back out carefully.

Fatigue – in many communities disasters mean that the emergency operations center staff and the field responders work until it is over. The result is physical and psychological fatigue and collapse. Fatigued people sometimes lose perspective.

Some of these factors are clearly legitimate. Some may seem silly, after all, why would someone not want help? But they are real to the people you have come to help. The author of this text has seen or experienced all of these behaviors in actual disasters.

VI. WORKING WITH THE LOCALS

Common sense, good manners, and an evident desire to be of assistance can solve most issues in human interaction in a disaster response. The following guidelines are important in establishing a good working relationship with the people and agencies in the impact area.

FIRST – it is their community. It was before you came, it will be after you leave. Never lose sight of that reality. Don't make it worse for them.

SECOND – be humble. Play nice with others.

THIRD - stay out of local politics. As a responder you have no political beliefs. You are there to be of assistance.

FOURTH – you are there to help do what they tell you that they need help with. You are not there to tell them how it should be done. Even if they seem to make no sense, local procedures have evolved to be what they are because they work for the community's system. Ask what they want you to do. Follow their local procedures. Apologize if you make a mistake or do something a way they do not like, and ask how they want the task done.

FIFTH – don't promise what you cannot deliver. If you say you will do something, make it happen, and do a good, professional job in the process.

SIXTH – you are not in charge. They are. Follow their lead, support them, don't embarrass them, don't play with their equipment, and clean up after yourself.

SEVENTH – think about not using the word "help." It may be value laden and be seen as a statement that they need help because of some failure on their part. Try "how can we be of assistance" or "what do want us to do?"

EIGHTH – don't hog the attention of the press. Make sure that requests for interviews and comments are referred to the incident public information officer. All it takes is one REACT member saying "the locals did not know what they were doing – we had to come in and save them" for the word to be all over the state in 24 hours, and for no public official in that state to be willing to use REACT resources again.

NINTH – don't recruit. It would seem that a disaster is an ideal time to sign up a new Team in the devastated community. If someone approaches you about doing so, refer them to REACT International Headquarters. It is a generally accepted practice among national organizations that do disaster response that response and relief organizations do not proselytize or recruit disaster victims during the event.

TENTH – remember that humanitarian response is not based on color, race, ethnicity, gender, gender preference, religion, economic status, political affiliation, disability, etc. People in need are people in need. Treat everyone with respect and kindness. Try to help anyone who needs help. Do not make assumptions about people based on appearance or your values and beliefs. You generally do not know to whom you are talking or who is listening, and you often don't know what their position is in the community or the influence that they have.

ELEVENTH – Never, ever, under any conditions criticize the victims, joke about their condition, etc. Don't say platitudes – "it will be okay" (they have lost their house, their car, their pet, their possessions, and their grandmother – it is not going to be okay), "it is God's will" (they may think their God is not the sort of deity to destroy their life arbitrarily), "he is in a better place now" (no, being buried and crushed to death in a mud flow or killed by flying debris is not a better place), etc. may not have the desired effect. Saying stupid stuff in their community is … well … really stupid.

VII. YOU ARE A REACT RESPONDER

When you deploy for REACT, you deploy as a REACT member. You are a volunteer emergency communicator. As such you have no more authority than any other citizen, and must obey the laws of the state in which you are operating.

From a communications perspective there are four important ways to get in trouble:

- If you are capable of operating on VHF or UHF interoperability channels make certain that you have made the necessary authorization request to the REACT Communications Committee, and have received approval to use the channels. Use interoperability channels solely to interface with governmental agencies that you are supporting, and ensure that interface has been coordinated with the agency you are working with.

- In the Personal Radio Services you have no authority to operate beyond the specific authorizations for normal operations in these services (CBRS, GMRS, PRS, and MURS) in the FCC rules. Under FCC rules members who are licensed Amateurs may operate on public safety frequencies in emergency situations when no other means of communications exist. No other means includes other radio services, telephones, and maybe couriers and the US

Postal Service. However, state laws in many states prohibit this type of operation. Even having public safety frequencies programmed in your radio has been held in at least one state court to be prima facie evidence of the intent to violate state laws prohibiting use of public safety frequencies by those not members of public safety agencies. If you have public safety frequencies cloned in your radio, get rid of them, now.

- A recent incident in which members of a REACT Team were apprehended with stolen police frequencies and encryption cloned into radios that they were using on dispatch frequencies highlights what should be obvious. As a REACT member you are expected to follow the letter and the spirit of the law. We are not members of a public safety agency. Don't steal from the public safety agencies, misuse their frequencies, or do other acts that will inevitably land you in jail. You will lose your REACT membership, your Team will be disbanded, and REACT will not defend you.

- Most states now have distracted driving laws. Some of these laws include a prohibition against the use of any electronic device while driving. A hand-held or mobile radio in any radio service may fit within the provisions of these laws. In some cases having the electronic device accessible in the vehicle may be considered enough for a ticket. Know what your state's distracted driving laws say – if in doubt ask an attorney who is current in traffic case law or the state police.

When you are responding as a REACT member it is important to not exceed your scope of practice. If you are a sheriff's deputy who is a qualified paramedic and a volunteer firefighter, you are not responding to do law enforcement, to provide medical care, or to fight fires. When you are in your home state, state law and commonly accepted doctrines of duty to act may demand that you step away from your REACT role and perform other services that you are licensed or certified by the state to perform. However, when you do this you are not acting for REACT. When you cross state lines, that goes away. If you perform services for which you are not licensed or certified by another state in that state's jurisdiction you may be violating the law or the administrative regulations of the state. Understand also that the fact you once were a (insert a qualification), but that qualification has expired, means that you have exactly the same standing as any other untrained and uncertified individual, namely none.

A final way to get in trouble is with firearms. REACT members are not authorized to carry or use firearms when performing emergency duties as a REACT member.

This includes weapons which you may otherwise be authorized by state law to carry concealed or to openly carry. This is a general and well-known policy of humanitarian agencies in the United States and worldwide, and is the reasonable man standard of performance that would be expected if you end up in court as a result of use of a firearm. If the situation is dangerous enough that you believe gunplay may result either do not go or request an armed law enforcement response with you.

VIII. OPERATIONAL IMPACTS FOR COMMUNICATORS

When planning for or responding to major emergencies and disasters, experience suggests that you should consider the following, whether you are planning to deploy or to work from your regular base radio station.

(1)   The most basic rules of deployment is <u>do not self-dispatch or self-deploy</u>. Deploy people and vehicles only when:

… a situation occurs that is identified in your Team emergency operations plan as requiring a deployment, and that response has been <u>coordinated in advance as a standard procedure</u> with your emergency management agency, National Weather Service Forecast Office, or other supported organization, or

… on request by a supported organization with which you have an established local memorandum of understanding or agreement, or

… on request of a government agency, or other recognized National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster member organization, if you do not have a memorandum of agreement and the situation is an imminent emergency.

(2)   Have a Team emergency operations plan that defines when you will activate for what types of events, who you will support, what types of support you will provide, how you will provide it, and what your succession to leadership arrangements are. Make sure that someone is designated as your Team's stay-at-home contact for deployed resources.

(3)   Be prepared for power outages. Have uninterruptable power supplies, backup batteries, generators, and fuel. Make certain that you have backup power capability for each device you intend to use. If you have a generator test it by running under the load of the equipment you will power at least monthly.

(4)   Be prepared for communications system outages. This includes repeaters and digipeaters, telephone lines for Internet access and fax transmission, your feedlines, antennas, and antenna towers.   Planning for communications resilience includes having back-up equipment and being prepared to use:

- Amateur Radio UHF, VHF, and HF, General Mobile Radio System, Citizens Band AM and SSB for medium to long range communications.
- Business, Family Radio System, Multi-User Radio System for short range communications.
- Network Radios, Zello, Team Speak, cellular telephones, fax, the Internet, e-mail for essentially wire based systems for long range communications.
- Alphanumeric two-way paging systems for long range communications.

(5)   Address how you will operate in the development, onset, response, after effects, and recovery phases of the disaster. Understand that food stores and restaurants of any type may not be open, vending machines may not work, bathing facilities may not exist, gasoline may not be available, and there may be no place to sleep that is dry and safe.

(6)   If you have a communications team that is deployable, expect that transportation by air or rail may not be available, and that transportation by road may require long and circuitous routes to account for damage to, or blockages of, bridges and roadways.

- Have good highway maps that show local road structures in some detail.
- Plan to refuel frequently to maintain vehicle fuel tanks full.
- Monitor fuel expenditure so that you have a very good idea of how far you can drive one way or drive and then backtrack if fuel is not available in the impact area. Do not outrun your ability to refuel your vehicle.

(7)   Be as self-supporting as possible. We used to say that 72 hours was a realistic estimate of how long it may take to set-up logistics support systems to support responders. And it was a realistic estimate of the earliest time basic supplies may be available if you are operating from your base station in a community that has been hit. However, the most recent disasters suggest that the increasing intensity of disaster events is pushing well past a 72 hour criteria, and that 10 days may be more accurate. Have a standard team equipment list that includes, as appropriate for either a deployed team or a base station:

- Credentials: REACT membership card, REACT Type Qualification Card, Position Task Book, training and qualification book
- Clothing including changes of clothing for the expected length of deployment
- Protective equipment including rain gear, gloves, hard hat, work boots, a dust mask, and a reflective vest. In some cases a personal flotation device may be a good idea.
- Food, especially food that can be eaten without cooking or with minimal preparation. Have at a minimum, a sierra cup or equivalent metal cup, and a metal knife, fork, and spoon set.
- As much water as you can carry – the standard guidance of 1 gallon of water per day per person is inadequate if you are doing physical work including setting up a station, operating in a hot environment, etc. You may need as much as 3 gallons per person per day.
- All of the components needed to establish and operate a deployed radio station – radios, power supplies, antennas, coaxial cable, guy wires, etc.
- All the tools and parts needed to make typical repairs to, or spare equipment to replace, damaged or malfunctioning equipment
- Personal hygiene and sanitation including toilet paper, soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, washcloth, and towel
- Personal medicines sufficient for the duration of the deployment.
- Sleeping bag
- Flashlight and battery powered lantern with spare batteries
- Folding chair
- Folding table
- 100 foot heavy duty extension cord and power distribution strip.
- Tent to protect an outdoor operating position from sun and light rain
- Insect repellent and high pf sunscreen
- First aid kit

(8)   Have ICS Form 213 Message forms, Radiogram message forms, station logs, net rosters, clip board, pens, and a file case to carry them – and know how to fill out the forms. Power outages may mean that your computer based logs and word processing are not available.

(9)   Practice map reading skills. Expect that in a disaster impact area that road signs may not have survived and that many landmarks may no longer be recognizable, even if you know the area well. Be able to read and navigate with topographical maps and road maps down to and including street maps and county

road maps. Have and know how to use a compass. Do not plan to rely solely on GPS – in many rural areas the local residents may give directions in terms of local landmarks, not addresses in a GPS database. Yes – people do give directions like "turn right at Charlie's store was when it burned down 20 years ago" or "turn left at the big rock."

(10)   Our minimum team is a 2 person Type IV Team. Never split up into single individuals. A single individual lacks anyone to help if he or she is injured, falls ill, need relief. A single individual has no one to watch behind them to see if the disaster is sneaking up on them, or if someone with hostile or criminal intent is doing the same thing. A single individual has no one to say "that is a bad idea." Maintain Team integrity.

(11)   Pay attention to your inner voice saying "this is stupid" or "this is dangerous.", the hairs on the back of your neck, the vague feeling that something is wrong. These are your brain trying to tell you that you are in trouble. Pay attention. Act on it. Now rather than later.

(12)   The nature of disaster work is that you may be asked to do tasks that go beyond emergency communications. Make sure you consider every request for assistance in the context of the training of your Team members, their physical condition, their fatigue level, the adequacy of your equipment for the task, and the existing hazards. Don't accept tasks for which you are not trained or if you are not physically capable of doing the task. Don't accept tasks if they will put your Team at significant physical risk.

IX. YOUR CREDENTIALS

Today identifying who is on scene from both a qualification and a security perspective is a significant concern in any major event. Today increasingly when you show up, the fact you are a REACT member means absolutely nothing. The people who manage the response want credentials, verifiable credentials issued by a recognized governmental agency or by a recognized voluntary organization. And increasingly in the volunteer world there are accepted standards as to what these credentials should represent.

So what credentials should you have and how do you prove you have them? A basic set of credentials includes:

- Drivers license or a governmentally issued photo identification card.

- REACT membership card.
- REACT issued Type Qualification Card that lists your qualification level (Type IV, III, II, or I), kind of Team (Communications, Base Station, or Message), and your duty (Leader for Types I and II, Boss for Types III and IV, or Operator for all four).
- Training and Experience Book – a three ring binder with copies (not originals) of all training certificates, a log of all major emergencies and disasters which you have worked along with your role in each, and a current copy of your Position Task Book. It is both easier and more credible to be able to hand this to the person who asks about what you have been trained to do than to try to remember and list your training on the spot.

X. REACT OPERATIONS

For any major disaster in which REACT Teams are involved or may be requested, REACT International activates two resources, the REACT Traffic System and the Incident Management Team. The Traffic System provides initial alerting and warning messages to Teams in the Region and the REACT Board of Directors. The Incident Management Team assesses the developing event and provides the best available alerting and warning information applicable to our Teams.

A note – your Team should read its e-mail. Approximately two thirds of REACT member Teams do not open any e-mail sent regarding exercises or actual disaster events. We encourage all Teams to have a current e-mail address that will be checked regularly based on the stage of the event.

Alerting (the first message that there is a developing threat) and Warning (the threat is potentially going to impact the addressed REACT Teams) messages are sent by e-mail as ICS 213 forms. In some cases they may be faxed or transmitted by Amateur Radio.

Warning messages include recommendations on the appropriate Activation Level. Social media postings with comments to the effects of all our teams in states AA, BB, CC, etc. should go on alert now may be well meaning, but are not very useful, and may be misleading. REACT has an established system of four activation levels which are broadly similar to those used by other emergency communications organizations. We provide suggested activation levels based on prudent actions for the level of the threat based on an assessment of data from a variety of sources. The standard activation levels are:

(4)   **Activation Level 4 - Standby** - an awareness level during which the Team should:

- contact their members to increase awareness of the situation,
- review the Team emergency operations plan,
- check vehicles, equipment, and supplies,
- REACT Traffic System operates a daily net – message traffic is Routine.

(3)   **Activation Level 3 – Readiness** – the first level at which response activity is initiated:

- Teams start to determine member's availability and schedules,
- a Standby Net is initiated to provide updates,
- individual members and Teams should take actions to protect life and property and the ability to communicate in the event of impact,
- the REACT Traffic System is activated for daytime coverage – message traffic is Routine and Priority.

(2)   **Activation Level 2 – Limited Activation** – the Team is now performing a basic level of emergency communications:

- Base Station Teams are activated and a schedule established to maintain coverage as needed,
- individual and Team protective measures should be complete.
- deployable Communications Teams should be ready to deploy
- REACT Traffic System is on 18 hour coverage - message traffic is Priority and Emergency.

(1)   **Activation Level 1 – Full Activation** – The Team is fully engaged in response communications:

- Emergency communications are fully operational,
- Communications Teams are deployed as needed,
- REACT Traffic System is working 24 hours a day – message traffic is Priority and Emergency.

During an activation, we use a series of template reports. They are designed to request the key information needed for specific functions and activities. Using the template ensures that information is not forgotten and that the information is always

reported in the same way, making it simpler for decision makers to immediately find the particular data needed. The variety of standard templated messages that we use to push information on developing situations to, or gather it from, Teams includes:

… For rapidly developing situations you may receive a Warning Order message that has basic information on the situation and expected taskings.

… When alerted let REACT know what resources you have and your activation level by submitting a Team Capability Report (http://reactwarning.org/ics213c). These reports allow REACT to let supported organizations know what resources we have available to support them.

… If your team is in the impact area of the event and you observe severe weather or other impacts, submit a Spot Report (http://reactwarning.org/spot-report). Spot reports should be made direct to your supported organizations. When you send a copy REACT, it improves REACT International's and the Regional Director's understanding of the event. In addition, we can forward the report on to other users.

… When activated by a supported organization file a Situation Report (SITREP) (http://reactwarning.org/ics213e). SITREPs are a daily report to keep REACT informed about the condition and status of your Team.

… If you need help, request mutual aid using the Mutual Aid Request (http://reactwarning.org/ics213g).

… If you receive a request to deploy from REACT International, that request will be made on a templated message form, the REACT ICS 213D Mission Request. The key items are:

7.B.   Event type – is this an actual response or an exercise?

7.C.   Actions required – for exercises is this just a communications drill, or for both exercises and actual events is activation and movement of resources needed.

7.D.   Response duration – for how long are you needed?

7.E.   Time needed – when are you needed on scene?

7.F.   Agency or organization to be supported

7.G.   Location – where are you needed either to stage or to do work?

7.H.   Contact person – to whom do you report when you arrive?

7.I.   Contact by – how do you get in touch with the contact person?

7.J.   Other instructions

7.K.   Support – what is available in the way of a place to stay (billeting), feeding for responders (messing), fuel, and water?

7.L.   Weather and hazards

If you receive a request to deploy direct from a supported organization with which you have a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement or from a recognized agency or organization, don't expect that the requestor will provide all of the information you need. If you receive a good deployment briefing, great – feel yourself lucky. If you do not, you can use the items on the ICS213D as a list of questions to ask.

Have a standard pre-deployment safety briefing and make certain that it is given. In disaster areas power lines may be down and still energized, trees may fall, roadways may have been washed out or undermined so that they collapse, landslides may occur. Everyone needs to be aware and have thought about the hazards that will be encountered.

When you are released or demobilized, make sure you are safe to travel. There have been cases where volunteer responders have been released at the end of a 12 hour shift, and then been involved in serious accidents on the way. In one case a search incident commander drove off a mountain road and was killed. Make sure you get a meal, have water to drink, and can take a nap if you are hungry, dehydrated, or fatigued.

When you are ready to depart to return to home, call your stay at home person or message the REACT Warning Team (use the radiogram format on the right hand side of http://reactwarning.org) so that we know that you are departing. When you arrive at home let us know you have arrived home. This trip following is a basic safety mechanism to ensure that if you run into trouble on the way, someone will know to look for you when you do not show up on time.

In the past REACT Teams did not tell REACT International in real time if they were responding to a major emergency or disaster. Today, we need to hear from you as it happens for a number of reasons:

(1)   Your reports document that you are working on a response as a REACT Team – that documentation is important to establish that REACT knows what you are doing and that you are covered by the provisions of our insurance policy.

(2)   If your Team needs help to get the job done, REACT International can try to find you the help you need. Most REACT Teams do not have the resources or ability to deploy outside their home area, but some do. We do not have large caches of equipment, but we may be able to help meet some needs. But most importantly, we are in a position to try to help, and we know where to look.

(3)   We need to know what resources are available and where they are working so that we can keep state governments, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the national organizations with which we have Memorandums of Understanding informed.

(4)   Your Spot Reports of what is happening around you can make a valuable contribution to the understanding of other agencies about the ground truth of the event.

(5)   If we know that you are activated, we are in a position to monitor your Team's status, and to initiate actions to assist if it appears that your Team is in trouble.

(6)   Data on the number of hours you have worked in important in establishing the value of REACT volunteer work (at the time of publication of this text one hour of volunteer work was worth $24.39). In addition, the value of your volunteer work may be used by local and state governments to help meet their matching contribution for federal disaster funding.

XI. MUTUAL AID

Mutual aid is an agreed upon response by one Team or Council to assist a neighboring Team or Council in a major emergency or disaster. Mutual aid relationships are established by written agreements between REACT organizations (see our course on Mutual Aid for a detailed discussion of these agreements). If a Team needs assistance during a disaster (and none of our Teams is large enough to make a substantial contribution to community disaster response in today's

environment by themselves), the Team can request mutual aid directly to Teams with which they have agreements, to their Council or Regional Director, or through the REACT Warning Team.

Teams receiving mutual aid mission requests should make every effort to provide any assistance that they can. Even one or two relief radio operators can make a significant difference. A mutual aid request tells you that your fellow REACT members need help. It is difficult to conceive of a good reason to not make an effort to support them. Remember that the next time it may be your Team that needs assistance.

XII. FITTING INTO THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

When you arrive at your deployment location, you may find an established and operating Incident Command System. That Incident Command System may look and operate like a National incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS). Or it may have local variations that make it quite different from the standard ICS. In any case there is a common sense sequence of actions to take to fit into the system as it is functioning at this incident.

FIRST – Park your vehicle in an appropriate place. If there is a staging area, follow the directions of the Staging Area Manager. If not, but there is an obvious parking lot, park where your Team vehicle or vehicles will not block entrance, exit, or lanes or be blocked in yourself by other vehicles. Do not park on the entrance road, especially one lane entrance roads – one lane roads or long driveways become instant traps from which you cannot extricate your vehicle until everyone behind you has left.

SECOND – Report to the establish incident sign-in area. This may be handled by Staging, be located in the Logistics function, in Plans, or even in Administration. Sign in your Team and your Team vehicles following the procedures in use for this incident.

THIRD – Contact your Team's stay at home contact to advise that you have arrived and are checked in to the incident. Be ready to show identification and qualification cards.

FOURTH – When directed to do so, report to the functional or geographical unit to which you have been assigned and get a briefing on the current status of the incident and your assignment.

FIFTH – Go to work.

The same basic procedure applies if you are activated to support an organization with which you have an established memorandum of understanding/agreement. Report to the location to which they direct you, and contact their point of contact for an assignment.

People often assume that, because we are communicators, REACT members will be automatically assigned to the Communications Unit. This is not necessarily where you will end up. The possibilities include:

(1) Being embedded with teams from the organization you support as internal organizational communications or to provide those teams tactical communications.

(2) Helping to staff the Incident Command Post or Emergency Operations Center Communications Unit.

(3) Serving as shelter or mass feeding site or hospital communications.

(4) Serving as relay stations in difficult terrain to maintain point to point circuits.

(5) Serving as reporting stations to observe and report developing incident impacts, including flooding and severe weather, at specific locations.

(6) Operating a point to point circuit from a hospital to a medical evacuation airhead.

How these types of assignments are managed often depends on local plans and practices. As a result, you may be assigned at the Emergency Operations Center, at an Incident Command Post, or somewhere in the field operating either as an Operations Section or Communications Unit resource.

XIII. SECURITY

Security is a significant concern in any disaster situation. There are four possible threats to your Team's security that should be addressed in your deployment.

(1)   Physical security against threats by groups in the impact area who do not want you there, because of racial or ethnic issues in the community, because you are seen as representatives of government, or for other reasons. These situations can escalate quickly, and local knowledge from the local communications organizations is important to avoiding going where you will be met by hostility.

(2)   Theft and looting. Yes, both occur in emergency situations. Do not leave your vehicles or equipment unlocked or unattended. Radios, in particular, are a theft target, but almost anything may be attractive.

(3)   Armed looters and paramilitary organizations. Groups of armed looters have started to appear and were reported in the Florida panhandle after Hurricane Michael. There are a number of paramilitary anti-government organizations and even armed civilian disaster response organizations starting to make appearances in the recovery period. Operataing in an environment with groups that display firearms and whose training, rules of engagement, level of legal authority, or intent are unknown should be an immediate cause for concern. Also of concern are residents who advertise that looters will be shot. Operating at night in areas where there is a high degree of suspicion of anyone by armed survivors is extremely dangerous.

(4)   Terrorism. Any terrorist event has a potential for attacks against computer and communications systems. Good communications and cyber security practices are vital in preserving our ability to operate in the cyberterrorism environment. However, there is also a physical threat from secondary devices and follow-on attacks intended to either increase the area and scope of the attack or to target responding organizations.   In this environment any uniformed individual is a potential target, and Team leaders should use great caution in accepting taskings for their Teams in areas on which there is an identified threat.

XIV. WHEN DO YOU NOT RESPOND?

Disaster deployments are stressful events that demand physical strength and endurance, training in your disaster duties, an understanding of safety, good human interaction skills, and the ability to deploy whether in the community or a single shift or across the country for 7-10 days. Even if yours' is a large Team, you may have only a limited number of members who can and/or are willing to deploy. Therefore, it is important to understand the basic criteria as to whether or not to agree to deploy on a disaster assignment:

1.   Can you provide the appropriate Kind (Communications, Base Station, or Message) of Team, of the needed Type (Type IV, III, II, or I), with members who are credentialed and with the needed equipment?

IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THEN

2.   Are your members trained in the specific duties for which they are requested? If the request is for a Kind and Type of Team we credential, the answer is probably yes. If the request is for people to help grid a mass casualty site and recover human remains, the answer is probably no.

2.A.   Is the request in keeping with what your members can legally do and for which they are insured? For example, REACT members are not insured to provide medical care, to direct traffic, to do other law enforcement functions, etc.   And without meeting state requirements in the impact state they can't do either medical care or perform actual or quasi law enforcement functions such as directing traffic.

2.B.   Do your members have the strength and stamina required for the tasking?

IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THEN

3.   Can you get there? Do you have the transportation resources or the funding for tickets, and can your people be away from home and jobs for the requested time? And can you get there on time?

IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THEN

4.   Is the situation reasonably safe and the risk reasonable? Being asked to drive up to the top of Pikes Peak and set up an antenna in the midst of the passage of a long line of thunderstorms is not safe. Being asked to cross a sound in a jon boat in the midst of gale force winds and 6 foot waves to set up communications on a barrier island that has been cut off in a nor'easter is not safe. Paid emergency services routinely accept assignments with compromised safety and relatively high risk because they are trained, equipped, and paid to do so. Emergency communications volunteers should not.

IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THEN

You can accept the tasking. A No answer anywhere in this series of questions means that you either have to address how to meet that requirement or that you should not accept the tasking.