

NTS Message Handling Instructions

The ARRL National Traffic System has a long history of originating, relaying, and delivering messages via amateur radio. This system includes many features that do not conform to the guidance of the Incident Command System, particularly the requirement to use "Plain Language" for all communications. Operators originating any message within the ICS system should always use plain language. However it is possible that you will receive messages that include ARRL NTS Handling Instructions or Numbered Radiograms.

Avoid using these handling instructions when originating a message.

If a message is received that already includes one or more of these Handling Instructions, those instructions are part of the message and must be included. If the message is being relayed outside the ARRL National Traffic System it will generally be necessary to translate the HX-code into plain language. There is no space for handling instructions on the ICS General Message Form (ICS form 213) but the plain language version of the instruction can be included with the message text when necessary.

According to the NTS manual: When Handling Instructions are used, one or more of the instruction codes are inserted in the message preamble between the precedence and the station of origin. Its use is optional with the originating stations, but once inserted is mandatory with all relaying stations. The following definitions apply:

- HXA** (Followed by number) Collect landline delivery authorized by addressee within...miles. (If no number, authorization is unlimited.)
- HXB** (Followed by number) Cancel message if not delivered within...hours of filing time; service originating station.
- HXC** Report date and time of delivery (TOD) to originating station.
- HXD** Report to originating station the identity of station from which received, plus date and time. Report identity of station to which relayed, plus date and time, or if delivered report date, time, and method of delivery.
- HXE** Delivering station get reply from addressee, originate message back.
- HXF** (Followed by number) Hold delivery until (date).
- HXG** Delivery by mail or landline toll call not required. If toll or other expense involved, cancel message and service originating station.

Example: NR 207 R HXA50 W4XXX 12...(etc.).

If more than one HX prosign is used, they can be combined if no numbers are to be inserted; otherwise the HX should be repeated thus: NR 207 R HXAC W4XXX...(etc.). On phone, use phonetics for the letter or letters following the HX, to ensure accuracy.