

SKYWARN NET PROCEDURES

*Some of the procedures addressed here are specific to **Skywarn Nets**, but most are the same for **any** directed net, esp. tactical nets.

These notes are an addition to the handout, **Severe Thunderstorms and Tornadoes**, and to your three **Spotters' Guides**. Be sure to refer to **them** for descriptions, definitions, etc., as that information will not be repeated here. As conditions change, the Net Control Station (NCS), Liaison Stations (LS), or the National Weather Service (NWS) will occasionally request information that is different than what is listed here. **Follow their directions!** *Semper Gumby **

NET ACTIVATION

If severe weather is expected, occasional updates should be made on the local repeaters while routine operations continue. This may and should be done by anyone who is monitoring the weather conditions.

As severe weather approaches our area, an informal weather net may be started. Monitor closely as conditions change. The telephone alerting service might be used, but only if conditions become very severe.

At the request of the NWS, or if it appears that severe weather is approaching, a formal **Skywarn Net** should be activated. This is a directed net, and the **NCS is in control**. A Liaison Station (LS) will be needed to continuously monitor both the local net on **145.350** and the regional net on **146.700**, and to relay between the local net, regional net, other area nets, and the NWS.

The **LS** will relay pertinent information to the NWS via radio to **WX4NWS**, by computer, or landline.

As the weather system passes our area, the Skywarn Net may close or may return to an informal mode. However, because Hardin is a centrally-located county, a net may need to remain in operation for relaying between the Louisville NWS and other counties and repeaters in the Louisville NWS's area of responsibility.

NET PROCEDURES

A **Skywarn Net** is a **directed, tactical** net under the guidance of the NWS. Transmit only with permission of the NCS. Keep transmissions short and leave space between transmissions. Be **brief, specific**, but **give full information**. All operators operating from home should make and save notes on any reports (including the time, in 24-hour format) for assisting with relays and for future reference. If a station is weak, all must listen on the repeater input frequency for relaying. If stations are operating from any agency location (e.g., Red Cross, EOC, etc), **tactical calls are authorized** after initial check-in. A "net preamble" normally will not be read – only the announcement that a Skywarn Net is starting, followed by a weather update.

* *Always flexible*

Priority traffic obviously is handled immediately. "Emergency" or a "double *Break*" is not used unless life or property is in imminent danger. (Of course, always be sure that you and your family are as safe as possible).

*As bad weather approaches and the net is formalized, **ALWAYS CHECK INTO THE NET**, even if you have nothing to report. The NCS **MUST** know who is available in the various parts of the county in order to relay requests from the NWS for immediate reports from specific locations. Never leave a net (or your assigned position) without permission from the NCS.*

These procedures are basically the same as with any directed tactical net. If the NCS determines that the operation can be more relaxed, or conversely if he/she needs to tighten up the procedures, **follow the direction of the NCS**. But do not get hung up on exact procedures. Report what is needed, as best you can! The NCS will assist you. If out in the field, always wear your ANSI Class 2 ARES vest and ID. And be careful!

REPORTING

During a directed Skywarn Net, **report only severe or near-severe weather, OR as the NCS/NWS directs**.

Less important reports may not be wanted and take up net time. (Cf. the 3 Spotters' Guides, etc for reporting details). No "*sunshine reports*" unless requested!

However, the NWS will occasionally request "**negative**" (i.e., "*What is happening there right now?*") reports in order to get the "**ground truth**" at a specific location and compare it with what is being seen on radar. This type of report is **especially** needed when a supposed severe weather report has been received at the NWS from the general public. So be ready. But you must be a **trained Spotter**.

Include – **what** it was, **where** it was (maps, references, coordinates needed - and we may start using some **APRS** for mobile spotters), **when** it happened (be as exact as possible), which way it was **moving**, **what happened**, and **who** is reporting it. Remain at your rig while the info is relayed to the NWS in order to answer any questions they might have. (Can you operate and spot at the same time? You need to work out how to accomplish this).

Be **brief, specific** and **precise**. It is best to "double up" on important information; e.g., "*a tornado on the ground*", or "*a funnel cloud aloft*", etc. We must be **accurate**, then **timely** (in this example, **immediate**).

If you **aren't sure** what you see, **report and describe it briefly**. This will alert the net and allow others who have a better view to assist. Spotting is difficult in this part of the country! Watch the formation, then report if you still are not sure. Regularly attend spotter classes, get lots of experience spotting, and report what you see, as directed by the NCS. Do not normally report third-

hand information, TV reports, “sunshine” reports, etc, unless requested. But make notes of anything intercepted, along with the time.

Do not call weather reports in to the local police, county dispatch, etc. They must go to the NWS for proper analysis and dissemination. Obviously, traffic accidents, fires, medical needs, etc. go to 911. If you do not have access to a telephone, the net will assist you, if necessary.

NET CONTROL STATION, LIAISON STATION, AGENCY STATIONS

The EC will **try** to be on hand when necessary to assume **NCS**. Of course, he/she will not always be available. **Any ARES operator is authorized and encouraged to start a net and assume NCS if conditions warrant.** Monitor some directed nets to get the feel of it (and check into a good net, such as the Ohio Traffic Net on 3972.5, which runs three times each day). The job of the Skywarn NCS is basically the same as that of the NCS of any directed tactical net. We need others to be available to serve as NCS.

At least one **Liaison Station (LS)** will be needed. This is not a job for the NCS. The **LS** needs two rigs, two antennas, telephone, and a fair location in order to monitor two nets and relay between them. We need several people to prepare for this service, as well as **radar observers** to back up the NCS by watching various radar displays.

At this time no one will be sent to any **served agency**. We do not have enough operators, they don’t know how to use us, and we have not been invited. This may change in the future, especially for follow-up damage or logistic nets. Because of the requirements and regulations of each agency, you might or might not be allowed to operate there (e.g., certain training may be needed such as IC 100, 200, training in their procedures, background check, etc). This is their decision. If you are ever sent to an agency’s location, a minimum set of equipment will probably be required (base-type rig, power supply, earphones, extension cord, mag-mount ant, extra coax, map, info sheets, scratch pad, ID card, HT and extra batteries, etc).

THE WALLS HAVE EARS! (Or Scanners)

Be accurate, be precise. If you don’t have anything to say, don’t say it!

This is still Amateur Radio. But many QSOs on Amateur Radio are not particularly edifying.

However, note that other people are starting to monitor us!

As an example - in Mid-Michigan, it wasn’t long before seemingly everybody was monitoring our nets! Every hospital, all FDs, Central Dispatch, many factories and businesses, etc, plus many hundreds of private individuals would (and still do) bring up the ARES repeater frequency on their scanners long before severe weather arrived. Since the Genesee County (MI) ARES normal-

ly would have 40-60 spotters deployed, plus we relayed the reports from a number of fire department spotters, people knew they could receive our Spotter reports as fast as the NWS did!

You see the dangers here. These are raw Spotter reports and are not yet official, tho they are considered pre-confirmed. But as we grow and operate properly, people will find our nets! So keep your reports accurate! Also, even during non-net and non-severe weather times, operate as tho you know what you’re doing! Our nets – or, more accurately, our day to day VHF FM operation - will be the only exposure many people have to Amateur Radio. Operate all the time as though you really know how to communicate.

FINALLY....

The NCS is in charge of any directed net; and as conditions change, the NCS and/or the NWS will make changes in the net operation in real time. Do not get hung up on net procedural details, but **get the information thru!** It must first and foremost be **ACCURATE, then timely.** And when you are not certain, report and briefly describe what you see.

If there is damage reported in our area, the Skywarn Net may transition to a Support, Tactical, or Command net to assist the EOC, Red Cross or other agency. Or, if necessary, the Skywarn Net may continue while another net begins on a different frequency or repeater. This will obviously require many more operators who are prepared for serving in the field.

CONTACTING THE EC

At this time **EC W8WN, AEC K4EK and R5 DEC WA4YPQ** are the primary contacts for the Hardin County Amateur Radio Emergency Communications.

We cannot monitor the **145.350- (T 103.5) HC ARES repeater** all the time, and also may be on **scan**. So call properly, and call several times, if necessary.

You may phone EC W8WN at home at **270-737-8361**.

The **cell phone is 270-763-3648**. You may call any time if you feel it is necessary. (Note – if your Caller ID is blocked, we may not answer. Leave a message).

For routine things, my E-mail addresses are **W8WN@ARRL.NET** or **W8WN@AMSAT.ORG**.

I am also on **WinLink2000**, but I check it only about once per day.

You must be self-alerting, as we do not have a good alerting system in place. So “*use every means at your disposal to stay informed*”, for you are not only responsible for your own safety, but now, having had Skywarn and other training, you share the responsibility for helping with the safety of this whole area.