

Radio Nets

What is a radio net?

When a group of radio operators get together over the air on a specific frequency and at a specific time and for a specific purpose, we refer to this gathering as a “Net”.

There are several “types” of nets available. Examples include: ARES (emergency), Social, and Training.

Most nets are “directed nets” which means that the net is directed by a net control operator (NCO, or net control station (NCS). Directed nets provide for an orderly means of controlling communications by channeling all communications through the net control operator and only transmitting with the permission of a net control operator.

Nets typically begin with a brief explanation of the net’s purpose and how it operates. Then the NCO will perform a check-in for operators who wish to join the net. The check-in may be done from a list of known operators (a roll call check-in), or simply by asking for operators to call in with their call sign, name, and possibly location (check-in by call sign).

When checking into a net it is customary to indicate if you have traffic for the net. Traffic consists of announcements, comments, questions, or items of interest to the group. Often traffic is handled at once after the check-in is complete and most of the participants are on board and ready to hear it.

Once checking into a net it is good practice to remain with the net until released by the net control operator. This is especially critical if you are participating in an emergency net with an assignment. If you need to be relieved, contact the net control operator and indicate that you need to leave AND provide the net control operator with the name and call sign of your replacement who will be assuming your assignment.

If an operator has an emergency situation and finds a net that is in progress, they may “break” into the net by saying “Emergency” or “Priority” and giving their call sign. All traffic on a net or on any frequency upon hearing an emergency break tag, is to immediately pause and direct their attention to the operator who called with the emergency. The frequency is then dedicated to handling the emergency until it is either resolved or the emergency traffic is moved to a different frequency.

Nets are a fun way to learn about your radio, how to use it, and receive help from other operators.

Becoming a net control operator is a valuable experience especially given the fact that when an emergency occurs, the first operator on frequency becomes the NCO until another is appointed. We all benefit from practicing listening for call signs and names during net check-ins and writing them down. This is the most important part of being an NCO to have participant info available when going back to solicit input from each operator.

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