



Lake County
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ®
Amateur Radio Emergency Services ®
1303 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048



Backgrounder: What Is R.A.C.E.S.?

Founded in 1952, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a public service that provides communications personnel to government agencies in times of extraordinary need. During periods of activation, RACES personnel are called upon to perform many tasks for the government agencies they serve. Although the exact nature of each activation will be different, the common thread is communications.

Although the FCC is responsible for the creation and regulation of RACES operations, administration of the service is the responsibility of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). FEMA is charged with the task of administrating the RACES groups because of its role in national disaster preparedness and disaster aid and recovery. Due to the structure of FEMA, each RACES group is, in turn, administrated by a local government agency responsible for disaster services. Lake County RACES (LCRACES) personnel are certified by the Lake County Sheriff's Department/Emergency Management (LCSD/EM).

The importance of RACES operations cannot be stressed enough. The Amateur Radio Regulations, Part 97, Subpart F, were created by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to describe RACES operations in detail. Although no longer issued, special licenses were issued in the past by the FCC to government agencies for RACES operations.

RACES provides a pool of emergency communications personnel that can be called on in time of need. RACES groups across the country prepare themselves for the inevitable day when they will be called upon. When a local, state, or national government agency activates a RACES group, that RACES group will use its resources to meet whatever need that agency has.

Traditional RACES operations involve emergency message handling on Amateur Radio Service frequencies. These operations typically involve messages between critical locations such as hospitals, emergency services, emergency shelters, and any other locations where communication is needed. These communications are handled in any mode available, with 2 meters FM being the most prevalent.

Other tasks that RACES personnel are involved with may not involve amateur-radio communications. For example, Lake County RACES communicators may become involved in public-safety or other government communications, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staffing, and emergency equipment repair.

Whatever need arises, trained RACES personnel are ready and prepared to help. RACES groups develop and maintain their communications ability by training throughout the year with special exercises and public-service events. When that fateful day occurs, Lake County RACES will be there to meet the challenge.

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