

CERT and ARES

A Partnership Which is Meant to be!

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My name is Samantha Henley. I was recently appointed Emergency Coordinator of the Benton County, MO Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). My first foray into the CERT program involved learning about it from Benton County's neighbor to the east, Camden County, MO. I was fascinated by the hands-on approach the group takes in training their members to prepare themselves, their families, and their neighbors for emergency situations.

I also found that our two groups, CERT and ARES, are very similar, and even overlap. Some of the areas our groups share are:

- the brightly-colored safety equipment due to identification mandates,
- the training suggested and offered through FEMA which targets some of the same areas (IS 100, 200, 700, and 800),
- the fact that many people are volunteers for both organizations, so on-site actions are uniform.

Even our procedures during emergencies are the same in some instances, such as:

- the need to take care of family first,
- the mandate to not self-deploy unless absolutely necessary,
- the requirement to put safety above all other concerns, and to make efforts to protect life and property if and when possible.

In addition, our training and activities for gaining field experience are almost identical. Both CERT and ARES groups can participate in crowd control for events in their area, such as bicycle relays, marathons, festivals, carnivals, and other such venues where large crowds of people gather. Both organizations

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can aid in search and rescue scenarios (training and actual events). CERT and ARES can man emergency shelters, providing not only extra hands, but also assessing needs, losses, and other essential information. Both can help with registration and assignments for spontaneous volunteers in emergencies, and they can provide support to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if they are overwhelmed.

Pulling these two groups together and making their training uniform is not only ideal, but increasingly important. As we have recently seen during the large-scale disasters in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and California, communication is the key.

I was very interested to learn that several of the Camden County, MO CERT members recently acquired their amateur radio technician licenses, and were eager to learn about the radios and how to use them. These CERT members immediately grasped the importance of alternative communication for their field operations, and showed great

initiative in educating and preparing themselves with this ever-growing and evolving hobby.

For CERT teams and groups that don't have their own amateur radio operators, it is ideal for them to reach out to their local ARES group and form a strong affiliation and partnership so they have access to licensed operators. Those ARES members can then be deployed to aid in communications between CERT teams and leadership, which would otherwise have little to no access to communications in true emergency situations.

Having knowledge of both organizations' structures and operating procedures is beneficial to emergency management and local neighborhoods. There is great value and opportunity for CERT and ARES to work together, both currently and in the future! **CERT**

