

ARRL and FEMA Sign Agreement: Ham Radio Is as Relevant as Ever

In March 2023, FEMA released the final version of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Information and Communications Technology Functional Guidance, which includes radio amateurs in the response ecosystem and national emergency preparedness. "The agreement is representative of the continued commitment and cooperation between FEMA and ARRL," said ARRL Director of Emergency Management Josh Johnston, KE5MHV. "Serving our country during emergencies is an important service provided by ARES volunteers and a principal purpose of our Amateur Radio Service. Our well-equipped volunteers bring their training, use of innovative technologies, and community partnerships together to serve before and during disasters."



FEMA

FEMA announced the new agreement on Twitter, stating, "We recently signed a new MOA with @arrl — establishing our partnership with licensed, voluntary amateur radio operators to support response [and] recovery efforts. We're honored to work side-by-side to meet the needs of millions in the wake of disasters."

The agreement emphasizes the importance of skilled amateur radio operators in times of crisis and the role of ARES leadership within the emergency communications space.

More than 20,000 ARES volunteers actively participate in the ARRL program. In 2022, they provided more than 420,000 labor hours of service, and saved local officials \$13.4 million in personnel costs.

Each member of ARES has specialized training in emergency communications. Many have also completed training in the NIMS in order to integrate with local officials during an emergency response.

ARRL member and former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, KK4INZ, led the agency when the previous MOA with ARRL was signed in 2014. Fugate said the agreement underscores the importance of ham radio. "By incorporating amateur radio into their emergency plans, FEMA ensures that they have access to a network of trained operators who can establish and maintain communication links when traditional infrastructure fails." He continued, "This collaboration between FEMA and amateur radio operators allows for more robust and resilient emergency communication capabilities, ultimately contributing to effective disaster response and recovery."