

## RACES/ARES

### Message Handling Tutorial

#### **Part 4 - Message Handling Training**

##### ARRL Format

Message Identification and classification: The "Preamble" of an ARRL Format message has eight elements:

First is a message number. The number is a serial number starting with number one and adding one for each message that is originated by the originating station, usually counted for that calendar year.

The second element is the "precedence". This is an indicator of the level of priority the message carries. There are four possibilities, in order of priority:

EMERGENCY is used rarely and is only to be used if there is immediate life or death urgency to a person or group of persons. This may include official messages of welfare agencies during emergency or disaster conditions which are vital to relief of stricken population in the disaster area. On CW or other digital mode, spell the word EMERGENCY out in full.

PRIORITY is used to indicate an important message with a specific time limit. This might include, among other things, official messages not covered by the emergency category, or notification of a death or injury in the disaster area.

WELFARE indicates a message that is either an inquiry as the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area or a reply to such an inquiry that indicates that all is well. Messages with the WELFARE precedence should be handled after EMERGENCY and PRIORITY messages.

ROUTINE is used on any message that does not qualify for the more urgent precedence, and is used on the vast majority of National Traffic System messages.

The third is the preamble in the handling instructions. Handling instructions are optional, and indicate actions to be taken by the delivering station under certain circumstances. For example, the handling instruction HXG indicates that delivery by toll call or mail is not required. HXE requests a reply from the addressee. There seven handling codes and they are listed in many ARRL and other publications.

The fourth is the station of origin. This callsign, along with the message number establishes unique message identification.

The fifth element, the "check" is one of the more mysterious elements of the preamble. But it really isn't that mysterious. The check is a count of words in the text of the message. When in doubt, the easiest rule to work with, is that if there is white space between two characters that indicates there is a new word. When the letter X-Ray is used like a period, it is considered a separate word. Groups of numbers such as area code, prefix and main number in phone numbers are considered separate groups so that a full phone number is three words. There are numerous rules for counting words in a message, use the "white space" rule and you won't be far off. The check is used to verify that the message was received correctly. A message that is relayed many times can become scrambled anyway, but the check

The six is the place of origin. Note that this is not necessarily the location of the station of origin, but the place where the person signing the message is at the time of originating the message.

The seventh and eight are the time and date and usually are given in 24-hour time. The time zone should be indicated, and if UTC is indicated with the "zulu" indicator, the date must be consistent.

The eight elements of the preamble give detailed information about the message.

After the preamble, there is the address. When originating a message, you should try to supply as complete information as possible. Name, address including zip code, and telephone number. Remember, the operator who must deliver the message has to fill in the blanks on the other end.

Finally, we get to the text. There are a few rules that apply to the ARRL method of composing messages. Generally, there is no punctuation in an ARRL message. The letter X, "INITIAL XRAY" is used to indicate the end of a sentence or thought. Questions are indicated with the word "QUERY". When composing a message it is a good idea to organize the text on paper five words to a line. That makes it easier to count the words to figure the check. When copying a message, write it down five words to a line and it will be easy to verify the check. ARRL Radiogram forms have the lines already set up that way, but you can create your own form that will do the same thing.

At the end of the message there is the signature. This is the name of person for whom the message is being sent. Note that this is not necessarily the station of origin.