



EMRGENCY COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

OVERVIEW: RACES, GUIDELINES & AUTHORIZATIONS

The York County Maine EMA Emergency Communications Team functions through the guidelines published in Part 97 of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rules. These rules authorize and define the operational standards for the RACES emergency communications program and their link with local and state government Emergency Management Agencies. RACES is the emergency radio service that brings trained and equipped, FCC licensed, amateur* radio operators into the official government emergency communications network to aid during natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or the threat of war.

RACES:

The Government Arm Of The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Service. [Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service]

People who are new to understanding the facets of emergency communications, sometimes confuse the government operated RACES system with the non-government emergency service, ARES, that is operated as a part of the ARRL [American Radio Relay League]. These two services are similar in the sense that each service uses HAM radio operators to form the communications nets. However, the government operated RACES emergency communications system is authorized by Federal Law. Federal law, in Part 97, binds RACES to regulated government operations in the following ways:

- RACES is structured and rigid and must be activated by a local civil defense official
- RACES stations are limited to the following types of communications:
 - 1) With a RACES station licensed to the local civil defense organization;
 - 2) Other RACES licensees;
 - 3) Certain amateur stations registered with civil defense organizations;
 - 4) Certain U.S. government stations authorized by the responsible agency to communicate with RACES stations and;
 - 5) Stations in a service regulated by the FCC when authorized by the FCC [97.407(d)].
- RACES stations are authorized to transmit and relay specific types of communications
- RACES members may transmit only messages related to:
 - 1) Impending danger to the public or affecting national defense during emergencies;
 - 2) The immediate safety of individuals, the immediate protection of property, maintenance of law and order, alleviation of human suffering and need, and combating armed attack and sabotage;
 - 3) The dissemination of information to the public from a local civil defense organization or other government or relief organization and;
 - 4) Communications during RACES drills [97.407(e)].
- RACES may be activated as an emergency is developing
- RACES is typically activated at the point when an emergency has been declared
- RACES typically remains activated immediately after an event as the government emergency management offices need communications support.
- RACES is normally shut down shortly after the emergency has cleared.
- RACES drills and tests can't exceed a total time of one hour per week. With proper authorization, such drills and tests may be conducted for a period not to exceed 72 hours and such drills can occur no more than twice in a calendar year [97.407(e)].

RACES operations are conducted by FCC licensed amateurs using their own primary license call sign and by existing RACES licensees who hold RACES licenses. Control operators for local civil defense organizations are authorized by [Part 97.407(a)].

Reference: **Extracted from ARRL's [ARES RACES FAQ \(arrl.org\)](http://www.arrl.org/ares-races-faq) "Two Flavors of Amateur Radio Emergency Operation"**

Arrl.org: <http://www.arrl.org/ares-races-faq>.

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* Note: The word "amateur" does not imply lack of communications skills. Most operators are highly skilled and have extensive careers in communications, medical, fire service, law enforcement, military, business, engineering & science.