



Florida Division of Emergency Management

TITLE:

**Statewide Amateur Radio Network (SARNet)
Operational Guidelines**

POLICY NUMBER

SOP-ITM-008

Effective: January 1, 2024

Expiration: N/A

Revised: July 10, 2023

Signature of Approval: -FOR A SIGNED COPY CONTACT FDEM TELECOM

PURPOSE

To establish a policy related to the operations and usage of the Statewide Amateur Radio Network (SARNET) and the Florida Division of Emergency Management's (Division or FDEM) involvement with said network.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all amateur radio operators in Florida.

AUTHORITY

47 CFR Part 97

47 U.S.C. § 301

DISTRIBUTION

Individuals to be Notified of This Policy and Its Procedures	Method of Notification
SARNET Public Users	SARNET Website
Florida County Emergency Management Agencies and Florida Communications Unit	Email distribution

POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

SARNET is defined as a system of ultra-high frequency (UHF) voice repeaters, owned and controlled by private Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensed amateur radio operator volunteer trustees within Florida, that are interlinked by a microwave radio network operated by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The auxiliary communications network consists of many organizations that provide various types of communications support to emergency management, public safety, and other government agencies.

Normally, the network operates in an “open access” mode that is available to FCC licensed operators. However, there are occasions when the network may also be operated in a “controlled net” mode at the direction of the Division.

GUIDELINES FOR NETWORK USAGE

To prevent interference, especially during emergencies, and create a positive and effective communication environment when utilizing an amateur radio network, amateur radio operators in Florida shall communicate in the following manner:

- Messaging should be simple, concise, and not contain inappropriate language.
- Follow and stay informed about frequency rules, local regulations, and emergency procedures.
- Maintain professionalism and respect.

In addition to knowing how to communicate using SARNET, users should know what messaging is deemed appropriate usage of the network, such:

- Social communications for the overall goodwill of amateur radio.
- Non-commercial exchange of messages.
- Wireless experimentation (Radiosport).
- For emergency management purposes:
 - Conduct regularly scheduled communications with a group of stations, called a net. Nets will be authorized by FDEM’s Office of Telecommunication.
 - Disaster and auxiliary communications support.
 - Training and exercise activities, which must be approved by FDEM.

PROHIBITED COMMUNICATIONS

SARNET users are reminded that the network reaches many repeater sites simultaneously and reasonable use is required. The network may be utilized for initial contact between stations on a calling channel for the purpose of hailing a station or to move to a local repeater or simplex frequency. However, there are communications and transmissions that are not permitted, pursuant to the FCC’s rules and regulations as well as 47 CFR Part 97. SARNET users shall not use the network for the following purposes:

- Weather advisories. Should a weather advisory message be transmitted to relay immediate life safety information, it must be classified as a tornado or flash flood **warning** as issued by the National Weather Service.
- Local club bulletin messages.
- Roadway traffic advisories.
- Other similar messages that are not part of a two-way conversation.
- Unless authorized by the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) or designee, communications between licensed operators that may otherwise be possible utilizing other local or regional resources (i.e. local repeaters, simplex frequencies, etc.).
- Other advisories, warnings, and watches issued or observed by SARNET users of a broadcast nature shall not be permitted transmission (except by the State’s Emergency

Operations Center (EOC) station during an emergency when routine networks are not available or accessible).

- Reports and bulletins, unless no other means are available, by authorized and trained weather spotters, such as SKYWARN, who may be amateur radio operators providing information to the National Weather Service.

ACCESS AND ADDITIONAL OR NEW SARNET SITES

Any individuals seeking access to a physical SARNET repeater/network site, shall make a request for access and provide reasoning for the request to the Division's Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC). If the requestor is granted access, prior arrangements should be made to ensure there are sufficient personnel on duty to assist. If the Division's Office of Communications personnel are not required to assist, advance notice should be given to preclude interruptions of unscheduled visits and to ensure necessary security measures are in place. All visitors must be escorted and screened as determined by the Division. Visitors may be required to produce identification in advance for background screening prior to approval.

All site visits shall be in accordance with policies and procedures of the Florida Department of Transportation, if applicable.

To request a new site location for a SARNET, the justification and request shall be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the SWIC. If the request is approved, the Florida Communications Unit, at the direction of the SWIC, will determine feasibility. If studies show that a new site is in the best interest of the network, the application will be filed and work will proceed based on the agreement between the FDOT and FDEM. Repeaters, links, and other radio equipment will not be added without written consent from the SWIC.

DISCONNECTION OF A NETWORK SITE

Individual interlinked repeater sites may be disconnected from the network periodically as determined by maintenance personnel of the Division and FDOT when the following occur:

- Network maintenance is required.
- Radio or control circuit interference as well as prohibited communications occur that pose a significant operational restriction to the operations of SARNET. Examples of this are unidentified transmissions keying a repeater (kerchunking), end of transmission tones, "roger beeps", and frequency-shift keying (FSK) in-band audio signaling (MDC1200, dual tone multifrequency, and similar protocols)
 - Keying a repeater is discouraged, a violation of FCC rules, and will be reported to the FCC field office.
 - End of transmission tones, "roger beeps", and FSK in-band audio signaling are discouraged but are NOT a violation of FCC rules.
- Continual or repeated packet or data radio transmissions occur.
- When otherwise requested by FDEM.

Sites removed from the network will be offline for a predetermined amount of time, approved by the SWIC, then re-enabled. Permanent removal of a site can occur if the site continues to cause networkwide interference, the local trustee cannot locate the cause, or anytime at the discretion of the SWIC.

DECLARED DISASTERS

During a declared emergency or disaster the use and operation of the network, including the priority of communication needs, will be determined by the SWIC or their designee. Nothing in this policy prevents the SWIC or their designee or the Florida Communications Unit from making a temporary amendment to the policy if doing so would provide a more positive outcome or result in an emergency or disaster communication event.

CONTROL OPERATORS AND NETWORK ADMINISTRATORS

FDEM will select and maintain a roster of network administrators and control operators. Network administrator will be provided guidance and support by FDEM in the operations of SARNET. Control operators will be provided guidance and support by FDEM in their willingness to participate as a volunteer to assist network administrators. Network administrators, authorized by the SWIC and FDEM, will have access to disable, enable, and monitor sites as well as network traffic. Control operators and network administrators report to the SWIC and the Division in a voluntary capacity.

Should the SWIC determine that there has been conduct unbecoming, lack of participation, or failure to follow established guidelines by the network administrators or control operators, they will be removed from the roster.

The SWIC shall provide an operational job aid for the network administrators and control operators on the roster. Prior to designation as a network administrator or control operator, a background screening and training may be required.

BI-ANNUAL REVIEW OF SARNET

The SWIC, designee(s), control operators, network administrators, and repeaters trustee(s) will convene a meeting at least bi-annually. This meeting will contain a review of network operations, site status, procedures, this policy, and to hear feedback from the amateur radio community. This meeting will either be in person or virtual.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Individual or Group	Responsibilities
SARNet Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and adhere to this policy.• Hold a license or an exemption from licensure from the Federal Communications Commission under 47 U.S.C. § 301, or other applicable federal law or regulation.
Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee the daily operations of the state's interoperability efforts.• Coordinate interoperability and communications projects.• Maintain governance structures.• Assemble working groups to develop and implement key initiatives.• Update and implement the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP), which outlines:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Current and future interoperable and emergency communications environment;

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Goals with specific steps for action;○ Defined mechanisms to measure achievements; and○ Process by which the state will record progress and challenges each year. |
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