

Michigan MARS Support of Civil Authorities in Emergencies and Disasters

Army Regulation 25-6

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Information Management

Military Auxiliary Radio System and Amateur Radio Program

Military Auxiliary Radio System Mission and Responsibilities

2-1. Mission

The mission of Army MARS and other DOD-sponsored amateur radio programs is to —

- a. Provide DOD-sponsored contingency communications on a local, national, and international basis as an adjunct to existing HQDA communications.***
- b. Provide auxiliary communications for DOD, Federal, National Guard, civil authorities, and local agencies as directed or requested in accordance with Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) policy and directives (see DOD Directive (DODD) 3025.18).***
- c. Assist in effecting normal communications under emergency conditions as directed or requested.***

(excerpt)

Title slide

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Opening Statement

AUXCOM envisions the many different communications systems and agencies in the state contributing to State-wide communications resources, allowing a much quicker economical and appropriate response to disasters. MARS, The Military Auxiliary Radio Service, once it has been called upon, can improve connectivity into and out of the state, as well as adding incrementally to communications within the state. Many Emergency Operations Centers already have Amateur Radio positions and some also have MARS capability.

What is MARS?

MARS is an activity of the Department of Defense, and our chain of command runs through Regions coinciding with the FEMA regions; Michigan is one of the six states in Region 5.

Who are we?

MARS members are all amateur radio operators. Some of us have made a living working with technology and some of us have made a living doing other things, but the FCC requires we know enough that it trusts us and holds us responsible to build, repair and calibrate our own equipment; years of experience make many of our members effective instructors and trainers as well.

What MARS does

Bottom line we deliver the mail. You give us the message and we send it where it's going. When the answer comes back, we can send it to your Emergency Operations Center, doorway or desk,

We are held to military standards and routinely trained in communications discipline, the use of a number of frequencies to overcome propagation problems, and the creative use of different communications modes to overcome the difficulties of propagation that cannot be met by frequency changes. To enhance security, MARS routinely uses encryption to prevent eavesdropping. In addition, we can change frequencies to avoid inadvertent or purposeful interference.

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How do you get us to help?

MARS is a military auxiliary, and there are safeguards in place to ensure the military only acts internally if States ask it to. We may look like civilians and may be civilians, but we too must be requested by the State before being brought in as part of a Federal response. The Michigan State police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) is the interface between local government and the federal government, and it starts with asking for help. Outside of normal memorandums of understanding and mutual aid agreements, localities will declare a local emergency or disaster, and ask the state for help; more, if things are beyond what towns, counties, and the state can deal with, the state will ask for a federal declaration of disaster. We saw that process in Flint.

“The Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) is responsible for coordinating state and federal resources to assist local government in response and relief activities in the event of an emergency or disaster, as well as coordinating homeland security initiatives and various federal grants.”

http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-72297_60152_66327---,00.html

Someone in MARS should be told as well, and our colleagues in the Amateur Radio emergency volunteers should be able to call or contact others in the MARS system. The Michigan Army MARS interoperability officer – just now, that’s me – is a natural place to start, but any of our officers or members you can reach will do. Let us know.

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INFORMATION AND COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS (slide 1)

Question: What is Defense Support of Civil Authorities?

Answer: DoD support, including Federal military forces, the Department's career civilian and contractor personnel, and DoD agency and component assets, for domestic emergencies and for designated law enforcement and other activities. The Department of Defense provides defense support of civil authorities when directed to do so by the President or the Secretary of Defense.

Question: How can Defense Support of Civil Authorities be activated?

Answer: There are three primary mechanisms by which DoD takes part in a Federal response to a domestic incident. Federal assistance, including assistance from DoD, can be provided: (1) at the direction of the President; (2) at the request of another Federal agency under the Economy Act, or (3) in response to a request from DHS's Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Stafford Act. The second and third mechanisms require a request for assistance and approval of the Secretary of Defense.

Question: How many requests for assistance has the Department of Defense supported?

Answer: DoD has continued its long tradition of DSCA while maintaining its primary mission of fighting and winning the nation's wars. In 2003, DoD acted on 75 requests for assistance from more than 20 civilian agencies. In 2004, DoD acted on 99 requests for assistance from domestic civilian agencies. During the response to Hurricane Katrina, DoD acted on more than 90 hurricane-related requests for assistance from civil authorities requiring a broad range of military capabilities. In addition to Hurricane Katrina, DoD acted on more than 140 requests for assistance in 2005, including responses to hurricanes Dennis, Ophelia, and Rita, and the provision of UAV support to DHS border security activities.

Question: What is DoD's role in the National Response Framework?

Answer: DoD is a full partner in the Federal response to domestic incidents, and its response is fully coordinated through the mechanisms of this National Response Framework. The primary mission of DoD and its components is national defense. Because of this critical role, DoD capabilities and resources are committed after approval by the Secretary of Defense or at the direction of the President. The provision of defense support is evaluated by its legality, lethality, risk, cost, appropriateness, and impact on readiness. When Federal military and civilian personnel and resources are authorized to support civil authorities, command of those forces will remain with the Secretary of Defense. DoD elements in the incident area of operations and National Guard forces under the command of a Governor will coordinate closely with response organizations at all levels. DoD is a supporting agency for each of the 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) and each of the 6 Incident Annexes of the National Response Framework.

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INFORMATION AND COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS (slide 2)

Question: What are the roles of the military commands?

Answer: The Commander, USNORTHCOM, is responsible for the command and control of assigned military forces supporting civil authorities in the lower 48 States and in Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Commander, USPACOM, is responsible for the command and control of assigned military forces supporting civil authorities in Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and insular territories throughout the Pacific Ocean.

Question: What role did DoD play in the response to Hurricane Katrina?

Answer: DoD's response to the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina was the largest and most rapid military deployment within the United States since the Civil War. More than 72,000 Federal military and National Guard personnel were deployed in response to Hurricane Katrina more than twice the number that deployed in response to Hurricane Andrew in 1992 (more than 29,000). These forces were directly employed in saving lives through extensive search and rescue, evacuation, and medical assistance. Other military capabilities employed during the response included 23 ships, 68 fixed-wing aircraft, 293 helicopters, amphibious landing craft, space-based imagery, night vision capabilities, port and waterway surveillance, mortuary teams, and large-scale construction support provided through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Navy Seabees. Additionally, nine DoD installations served as logistical staging areas for the delivery of supplies and as sites for Federal Medical Shelters. Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, was designated as the central collection point for foreign relief donations. During the response to Hurricane Katrina, DoD acted on more than 90 hurricane-related requests for assistance from civil authorities requiring a broad range of military capabilities. Some of these requests were approved orally by the Secretary of Defense or the Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense, and were in execution when the approval paperwork caught up later. DoD felt a sense of urgency and acted upon it, as provided for within the National Response Plan.

<http://policy.defense.gov/USDPOffices/ASDforHomelandDefenseGlobalSecurity/HomelandDefenseIntegrationDSCA/faqs.aspx#Section5>

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Closing Statement

What happens when?

No one wants 10,000 gallons of diesel or gasoline leaking through ceilings, so it's not uncommon for generators on the roof of a tall building to put their fuel tanks in its basement. This is a good safety measure - think of lightning hitting the tanks! - but if the power is already out, how can the pumps that fuel generators be run?

There are stories in the radio business, and in public safety agencies, about people having to climb many flights of stairs with five-gallon fuel cans because someone forgot power for the pumps had to be produced by the generators they supplied.

And NO ONE wants to be trapped in a building with refrigerators full of rotten food, a few closets full of cans, and no can opener. It's happened.

The economies of business and well intentioned health and safety rules are partly to blame. When the waters rise or the sky falls, so to speak, backups are often taken out by the same event they were supposed to forestall, and things we take for granted clean water, sinks, dishwashers, refrigerators, flush toilets are suddenly unavailable. Not everything can be planned for, and even if plans are made, sometimes they can't be put into place; there aren't many Porta-Potties™ on the 17th floor of a high-rise building.

It can get worse. I've spoken to MARS operators who were listening when insurgents overran a station in Ethiopia, and I've listened to a 'phone patch from the Virgin Islands to Washington D.C. pleading for US marshals to enforce order during looting after a hurricane. Some of those in the audience may remember the conditions in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. These are among the reasons we volunteer.

What's left?

Sometimes, older systems are left installed. More often, volunteers are available to plug gaps until normal communications can be restored. Sometimes temporarily turns into weeks. Sometimes there are enough volunteers to fill those weeks. Sooner or later, though, the volunteers have to be relieved or go home, and volunteers can't do it forever. Hopefully, normal emergency services and communications will be restored before the volunteers run out of energy, money, and food – or simply have to go back to work.

There are a lot of volunteers in this room; together, we can help get things done.