

## Placer ARES use of the ICS-213 General Message form

This document describes how we fill in and use the ICS-213 form. There is a separate document that describes how we read/copy a message using this form. See Groups.IO under the Files, General information folder. Look for [Basic Message Text](#).

### Introduction

1. ARES messages may be formal or informal. The ICS-213 General Message form is used for formal messages during an emergency or a disaster. It provides a written history of our traffic.
2. There are several “variants” of the FEMA ICS-213 form. ARRL/ARES has its own version. If our served agency does not have a specific requirement, we prefer to use the ARES Version. There are even multiple ARES versions used by different teams. Sacramento Valley ARES have their own (ARES Long Version) allowing up to a 100 word message body. The Red Cross and many hospitals have their own versions also. The Red Cross form is called ARC 213
3. Be flexible, especially if operating in a mutual aid situation. Don’t fixate on the form; be prepared to send/copy a long message
4. In this document, the “sender” and “receiver” are the ARES members handling the traffic. The “originator” is a member of our served agency supplying the message content, priority, destination, etc. The “recipient” is the person or position for whom the message is intended. There can be more than one pair of sender/receiver, if the message needs to be forwarded
5. Always use the most expedient method. If the message is long, contains a list or uncommon technical terms (like chemicals or drugs), consider using a digital template and transmit via WinLink
6. The recipient may need to reply to the message. Especially, if the message contained a question. When the receiver delivers the message to the recipient, they can note the reply, and pass it back to the originator

### How the sender uses the ICS-213

1. You should have several blank ICS-213 (ARES Version) forms in your “go kit”, along with blank paper, pens, pencils, etc.
2. The sender talks with the originator and fills in a blank ICS-213 form
3. Remember that all patient/victim information (like name, birthday, zip code, medical records, etc.) is private and protected by HIPPA, but it is NOT our responsibility to censor the message. See HIPPA training on Groups.IO
4. Fill in the message body first (i.e. the text of the message). We normally write 5 words across per line, and as many lines as needed. When composing a message, the originator makes the rules, but here are some of our suggestions...
  - a. Keep it short, keep it focused, no need for “please” or “thank you”

- b. Always use plain language, no Q-codes or jargon
  - c. Use only uppercase
  - d. Remember to use “X” for any periods and omit at the end of the body. The “X” will occupy one word box. Try to avoid using other punctuation throughout the message unless absolutely needed
  - e. Once the body is written, fill in the header fields
5. Specifics about the header fields
- a. The message NUMBER is assigned by you. It is used for tracking
  - b. The only valid PRECEDENCE values are EMERGENCY, PRIORITY, H&W (Health and Welfare) and ROUTINE. Note: for EMERGENCY messages use common sense. Don’t waste time with the form if you can send the message without it. Once the message has been sent, then you can fill in the form
  - c. FROM STATION is your call sign
  - d. The CHECK figures are a count of the words in the message body. Any non-blank word box counts as 1. So an “X” in a word box counts as 1 word
  - e. PLACE OF ORIGIN is where the originator is working. Like GRIDLEY SHELTER or COMMAND POST. This may be being used also as your “tactical call sign”
  - f. INCIDENT NAME is optional but should be the official name of the Incident, like CAMP FIRE. It may be used to add information
  - g. The TO and FROM fields are very important; make sure the names are spelled correctly
  - h. The POSITION is the ICS functional title. Like IC, Logistics Section Chief, etc. The POSITION may help to deliver the message (or reply) if a staffing change has occurred
  - i. The SUBJECT will summarize the message topic and be provided by the originator (keep it concise)
6. Get the originator to read/review the form and sign it, showing it’s correct
7. Check-in to the net. Pass the traffic to a receiver
8. Pro-words may be added when reading, but are not written on the form. Spell out words using standard ITU phonetics, if necessary to avoid confusion
9. Always log messages sent and received. You may use the ICS-309 Communications Log or the ICS-214 Activity Log, or your radio station log. The Log becomes part of the retained documentation
10. File the sent traffic. All ICS-213 forms become part of the retained documentation along with the logs

## How the receiver uses the ICS-213

1. You should have several blank ICS-213 (ARES Version) forms in your “go kit”, along with blank paper, pens, pencils, etc. We could practice using this form during some exercises or public service events
2. Check-in to the net. Be ready to copy traffic. Know your location’s name, like GRIDLEY SHELTER. If you hear “... *I have traffic for Gridley Shelter*”, then respond with “*(your call sign) at Gridley Shelter ready to copy*”
3. Follow Net Control’s instructions. They may read you the message, assign a different station to read you the message, direct you to change frequencies to pass the message. There might be more than one message to copy. Remember to “clear” the frequency, if you are leaving
4. Both the sender and receiver should be using the same form. The receiver’s form should be an exact copy of the sender’s (without signatures)
5. Deliver the messages as soon as you can after the forms are complete. Contact the recipient to provide the message content. It’s best to deliver the message in person, but a runner may be used if necessary. Answer any questions you can. If an immediate reply is pending, wait for the response and add the text to the form. Proceed as if you are a sender, but use the reply area instead of the message body.
6. Always log messages sent and received. You may use the ICS-309 Communications Log or the ICS-214 Activity Log, or your radio station log. The Log becomes part of the retained documentation
7. All ICS-213 forms become part of the retained documentation

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## Revision History

Version 1.0 created on 4-14-2020 by Brad Stewart, KM6RIW