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Dr. David Woolweaver K5RAV
Director, West Gulf Division
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via email k5rav@arrl.org

Dear Dr. Woolweaver:

You have received the Nacogdoches Amateur Radio Club's comments under separate cover. I respectfully present my comments.

ARES is a volunteer program under the auspices of the ARRL to assist during emergencies. Amateur radio operators (Hams) are volunteers having/taking an interest in radio communications in its various forms. Their reasonings for becoming amateur radio operators are as varied as they are.

We have all volunteered to be a Ham and many have volunteered to perform EC duties. Many want to help and devote some time, but they aren't necessarily seeking the recognition of ARES, just lend a hand. Many are not deployable beyond their local area for whatever reason, including myself.

Reading through the capabilities list from the Plan (pg3), I do not DX, basically have no desire. I do not participate in Radio Sport (been there, not my cup of tea). I don't "rag chew" haven't set up a permanent HF location, I have not participated nor am I a member of an NTS group. I have done a number of exercises and real time operations professionally and as a Ham. As a Ham, I have worked through county and regional exercises and real world events to include Hurricanes Katrina, Gustav, Ike and the Angelina River Bottom fires. We were not tasked for Harvey.

I am the EC for Nacogdoches County. Upon accepting the position, I spent the \$50.00US, purchased the manual (\$), spent the 45 or so hours on line and took the test for EC-001. Now, based upon the ARES Strategic Plan, for me to keep my EC certification I must invest about 18 additional hours of study for level 2,

plus however many additional hours of IS-300/400, if a class can be found convenient to my schedule and enroll in EC-016 for an additional 30 hours of on-line training and spend an additional \$35 plus SEC approval. All of which must be completed within one year of plan approval. This does not include the 7 additional IS courses in Level 3 which are strongly encouraged (the plan's words). At the time I enrolled in EC001, I had a more convenient schedule and much easier access to the web. Now I don't have a lot of additional hours to give to study and I don't have easy Internet access to spend those hours in study.

A requirement or value of those people that was mentioned a couple of times in the plan: are committed; a serious interest in providing volunteer radio communications support in an emergency.

How do we accommodate the casual operator? The ones who would like to assist, who understand helping in a public service environment, but have no desire to go through all of the steps, the I'm just a volunteer, in particular, all of the required training. Do I tell them, we can't use you? I then lose a ham, I lose talent, I lose a warm body and I may lose an acquaintance.

Many of the things I have read in the Strategic plan point to a skill set of a professional paid skilled cadre, which was inferred in the Sept 2018 QST.

It is a document written to a professional, corporate or governmental level, I would expect to see this out of FEMA or any other number of Governmental agencies. The PSWEG report reads like an Inspector General Report or an ISO 9XXX Quality Review.

The qualifications and level of training are reminiscent of the training and qualifications while I was training in my military specialty or any other skilled tradesman from basic knowledge, to more advanced knowledge and then to instruct or train the task: apprentice-->journeyman-->master technician/craftsman. We had specific training guides, specific training references and levels of accomplishment before certification on the task. There were also routine reviews of task qualification by well trained technicians. Of course that was my job. The training as required in the Plan is not a one size fits

all or even a one size fits most.

The Qualifications section of the Plan (pg 6) specifically states "...when deployed, would be qualified to assume *any position* (my emphasis) they were assigned to." The FEMA/NIMS training would easily put us in that particular situation. We are not the National Guard where it is expected for everyone to be cross trained in multiple functions and skill sets.

The ARRL established a MOU with the American Red Cross. It established our boundaries for the amateur radio community. We were to act as the communications liaison to the shelter manager. We were not Red Cross Volunteers, we were comm.

Make the training desirable, not mandatory. Mandatory training and you may very well lose your talent base. I already have one active club member who has bluntly stated if this plan is implemented; he will withdraw from ARES and devote his energies elsewhere. Many of the smaller clubs may fold up their ARES commitment. They will be available, but not under the ARES banner.

We have a reasonable ham base in Nacogdoches, but not a high percentage who are participating in something as simple as a regular net that meets 2 times a week or even regular attendees at the club meetings. Nacogdoches County has approximately 158 hams, the City of Nacogdoches about 125, the club about 35 and about a third of those may or may not show up to our nets. Our bench isn't very deep compared to the following: Dallas County, Texas, has a ham population of over 4800 Hams, Harris County (Houston) over 7300 and Bexar County (San Antonio) over 2800. Based on data from the QRZ database. As a side note, these 3 cities are ranked in the top 10 most populous cities in the US, with 3 more Texas cities Austin, Fort Worth and El Paso ranking between 11 and 20.

My bottom line conclusion to the ARES Strategic Plan: you're wanting a group of professional communicators from the amateur community--Hams whose *raison d'etre* is Emergency Communications, who get to wear the yellow safety vest, have the hard hat and the coiled cord microphone upon their epaulet.

We aren't professionals, we are amateurs and trying to do the best that we can.

Respectfully Submitted,

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