



Emergency Radio Club
Of Reno County

Emergency Radio Club Of Reno County

Emergency Operating Procedures

Emergency Operating Procedure

Emergency Radio Club Of Reno County

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I. Emergency Operations Plan

1. Scope

This document provides a general plan for Amateur Radio Operators within Reno County to support an emergency situation. A detailed procedure for specific emergencies (such as Storm Watch) may be defined in a separate Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The information contained in this plan is to be used as a guide. It is not the intent of this plan to limit the action of an operator who is on site and best able to assess the prevailing conditions. This plan does not grant any special authority to amateur radio operators assisting in an emergency situation.

2. Definitions

AEC	Assistant Emergency Coordinator
ARO	Amateur Radio Operator
EC	Emergency Coordinator
EOC	Emergency Operation Center (Reno County)
ERCRC	Emergency Radio Club of Reno County
ICS	Incident Command System
RNCOEM	Reno County Emergency Management
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

3. Pre-Activation Procedure

Amateur radio operators who become aware of a developing emergency situation in which Amateur Radio support may be requested, should:

- Monitor the primary ERCRC repeater frequency of 146.670 MHz.
 - Monitor the backup repeater's frequency 147.120 MHz.
 - If both repeaters are off the air, monitor the ERCRC simplex frequency 146.580 MHz.
 - Limit non-essential conversations (rag-chews) to make it easier for stations to monitor emergency traffic.
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4. Emergency Net Activation Procedure

4.1 Requests for amateur radio assistance

A request by a public agency to activate the ERCRC emergency net may be made by:

- Contacting the office of Reno County Emergency Management
- Contacting the Reno County Sheriffs Department
- Contacting any member of the ERCRC

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Note: Individual members should contact the EOC with any activation requests from public agencies.

4.2 Emergency Net Activation Approval

Steps to initiate a formal amateur radio emergency net will be activated when approved or requested by:

- Reno County Emergency Management Office
- Reno County Sheriffs Department
- Club EC or AEC
- A member of the ERCRC

Notification of Amateur Radio is included in the following disaster response plans.

- Reno County Storm Watch
- Reno County Multi-hazard Emergency Operations Plan

4.3 Emergency Net Activation Procedure.

The following steps may be used to activate the ERCRC Net.

- Notify the EC and all AEC via telephone or radio
- Activate the telephone call tree
- A NCS should announce the emergency situation and establish a directed net on the 146.670 MHz repeater.
- A simplex frequency of 146.580 MHz should be used if repeaters are off air.
- The NCS should handle any emergency traffic and then follow established procedures for assembling and controlling the net.

5. Operational Procedures

5.1 Command and Control

In descending order the situation command and control hierarchy is as follows:

1. Reno County Emergency Management
2. Served Agency
3. EC, AEC or his designee
4. Net Manager
5. Net Control station

Decisions should be made at the lowest level. Net Control should give routine direction. The EC or AEC should provide direction via net control whenever practical. The requesting agency or organization may make specific requests.

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5.2 Net Control Station and Operator

A station designated to control traffic and enforce circuit discipline within a given net. The net control station operator has the responsibility to decide what happens in the net and when it happens. Some NCS responsibilities are to:

- Make sure that highest priority messages are sent first.
- Handle the needs of net members and served agencies.
- Keep a log of all participants on frequency.
- Periodically confirm contact with each participant.
(This helps spot dead HT batteries, or other communications problems.)
- Check progress on individual assignments.
- Decide if specific traffic will be handled on the net frequency or sent to an alternate frequency.

5.3 Reno County Emergency Management Liaison Personnel

Due to the level of activity in the EOC, a liaison person should be available to monitor the emergency net operation and present relevant radio traffic to Emergency Management. Emergency Management can request additional information as necessary via the liaison. Liaison personnel are responsible to operate the secondary Amateur Radio equipment in the EOC.

5.4 Agency Liaison

There may be an Amateur Radio operator assigned as liaison with each served agency or organization. Duties would include:

- Prepare general information for participants.
- Pass requests for information or action from the requesting agency to the EOC.
- Pass collected information back to the requesting agency.

5.5 Staging Areas for Radio Operators

The ideal staging area for radio operators should be located outside the emergency area. The area should be easy to find, and near a main road leading to the affected emergency area. The location of this staging area should be selected after consultation with other groups. Amateurs are discouraged from going directly to a disaster site unless authorized by net control or by some other prior agreement. In a large emergency, the resource net control team may have a member at the staging area, checking people in and out, making sure that they have sufficient batteries, gasoline, food, water, clothing, sleeping bags and other special items.

5.6 Establishing Nets on Alternate Frequencies

Alternate repeaters or simplex frequencies may be established for specific net functions, such as traffic nets, resource nets or information nets. These alternate nets may be formal or informal (i.e. with or without a net control station). However, each net shall always designate one station to act as liaison with the tactical net.

It is important that the location and function of all participating Amateurs be known. Therefore, Amateurs should not join these alternate nets unless directed to do so by the tactical net control station.

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5.7 Resource Management

One person, preferably operating from the EOC amateur radio station console, should be responsible for handling resource requests and tracking resource assignments. The resources management person should track radio personnel and Amateur Radio equipment. Stations changing locations or duties shall advise the resource management person of their change in assignment.

Note that this function does not attempt to manage resources at a specific incident. This is the responsibility of the Incident Commander. The Amateur resource management function exists to manage the distribution of Amateur resources between multiple incidents plus agencies functioning outside an established Incident Command System (ICS).

6. Termination

Participation of amateur radio and amateur radio nets is terminated at the discretion of the requesting agency. Individual members that wish to terminate early must notify net control so a replacement operator may be assigned to their location

7. Identification

7.1 Personal Identification

There has been no standard established for identification of ARO personnel at this time. Necessary identification for entry into a restricted area will be provided by the controlling agency.

7.2 Vehicle Identification

There has been no standard established for identification of private vehicles being used by ARO. Appropriate magnetic signs or cards placed in the windshield are encouraged. While this identification will not automatically provide access to controlled areas, it will assist other agencies to identify an ARO when one is needed.

8. Security and Access

Certain situations may require Amateur Radio participation within an area or facility that has been closed to public access. In these situations, a staging area should be established outside the perimeter, but close to an access control point. One Amateur Radio Operator should act as liaison to the law enforcement officer in charge at the access control point. The liaison's function would be to identify the Amateur Radio Operators requesting entry to the closed area, and to issue any necessary identification. *For future study: What identification will be issued, where, and by whom? Would it be better (permissible) to issue identification at the staging area instead of at the access control point?*

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9. Participant Safety

While some disaster situations may require the taking of certain calculated risks in order to accomplish the mission, ERCRC members are ultimately responsible for their own safety and should take no action that would place them in jeopardy. In any questionable situation, you should pull back and report your situation to the Net Control Station.

10. Liability

Amateur Radio Operators shall assume they are operating at their own risk. At this time there is no extension of Reno County liability insurance coverage for Amateur Radio Operators or their equipment.

For future study: We plan to investigate what insurance coverage may be extended to Amateurs operating at a Government Agency's request and what conditions need to be met to qualify.

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II. Severe Weather Net

Standard Operating Procedure

1. Scope

This document provides specific procedures for Amateur Radio Operators within Reno County to support a Severe Weather Spotter network. Specific services supported are:

- Provide weather observations and damage reports from Reno and adjacent counties to Reno County Emergency Management (RNCOEM) and the National Weather Service office in Wichita.
 - Provide backup communications between Reno County Emergency Management, The National Weather Service in Wichita, and adjacent counties.
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2. Preparation

During times of severe weather forecasts

- All Amateurs Radio operators are encouraged to pay close attention to developing weather conditions
 - Monitor local media, including the "Weather Channel" and NOAA Weather Radio (162.550 MHz) for forecasts and severe weather watches or warnings.
 - If conditions indicate that severe weather will develop within the next few hours, Amateurs should monitor the 146.670 MHz repeater.
 - EC, AEC's and Amateurs that frequently serve as emergency radar operators should periodically make their availability known to the EOC on 146.670 MHz.
 - Personnel to serve as RNCOEM Liaison should be identified.
-

3. Spotter Network Activation Procedures

3.1 Network Personnel

Reno County Emergency Management uses volunteer firefighters and law enforcement personnel for the formal spotter network.

- 3.2** If ERCRC members are in the severe weather area, they should feel free to make storm to RNCOEM and/or the Net control station operator. RNCOEM will not request ARO to serve in the formal spotter network.

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4. Operational Procedures

4.1 OPEN Net Operation

During an OPEN net operation the NCS usually exerts minimal control over the net. The NCS may step in when the message volume increases or to solve problems and keep the net operating smoothly. Stations may call each other directly.

The net may be operated in OPEN session if severe weather is not an immediate threat to Reno County. This mode is used if weather related traffic is necessary but does not warrant full-time occupation of the repeater. The Net Control Station should periodically announce that the net is in OPEN session, and that stations may call other stations without permission from Net Control. During Open net sessions all stations should allow extra time, three to five seconds, between transmission to allow any station with traffic to contact the NCS. All transmissions should be kept as short as possible. Long transmissions those in excess of one minute should be moved to a different frequency.

4.2 Tactical Net Operation

- A Tactical net is used for real-time coordination of activities related to an emergency situation. During severe weather situations in Reno County the Tactical Nets will be operated as a directed net. Traffic will not normally be in formal format.
- The net shall be operated in Tactical mode when severe weather is in control shall broadcast progress or imminent. During a tactical net, the Net Control will limit traffic to weather and safety related traffic only.
- This is a formal net and all traffic flows through the designated net control.
- The NCS will broadcast minimum reporting criteria for each category of severe weather (lightning, wind, hail, damage) to control redundant reports and limit traffic to manageable levels.
- Tactical Call Signs may be used during this net.
- If predetermined Tactical Call Signs have not been established then Tactical Call Signs will be assigned by the Net Control Station as locations are "opened"
- Always let the NCS know if you are leaving the net.
- Refer to the Severe Weather Net Checklist for suggested reporting levels.

4.3 "Breaking" into the Net With Emergency Traffic

If a net is in progress and you have EMERGENCY traffic to send you may need to "break" into the net. The ERCRC VHF/UHF procedure for doing this is:

- Wait for a pause between transmissions and say **"BREAK" and your call sign.**
- The NCS will acknowledge the transmission and ask you to send your EMERGENCY traffic.

EXAMPLE: If KØABC has emergency traffic to pass the transmission would be:

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Calling Station: BREAK KØABC
NCS: GO AHEAD KØABC
Calling Station: KØABC with emergency traffic – KØABC will pass the traffic

4.4 Net Control Stations

- The Net Control Station should be established at a location outside the EOC, whenever possible.
- The NCS will broadcast minimum reporting criteria for each category of severe weather (lightning, wind, hail, damage) to control redundant reports and limit traffic to manageable levels.
- A BACKUP NCS should be established so that station can immediately assume control of the net if the NCS is unable to continue.

4.5 RNCOEM Liaison

- A liaison person should be located in Reno County Emergency Management to pass reports to Emergency Management personnel.
- The liaison person should monitor and operate the amateur radio equipment in the EOC.
- Due to the level of activity in the EOC, the liaison should present only relevant traffic to Emergency Management personnel.
- In the event the RNCOEM has not yet been activated, severe weather reports may be relayed direct to the NWS via their spotter telephone number, 1-800-367-5736.

4.6 EOC NWS Liaison

During hazardous weather events a method to pass spotter reports to the NWS office shall be established. A single contact point for compiling spotter reports shall be designated to avoid making duplicate reports to the NWS. The EOC NWS liaison person will send reports to the NWS using one of the following communication methods, listed in order of their preference.

1. From the Reno County EOC station (WBØEOC) to the NWS office station (WXØICT). Typically this will be done via the 146.820 MHz repeater.
2. Via telephone call to the NWS using the spotter telephone number, 1-800-367-5736.
3. The liaison function should utilize the most preferred method available at the time.

4.7 Spotter Reports

Severe Weather Spotter participants should report:

- Severe Weather observations that exceed the minimum reporting criteria established by net control.
- Storm Damage (if severe weather is not in progress)
- Threats to life or property

Observations should include:

- **Time** that the condition was observed, if other than current.
- **Source** of the report, if not a personal observation.
- Description of the **Condition**.

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- **Location** of reporting station (using common references) and the relative location of the severe weather condition if different than his location. This should include the estimated direction and speed of the severe weather condition, if possible.

Observations should **not** include "rain stopped here", "clear in the west", etc. reports.

5. Terminating Net Operation

- Termination of a Tactical Net will be made with the agreement of RNCOEM. Stations that wish to close their station prior to the closure of the Tactical net must notify the NCS.
 - Net control should confirm net termination with stations working designated assignments (e.g. liaisons) and with mobiles actively engaged in tracking storm cells.
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6. Storm History

Both EMA and the NWS office is interested in the history of severe storms, even after the threat of additional damage has passed. Reports can be collected by net control when in OPEN or TACTICAL mode, or submitted by individual Amateurs. These reports may be submitted by E-Spotter, or via Wichita NWS office by email through Reno County Emergency Management at bill.guy@renogov.org or tim.newman@renogov.org.

7. Safety Considerations

- RNCOEM will not request an ARO to respond to a specific location to watch for severe weather.
 - Amateurs wishing to spot storms from their mobiles are advised to operate in pairs.
 - Any mobile storm spotters operate at their own risk.
 - Only locations with near-by shelter from severe weather should be chosen, such as an accessible permanent structure.
 - **Your vehicle is not sufficient protection from severe weather.**
-

8. Preparedness

ERCRC members should prepare themselves for Severe Weather Net operation as follows:

- Make sure the radio to be used is not in danger of a lightning strike.
- When possible use inside antennas and a battery power source not connected to the main power line.
- Providing a source of emergency power for radio equipment, in case of commercial power failure.
- Extra charged HT batteries, if an HT will be used.
- Have temporary antennas and any required coaxial adapters available.

III. Winter Weather Operations

Standard Operating Procedure

1. Scope

This document provides recommendations for Amateur Radio Operators within Reno County to provide assistance to motorists during hazardous winter weather conditions. The objectives of this operation are:

- Acknowledge requests for emergency assistance.
- Summon aid for stranded motorists.
- Place telephone calls for travelers delayed by the weather.
- Facilitate exchange of weather related traffic information (road blockages, major backups).
- Manage repeater traffic levels such that requests can be handled with minimum delay.
- While the primary focus is Reno County, reports and requests from adjacent counties may be supported.

2. Preparation

Reno County amateur radio operators are encouraged to monitor the NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts on 162.550 MHz. and local news media for information about forecasts of hazardous winter weather. Monitoring local public safety radio frequencies may also be useful to learn when driving conditions are becoming hazardous.

1. Reno County Sheriff 155.580 MHz
2. EOC 154.370 MHz
3. Hutchinson Police 155.250 MHz

3. Operational Procedures

The type of operation we encourage depends on the existing conditions. The possible modes of operation are just monitoring, or establishing an OPEN or DIRECTED net.

3.1 Monitoring to provide assistance

- Any station is encouraged to monitor the 146.670 and 147.120 MHz repeaters and the simplex frequencies of 146.580 MHz and 146.520 MHz if driving conditions are hazardous.
- Monitoring would typically correspond to times when the NWS has issued a Winter Weather or Blizzard Advisory, Watch or Warning.
- If the repeater is quiet for an extended period of time, monitoring stations are encouraged to announce their availability with an announcement similar to:

"WBØEOC monitoring for motorist assistance".

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3.2 OPEN Net Operation (*See Section 4.1*)

3.2.1 When weather conditions are potentially dangerous, an OPEN net may be established. This would typically correspond to Winter Storm Warning or Blizzard conditions. The purpose of announcing an OPEN net is to control the volume and nature of traffic on the repeater to a level ensuring that assistance can be provided and weather related traffic reports could be exchanged in a timely manor.

3.2.2 During an OPEN net, the EC, an AEC or other trained net control operator establishes himself as the net control station on 146.670. Net control should:

- Announce that an OPEN Winter Weather Net is in operation.
- Announce that he is available to respond to both Emergency and non-emergency requests for assistance.
- Advise stations that the repeater is open for direct station-to-station calls, but requests that conversations on frequency be kept brief, with at least three-second gaps between transmissions.
- Request that non-weather related conversations be moved to other frequencies.
- Periodically request reports from mobiles on hazardous locations to be avoided. Limit reports to major thoroughfares if necessary.
- Periodically repeat reasonably current reports.

During periods when few mobiles are active (e.g. late at night during a Blizzard), the message traffic level may not justify an OPEN net and simply monitoring the repeater would be sufficient.

3.2.3 The purpose of this net is to assist mobiles in need, or to help mobiles select alternate routes to avoid traffic problems or specific hazards. This net is different from a Severe Weather net. Traffic is not being passed about weather observations to any public service agency, only other Amateurs. General reports such as slippery conditions or abandoned cars in the ditch are not useful unless they indicate a specific traffic hazard to be avoided.

4. Safety Considerations

1. Stations offering assistance to motorists should do so from a fixed location with land-line telephone service available.
2. Mobile stations should provide assistance via cellular telephone only if no fixed stations are available.
3. This section does not imply that Amateurs should intentionally "patrol" roads during hazardous winter weather. It is only intended to provide guidelines for giving assistance to mobiles in the course of their normal travels.

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5. Legal and Professional Considerations

Net control and other stations should avoid the direct relay of information received via Police and other Public Safety frequencies. Situations presenting hazards to passing motorists may be reported, but details of particular incidents should not be relayed over the air as it may violate FCC regulations.

Please refrain from personal observations on how stupid some drivers may be. Public Safety personnel may monitor our traffic under these circumstances. We would like to enhance their respect for our professionalism.

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IV. ERCRC Telephone Tree

Standard Operating Procedure

1. Notify Call Tree Leaders

The decision to activate the telephone call tree is made by the EC (or another ARO) according to the guidelines in the Emergency Operations Plan. The EC then contacts the call tree team leaders and advises them of:

- The nature of the emergency.
- Any special instructions.
- The telephone number or frequency where leaders can report results back to the initiator.

The call tree leader notification assignments are as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>Alphabetical Group</u> (by last name)
Tom Lappin	WØUY	A-L
Scott Neher	KCØBHE	M-Z
Dwayne Gobin	KBØFJI	(Backup)

If any of the leaders with a pre-assigned range cannot be contacted, then the backups should be contacted and requested to contact the missing alphabetical range.

2. Notify Club Members

Each call tree team leader will telephone members in his assigned alphabetical group advising each member of:

1. Nature of the emergency
2. Special instructions
3. Requests them to monitor the 146.670 repeater

3. Report Notification Status

Once an initial attempt has been made to contact all members on his list, each call tree team leader should:

1. Advise the initial call tree activator of the number of members contacted on his list and the number of members where only a message was left.
2. It may also be useful to specifically mention the status of any members with skills critical to the specific emergency.
3. This assessment will determine whether later notification attempts need to be made to achieve the desired response level.

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4. Preparation

Those Amateurs that have volunteered to serve as Telephone Call Tree Leaders should maintain a current list of all Amateurs to be contacted. At a minimum, they should retain one paper copy of the Call Tree List at their residence, and one at their place of employment. The Call Tree List is available to Planning Committee Members only.

5. Summary

1. Call Tree Activator notifies Call Tree Leaders
 2. Leaders notify members by alphabetical groups
 3. Leaders report status back to Activator
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V. Reno County ERCRC Prohibited Practices

This information is intended to provide Amateur Radio operators guidance for what actions are not appropriate when assisting in various activities.

1. Basic Guidelines

Remember that you are functioning with **no** more authority than a private citizen. The exception is if you are acting under specific directions issued by someone with appropriate authority to request a very specific action on your part.

Activities that Amateurs will never receive authority to do:

- Exceed the speed limit, or violate any other traffic law.
- Trespass on private property

Activities that are not permitted without the permission of the local authorities with jurisdiction:

- Pass through established barricades or roadblocks
- Inappropriate use of flashing/rotating lights
- Blocking, directing, or otherwise impeding traffic or people

2. Authorization for Specific Activities

It is important to understand which agencies have authority to grant any special permission for actions that Amateur Radio operators may be asked to perform. As a general rule, the authority originates from the government of the incorporated city in which that activity is taking place. If outside an incorporated area, then the Reno County Government has authority. In practice, the local fire departments or the local police (or Sheriff if outside a city) are the agencies that we need to satisfy. Reno County Emergency Management typically operates in a support role and cannot grant authority for any action not authorized by the local city or county with jurisdiction.

3. Questions and Answers

The following Question and Answer example scenarios will help clarify those actions that are not appropriate:

Question: A road has been blocked with barricades. May I drive around barricades to assess the situation?

Answer: Not unless you have received authorization from an appropriate authority. The road may be blocked because the area is dangerous, such as an unsafe bridge or a hazardous materials release. Report your observations as best you can from a position outside the barricades. Remember, becoming a victim is not helpful.

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Question: A deputy has requested that I block a road that is deemed impassible due to flooding until barricades can be erected. What authority do I have to prevent cars from passing?

Answer: You can attempt to stop cars and advise them of the deputy's request. As this action may be later questioned, we recommend that you write down the name and badge number of the officer that requested you to perform this function. However, if the motorist insists on proceeding, you have no legal authority to physically prevent them from proceeding. You are not a certified law enforcement officer, and have no legal basis to require compliance, even if an officer requested a specific action. You may call in to report the incident to net control.

Question: Can I use flashing yellow lights like those storm spotters I see on TV?

Answer: This is not an acceptable practice in Reno County.

Question: Can I use flashing lights to warn others that I am parked on the side of the road for Storm Watch?

Answer: If you think you need more than normal hazard flashers to warn others of your location, the place you picked is unnecessarily hazardous to both yourself and other motorists. Find a different place, such as a parking lot or other public place out of traffic.

Question: What if a Deputy or Firefighter questions the appropriateness of what I am doing?

Answer: Advise him of the person of authority (that has jurisdiction) that requested you to perform the behavior being questioned. If you have not received specific authority, you are on your own. Do NOT try to use an excuse that you are an Amateur Radio operator, you are affiliated with ERCRC, or even worse, that you are working as a volunteer for Emergency Management. This includes Storm Watch scenarios. None of these associations grant any authority to do anything beyond what is expected behavior of the general public. You will only damage the reputation of others if you imply that these organizations somehow endorsed the activity being questioned. Based on past experience, ERCRC leadership and Emergency Management will eventually hear about any inappropriate behavior.

Question: I've seen an Amateur Radio operator that is quite active in ERCRC exceed these guidelines. Shouldn't they lead by example?

Answer: These guidelines should apply to all people responding as Amateur Radio operators assisting in an ERCRC response. However, many of the more active Amateurs that respond to an emergency also have formal relationships with other organizations such as Fire Departments, Red Cross, Emergency Management, Civil Air Patrol, or a Medical Response team. They are most likely performing an activity for one of these organizations and are operating under guidelines appropriate for their particular organization. For example: Firefighters routinely direct traffic around an accident, Red Cross volunteers pass roadblocks to assist victims or perform damage assessment, and medical teams are allowed into otherwise restricted areas to assist victims. If you are curious, feel free to ask the Amateur about their activity and affiliation at a later time.

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4. Exceptions in Emergency Situations:

There may be conditions you encounter where your action is justified to prevent almost certain injury to people or immediate damage to property. Again, consider what action would be an appropriate response by the general public. Consider how your actions will be justified several months after the incident in a court of law. For example, if a bridge is washed out or an injured person is in the middle of the road, then your action to prevent motorists from passing will be justified, as it is an attempt to prevent almost certain injury. However, if there is only water over a road, then you will be judged as not having sufficient authority to prevent anyone from getting access to their threatened home. Remember that your actions will be judged from the viewpoint that you are a common citizen.

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