

ARRL Emergency Communications & Field Services Committee Mid-Year Report – 2026

As 2026 progresses, the Emergency Communications & Field Services Committee (EC FSC) remains focused on strengthening Emergency Communications and Field Services for ARRL members. The committee's goal is to support a more responsive, efficient, and collaborative Field Organization while encouraging broader participation from the amateur radio community.

During the first half of this year, the committee concentrated on several key priorities: modernizing programs, improving communication, expanding recognition opportunities, and providing additional support to volunteers, Affiliated Clubs, and National Traffic System participants. Together, these efforts have helped ensure that ARRL programs remain relevant, effective, and sustainable in a changing communications landscape.

Strengthening Affiliated Clubs

ARRL Affiliated Clubs remain a central focus of the committee's work. These local organizations form the foundation of amateur radio by offering education, mentoring, fellowship, and public service opportunities within their communities.

To strengthen that foundation, the committee has reviewed and updated club-related guidelines, procedures, and resources so they better reflect current operating environments and member expectations. These efforts are intended to give clubs the tools and flexibility they need to succeed in the twenty-first century.

Improved support for Affiliated Clubs helps these organizations thrive, attract new participants, and continue serving their communities effectively. This work reflects ARRL's broader commitment to strengthening amateur radio at the grassroots level and ensuring local clubs remain active, relevant, and welcoming.

The committee has completed a comprehensive review of key documents that guide ARRL clubs and the Field Organization. This work is intended to modernize policies, improve consistency, and ensure that volunteers and affiliated groups have clear, practical guidance.

Completed reviews and modifications include:

- Official Rules and Regulations Concerning ARRL Hamfests, Conventions, and Trunkfests
- Rules and Regulations Concerning Affiliated Groups
- Rules and Regulations for the ARRL Field Organization
- Section Manager Workbook

The committee has also advanced several initiatives for Board consideration:

- Establishment of the ARES Akerberg Award
- Modification of the Club Commission Program
- New Member Posting initiative

Together, these actions demonstrate the committee's commitment to strengthening volunteer support systems, improving member engagement, and ensuring that Field Organization policies remain relevant, accessible, and effective.

Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

The committee has continued strengthening ARES operations nationwide through focused education, improved communication, and targeted technology enhancements.

A key example is the yearlong *QST* article series, “*What Next?*” The series examines the evolving role of amateur radio emergency communications as government agencies continue investing in advanced, hardened communications systems. These articles have already helped many ARES volunteers to better understand how strong, productive relationships with served agencies can continue to grow, remain relevant, and support effective emergency communications in a changing environment.

The ARRL Net Directory Search system is now fully operational, giving members a more efficient way to locate nets, submit updates, and manage net information. Continued enhancements have improved the directory’s accuracy, usability, and overall reliability, making it a stronger resource for members and net organizers alike.

Development of the ARES Group Registration program continues, with new features being added to improve access and usability. A recently introduced mapping tool allows users to locate nearby ARES groups and meeting locations more quickly. As participation increases, the system will become a more comprehensive resource for members seeking emergency communications opportunities in their communities.

The committee also has continued to emphasize the importance of consistent monthly Form 4 reporting by Section Emergency Coordinators (SECs) or their designees. This responsibility has also been discussed with Section Managers, reinforcing the role they play in supporting timely and accurate reporting within their Sections. These reports provide valuable insight into ARES activity, improve coordination across the Field Organization, and strengthen information sharing. Submission rates and overall reporting consistency have shown measurable improvement, reflecting stronger engagement throughout the organization.

Quarterly meetings between Section Emergency Coordinators and the Emergency Communications & Field Services Director have also become an important part of the committee’s communication strategy. These sessions provide a regular forum for sharing information, coordinating priorities, discussing challenges, and identifying practical solutions. They also strengthen collaboration among section leaders and help ensure that ARES guidance and support remain aligned with field needs.

National Traffic System (NTS)

The National Traffic System (NTS) continues to grow and modernize through initiatives that improve digital tools, strengthen message-handling resources, and expand engagement across the amateur radio community.

- Refinement of the NTS 2.0 Radiogram Portal remains a priority. As the platform continues to evolve, additional functionality and usability improvements are being implemented to give traffic handlers more modern, reliable tools for supporting message-handling operations.

- The NTS Newsletter continues to demonstrate strong interest in message handling across the amateur radio community. Monthly readership now exceeds 3,200 individuals, reflecting continued demand for practical information, training resources, and operational updates. This growing audience strengthens NTS outreach and helps keep traffic handlers informed, connected, and engaged.
- The new NTS Challenge Coin recognition program honors qualified NTS participants who have submitted 48 monthly Section Activity Reports (SARs) to their respective Section Traffic Managers. Made possible through the generosity of a private contributor, the coins provide a meaningful way to recognize sustained dedication, reliable reporting, and long-term service to the National Traffic System.
- The committee continues to expand recognition opportunities that encourage participation and celebrate achievement throughout the National Traffic System. These programs recognize meaningful milestones in radiogram handling, net participation, traffic management, ARES response, and relay service.
- The NTS Treasure Hunt continues to generate enthusiasm among traffic handlers nationwide. Strong participation shows that the activity remains an effective and enjoyable way to build traffic-handling skills, reinforce operational practices, and promote excellence within the National Traffic System.

Together, these programs give participants meaningful opportunities to be recognized, build skills, and remain engaged in traffic handling, emergency communications, and related field-service activities.

Wrapping Up The First Half Year

During the first half of 2026, the Emergency Communications & Field Services Committee made significant progress across ARES, the National Traffic System, Affiliated Clubs, and the broader Field Organization. These accomplishments reflect the shared commitment of committee members, ARRL Headquarters staff, Section leadership, and volunteers throughout the field.

Looking ahead to the remainder of the year, the committee will continue strengthening core programs, expanding opportunities for member involvement, improving operational effectiveness, and ensuring that ARRL delivers meaningful value to amateur radio operators nationwide.

Respectfully submitted,

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