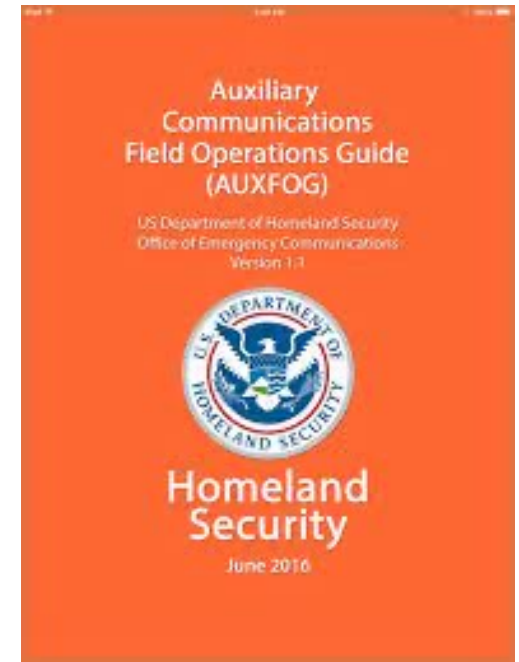# Georgia AUXCOMM
## A quick overview of AUXC in the state of Georgia

Agenda

- Review – ICS organizational structure

- ICS Communications Unit

- What is AUXCOMM?

- What is Georgia AUXCOMM?

- Georgia AUXCOMM Organization

- AUXCOMM selected missions

- How to get certified

- Relationship with ARES

- Current challenges

- Current opportunities

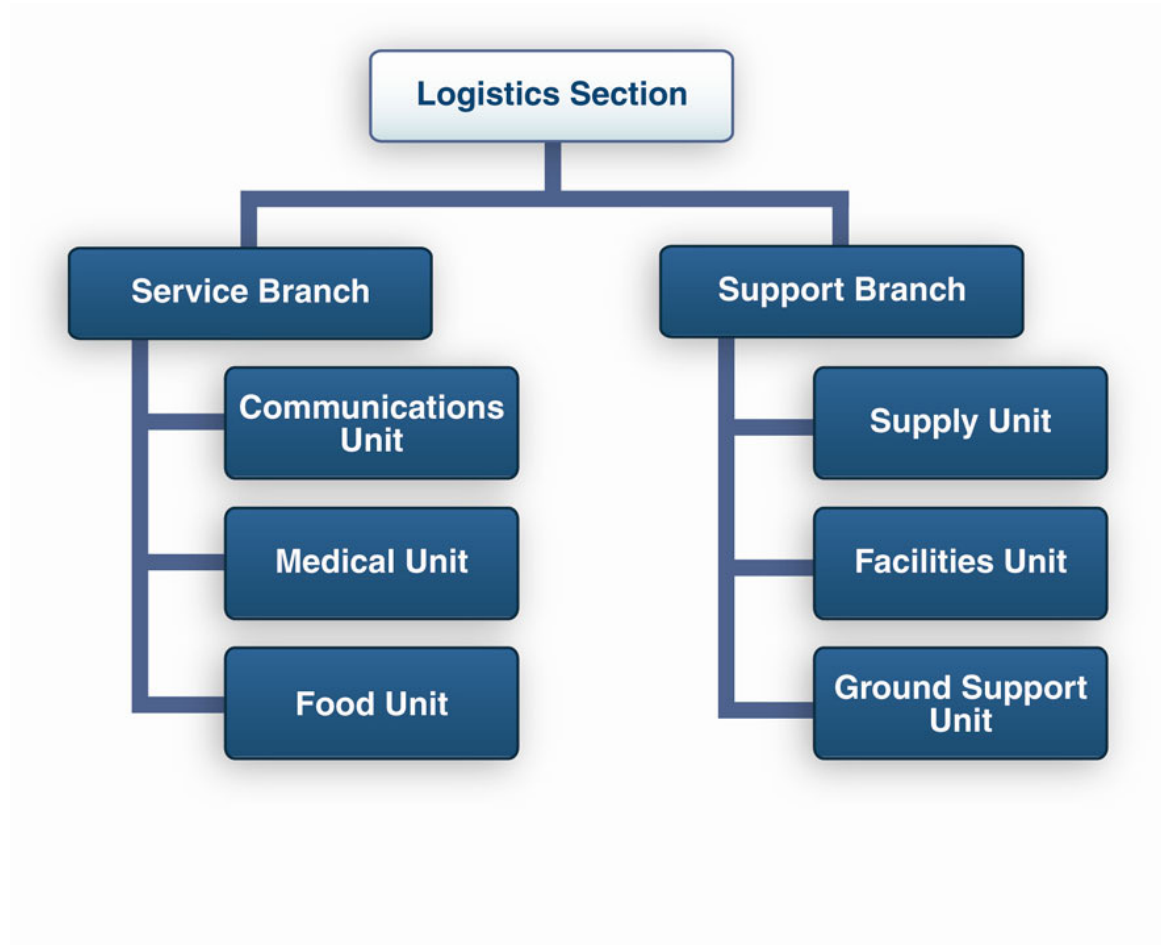- Where to get more information

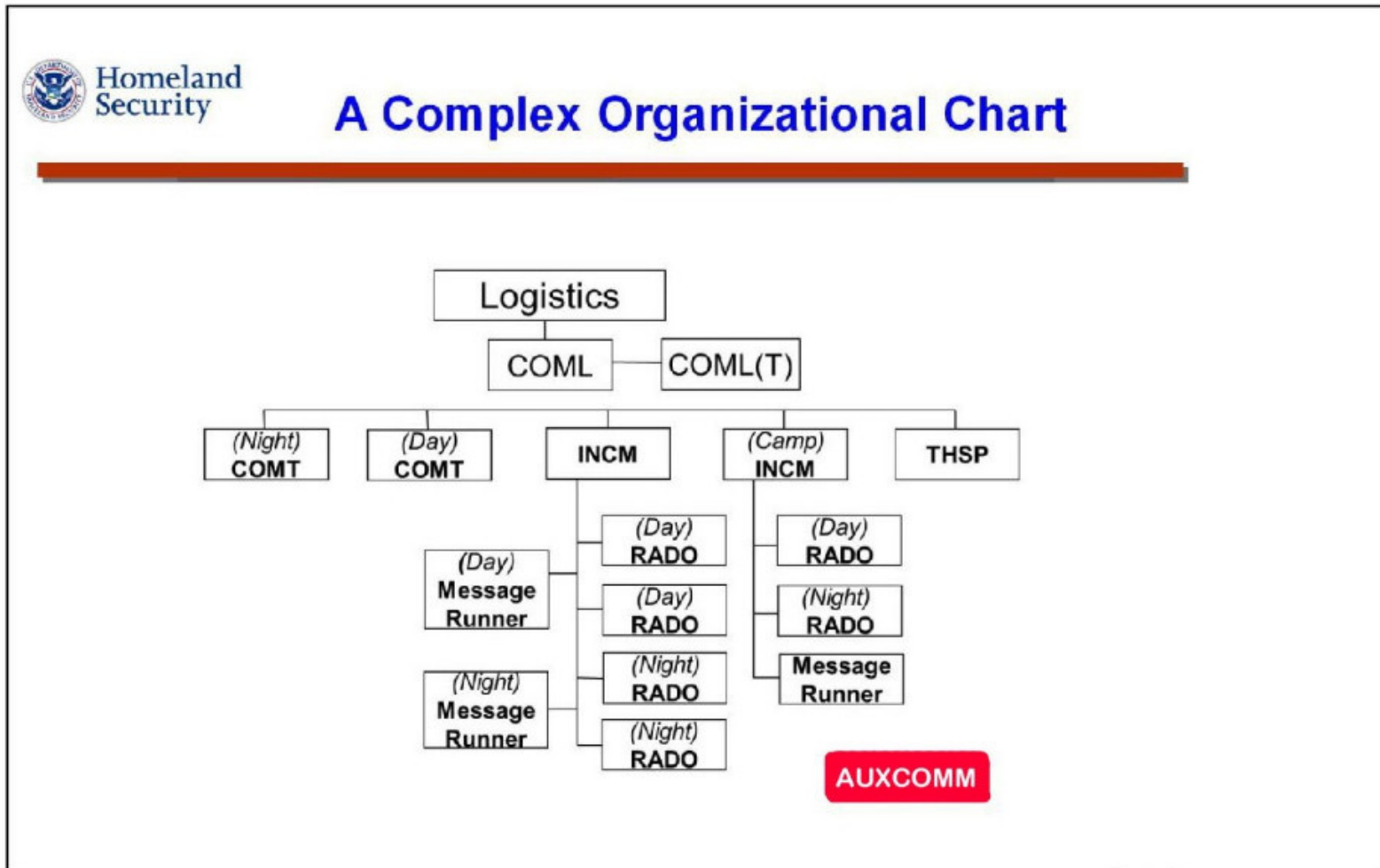# Review – ICS organizational structure
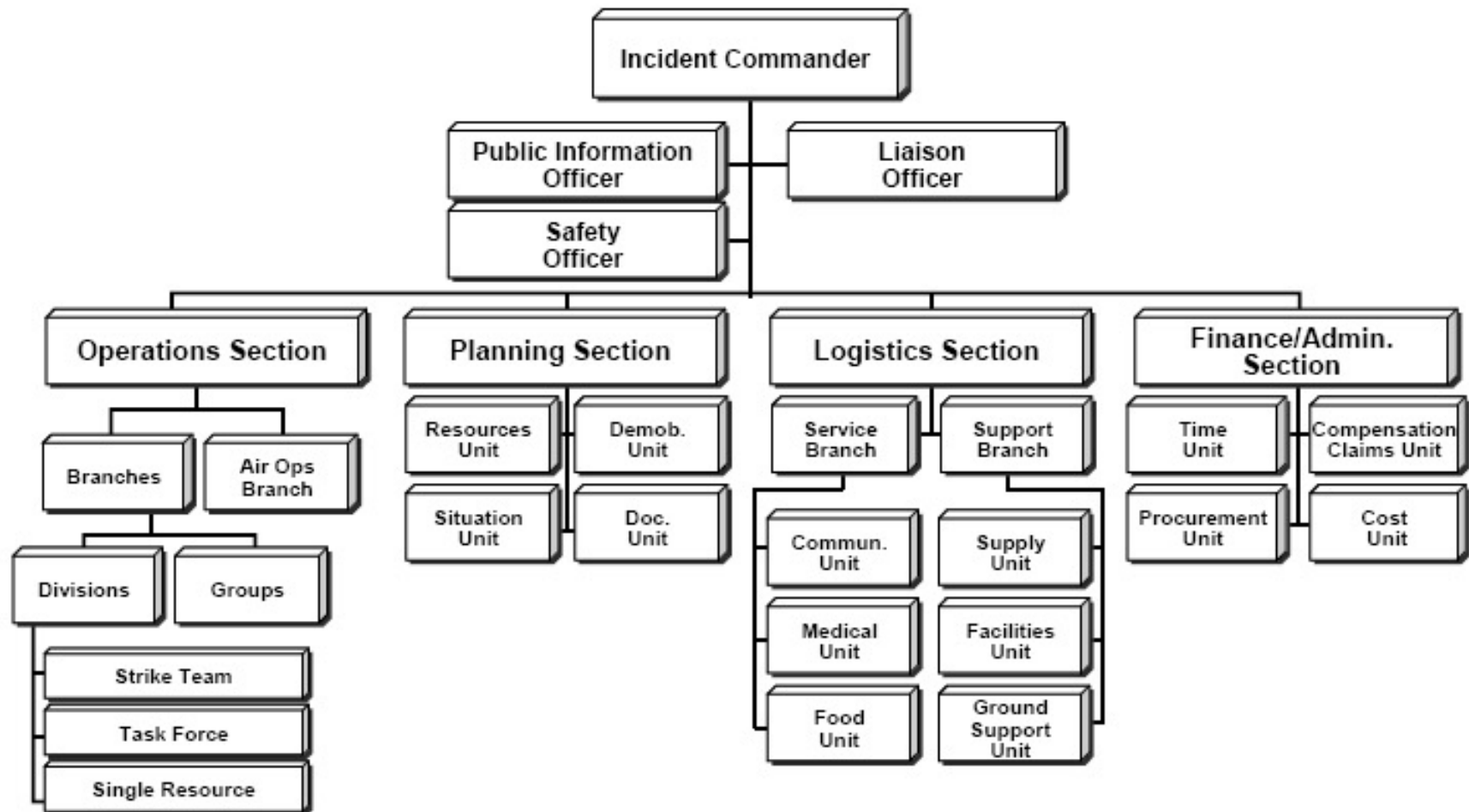
Source: FEMA ICS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System

Review – ICS Logistics Section

Source: FEMA National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) – Appendix B

ICS Communications Unit

A Complex Organizational Chart

Source: CISA COML Training Course / CISA AUXCOMM Training Course

What is AUXCOMM?

AUXC: Both the person (Auxiliary Communicator) and the Incident Command System (ICS) position used to provide auxiliary communications.

Trained Auxiliary Communicators (AUXC) are a valuable communications resource tool that can be used by local, county, regional, tribal or state agencies/organizations.

Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM) is an all-inclusive term used to describe the many organizations that provide various types of communications support to emergency management, public safety, and other government agencies or describes the services themselves. This includes, but is not limited to amateur radio, military radio, citizens band radio (CB), etc.

The AUXC PTB are the minimum tasks required to become certified (at a state level) as an auxiliary communicator.

Source: DHS/CISA Communications Unit Training Resources

What is Georgia AUXCOMM?

AUXCOMM is an abbreviation for "auxiliary communications." It was developed by OEC in 2009. The concept was to educate amateur radio entities to work and train with public safety personnel, understand the value of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) concept and the role of the communications unit leader (COML). In May 2019, the AUXCOMM position was officially recognized as part of the Incident Command System (ICS) under the Communications Unit as AUXC.

In Georgia, the AUXC position is officially recognized by the Georgia Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) to support auxiliary communications at the State Operations Center (SOC) and for official deployments requiring auxiliary communications. Georgia AUXCOMM has been formed to provide GEMA with trained communicators and provide information, ongoing training, and support for AUXCOMM operators in the state. Georgia AUXCOMM is a separate organization from GEMA but will receive direction from GEMA and provide communications support.

Source: Georgia AUXCOMM website

What is Georgia AUXCOMM?

The mission of Georgia AUXCOMM is to create a team of qualified auxiliary communicators, provide training and information supporting the Incident Command System and our primary served agency, Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

The purpose of Georgia AUXCOMM is to promote, support, and lead emergency communications activities that support community needs.

Source: Georgia AUXCOMM website and Georgia AUXCOMM Constitution

Georgia AUXCOMM Organization

AUXC MANAGER
JOHN DAVIS

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SHARES MANAGER
JIM HADDER

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AUXC OPERATIONS CHIEF
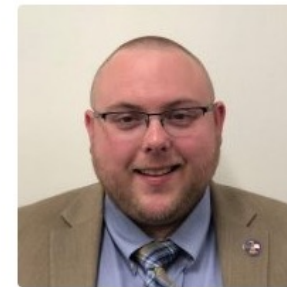**JAMES RAKESTRAW**

Email: james.rakestraw@gaauxcomm.org

DEPUTY AUXC MANAGER
JOE MARTIN

Email: joe.martin@gaauxcomm.org

AUXC PIO
JOE DOMALESKI
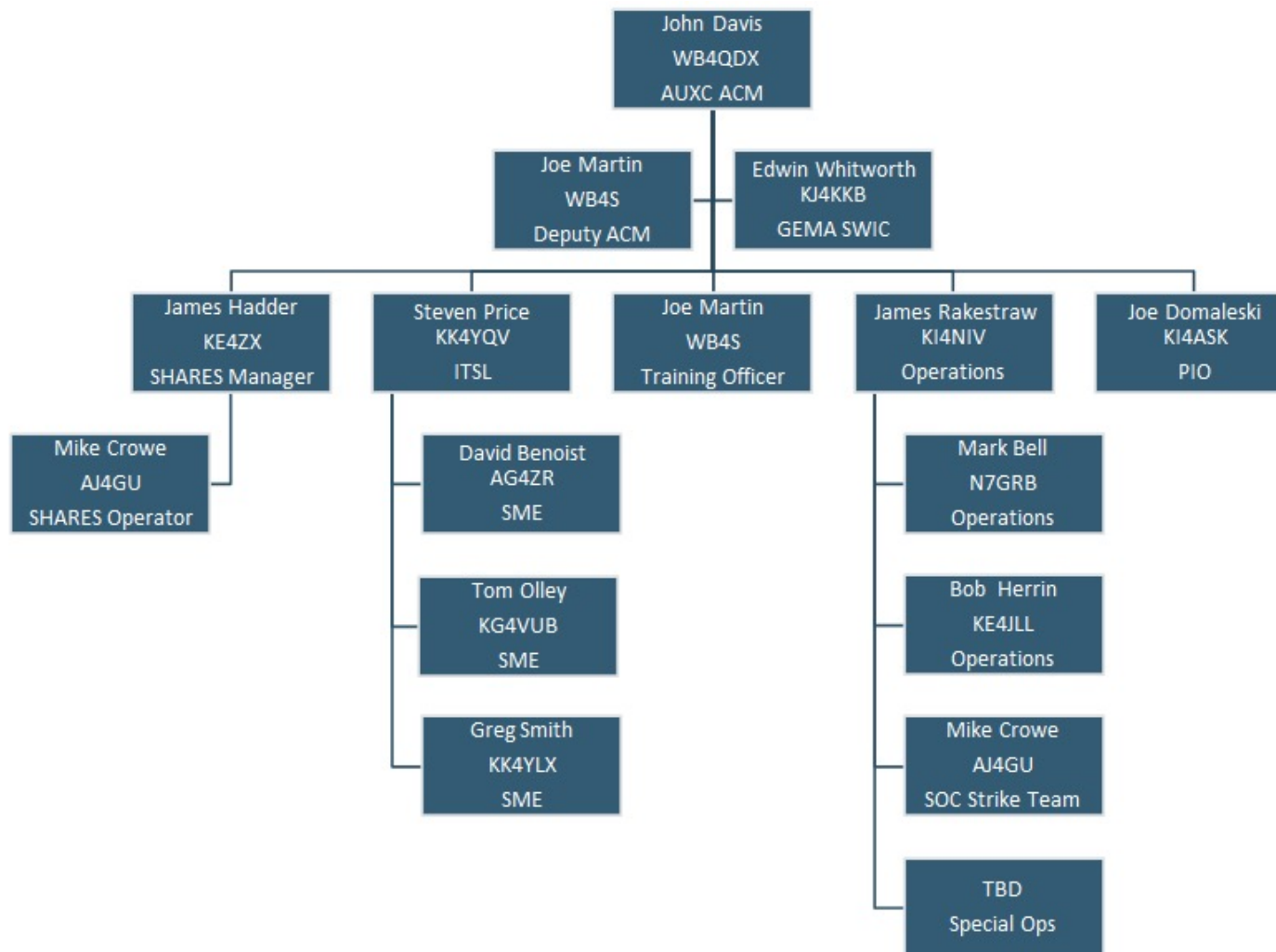
Email: joe.domaleski@gaauxcomm.org

GEMA LIAISON / DEPUTY SWIC
EDWIN WHITWORTH

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Legally, Georgia AUXCOMM, Inc. is a Georgia non-profit corporation.
Tactically, Georgia AUXCOMM is organized using an ICS as noted above.

Source: Georgia AUXCOMM website and Georgia AUXCOMM Adopted Motions

Georgia AUXCOMM Organization

AUXCOMM selected missions

- MCV Exercise (11/2020)

- Operation Inauguration (1/2021)

- Operation Clean Sweep (2/2021)

- Operation Corral (2/2021)

- Operation Vax (3-6/2021)

- Hurricane Ida (8/2021)

- Operation Southwire (9/2021)

MCV Exercise (11/2020)

- Purpose – assist GEMA and Gilmer County in planning and implementing the MCV exercise.

- Activities

    - Assist with planning and staging

    - Assist with setup

    - Assist with activities

    - Assisted with airborne operations (fixed and rotary wing)

    - Completed assigned tasks

- Technologies used

    - Satellite phones

    - VOIP systems

    - 700/800 MHz state communications

    - Amateur radio

    - Drone surveillance

Operation Inauguration (1/2021)

- Purpose – assist GEMA in radio listening post operations to note protester radio traffic on VHF/UHF in Atlanta.

- Activities

  - Identifying likely frequencies on FRS, GMRS, Amateur Radio, Business bands

  - Setting up listening posts

  - Actively listening, noting suspicious traffic

  - Logging active frequencies

- Technologies used

  - SDR receivers

  - Scanners

  - Wide band receivers

  - Frequency counters

  - VHF/UHF radios
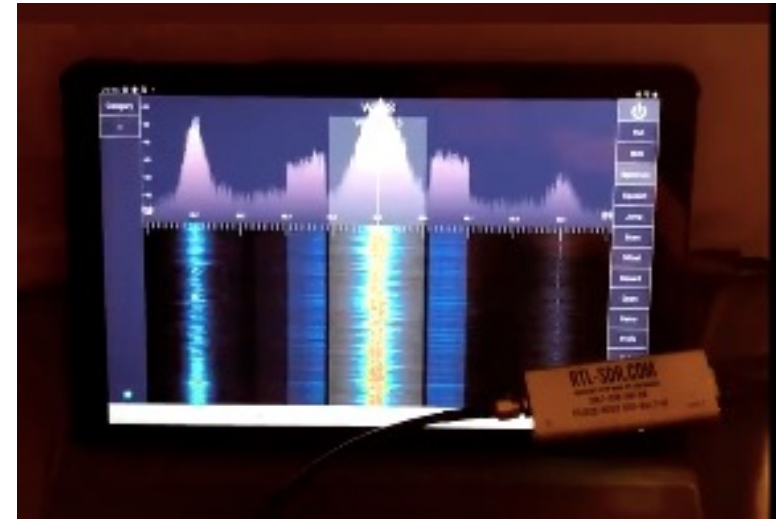
Operation Clean Sweep (2/2021)

- Purpose – assist GEMA in reorganizing radio room at SOC.

- Activities

    - Planning layout

    - Moving equipment

    - Configuring gear

    - Testing equipment

- Technologies used

    - HF radios

    - Computers

    - VHF / UHF radios

    - Network gear

    - Telephone gear
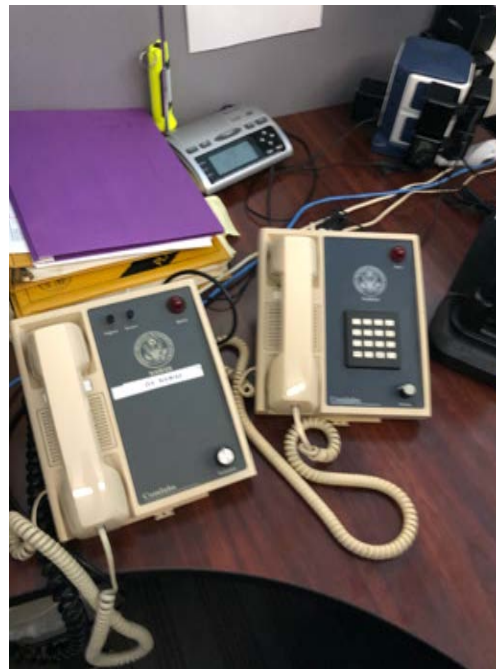
Operation Corral (2/2021)

- Purpose – assist Dept. of Corrections in programming radios

- Activities

  - Setting cache radios

  - Using programming software

  - Testing radio configurations

  - Deploying radios

- Technologies used

  - Dept. of corrections UHF radios

  - Programming software

  - Programming cables

  - Charging stations

  - Cache boxes

Operation Vax (3-6/2021)

- Purpose – assist GEMA in setting up communications at six mass vaccination sites around the state

- Activities

  - Planning communications setup

  - Deploying network / communications gear

  - Testing network setup

  - Deploying portable FM transmitter

  - Setting up Incident Command

- Technologies used

  - VOIP

  - Cradlepoint

  - FM transmitters

  - 700/800 MHz radio system

  - iPad configurations

  - Networking gear

Hurricane Ida (8/2021)

- Purpose – assist GEMA in monitoring hurricane-related radio nets.

- Activities

    - Monitor hurricane watch net on HF

    - Monitor other local radio traffic via SDR, remote receivers, and "hotspot" digital modes

    - Monitor local media sources in the affected areas

    - Monitor NWSChat (Skywarn-certified only)

- Technologies used

    - HF amateur radio

    - SDR remote receivers

    - Amateur radio "hotspots" – D-Star, C4FM, DMR

    - Internet
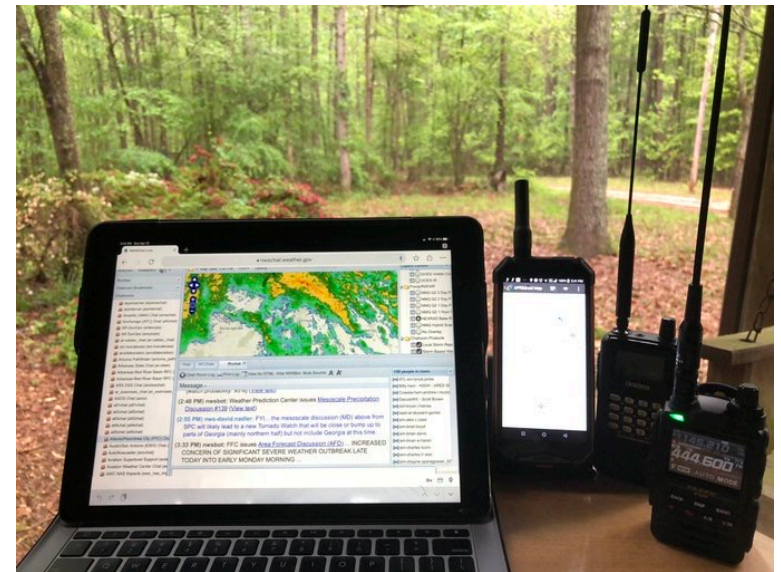
Operation Southwire (9/2021)

- Purpose – assist GEMA in setting up communications at an undisclosed location in preparation for visiting dignitaries

- Activities

  - Planning network layout

  - Implementing network design

  - Preparing network cables

  - Setting up VOIP, LAN, WAN

- Technologies used

  - Networking tools

  - Analyzers

  - Networking gear

  - Cable supplies

How to get certified

1. The first requirement is to complete the U.S. Department of Homeland Security / CISA two-day AUXCOMM class. Classes are held around the country on a periodic basis, including here in Georgia through the Georgia Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (GEMA).

2. The second requirement is to complete the National Qualification System Position Task Book (PTB) for Auxiliary Communicator (AUXC). The PTB must be signed off by the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC).

Source: DHS / CISA / GEMA

Relationship with ARES

Most AUXCOMM amateurs are also a part of a local ARES organization but have chosen to obtain additional training and certification to be able to support the GEMA State Operations Center (SOC) or to be deployed as a part of a Communications Unit for an official event. AUXCOMM volunteers often use a broader range of skills and equipment beyond amateur radio. AUXCOMM is a national-level certification that is managed at the state-level.

ARES members will always be needed at the local level to provide support to their local served agencies and will communicate with AUXCOMM operators at the SOC to provide valuable information during events. ARES members tend to use amateur radio equipment and technology. ARES is a program developed and owned by the ARRL.

In short, AUXCOMM tends to have a state mission while ARES tends to focus on a local mission.

Both organizations work together to provide communications assistance that supports community needs. AUXCOMM is NOT designed to replace ARES.

NOTE: As of 2019, the ARRL has added AUXCOMM training as an optional task for Level III of the ARES STANDARDIZED TRAINING PLAN TASK BOOK v. 2.1.1.

Source: CISA / GEMA / ARRL

Current challenges

- There is a misconception that AUXCOMM is going to replace ARES. The opposite is true, ARES is a much larger organization. ARES is usually a feeder program into AUXCOMM. The current and incoming ARRL Georgia Section Managers are both AUXC certified. The incoming Section Manager is also an AUXC instructor!

- It is true that some states (and local jurisdictions) are requiring ARES members to become AUXC certified in order to properly operate in an ICS structure. ARRL dictates standards for ARES. FEMA/CISA & local states dictate standards for AUXC. This has caused some confusion.

- Regrettably, there have been some very public disagreements on what it means to be state deployable – ARES & AUXC. Officially, AUXC is the official program and it's the discretion of GEMA on whom to deploy. This is being resolved with an MOU between AUXCOMM and ARES which is under development.

- Attending the AUXC class is a pre-requisite for getting the certification. Because of COVID and state funding challenges, the last class held was fall 2019. It's hard to build interest in a program that doesn't have regular classes. We are planning on an early 2022 class.

- There is some understandable "training fatigue" among amateur radio volunteers. AUXC is designed for people who want to take their training to the next level. It is not competing with ARES, but is complementary.

- AUXCOMM is a state program with a wide geographic coverage area. It's been challenging to conduct exercises and develop teams at the local level.

NOTE: This above is my personal opinion and is not an official position statement of AUXCOMM

Current opportunities

- AUXCOMM is a much-needed program. It finally provides a nationally recognized credential for emergency communications volunteers across the US.

- AUXCOMM finally answers the question, "where does amateur radio fit in ICS?" In the past, the THSP was a "catch-all" ICS position. Now, amateur radio has a place on the organization chart.

- Because AUXCOMM is managed at the state-level, official credentialing (when needed) is provided for formal deployments. The credentials are recognized vs. the "informal badges" that ARES traditionally provided that had no official recognition.

- AUXCOMM exposes emergency communicators to operations at a higher level than is normally available to a local ARES deployment. One gets to meet and interact with wide variety of agencies.

- AUXCOMM provides an opportunity to learn about a vast array of communications equipment and technologies that are not available to amateur radio – trunking systems, public safety radios, satellite phones, complex networking gear, and other communications technology.

- AUXCOMM has momentum and energy that can give a much needed "booster shot" to the amateur radio community by giving it official recognition beyond the ARRL.

- *RECOMMENDATION – Get AUXC certified, even if you have no intention of deploying at the state level. It's good to have just as most of you get Skywarn and, perhaps, CERT certifications.*

  NOTE: The above is my personal opinion and is not an official position statement of AUXCOMM

Where to get more information

- Georgia AUXCOMM website – https://gaauxcomm.org

  - FAQ

  - <mark>Sign-up for newsletter (official monthly communication)</mark>

  - Links to social media, including YouTube Channel

- CISA / COMU page - https://www.cisa.gov/publication/comu-training-documents

  - Complete AUXC training slides online

  - Training material for other COMU certifications – COML and COMT

  - Copy of the AUXC PTB

- ARRL / ARES page - https://www.arrl.org/ares

  - Official ARES Manual

  - Official ARES PTB

- Georgia AUXCOMM 60m Training Net, 2nd Sunday of the month at 1400 local on 5.403.5 MHz, USB

- Georgia AUXCOMM Training Meeting, last Thursday of the month at 2000 local via GoToMeeting

- Georgia AUXCOMM Facebook page