An Overview of the SCCo ARES/RACES Credentialing Program

Michael E Fox, N6MEF

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Environment and Purpose of Credentialing

- Credentialing in technical fields (usually called certification) has been used for 20+ years to verify an individual’s ability
- Credentialing is becoming more prevalent in Emergency Management, especially where mutual aid may be utilized
- The State of California has a credentialing program for EOC positions
- Served agencies are increasingly aware of credentialing and are expecting team members to be credentialed
- SCCo ARES/RACES has had a credentialing program for Mutual Aid Communicators since 2009
- We can better support our served agencies by expanding our credentialing program to all operators (not just MACs)
Comparison of Program Design vs. new State of CA EOC Credentialing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State of CA</th>
<th>SCCo ARES/RACES Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started</td>
<td>Recently</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>46 EOC positions</td>
<td>Field, Net Control, Packet, Shadow, HF*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>III, II, I</td>
<td>IV, III, II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICS/SEMS Training</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position-specific training</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge testing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience required</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-bounded</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recertification</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* HF Credential is TBD
Goals for Enhanced SCCo RACES Credentials

• Provide opportunities for everyone to earn credentials
  – No need to take an assignment outside one’s home city

• Expand number of credentialed operators who can respond to a given location
  – In-city operators plus MACs

• Use proven (10 years) methods from the MAC program to identify qualified people

• Make it easier to predefine requirements for any assignment
  – Served agencies know what to ask for

• Reassure served agencies of assigned operator’s capabilities

• Maintain consistency and integrity of credentials
  – Objective; no “gotchas”; no “gimmes”
**Former:**

SCCo ARES/RACES MAC Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Field Comms</th>
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<td>Packet III</td>
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<td>HF III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type V</td>
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Current:
SCCo ARES/RACES Technical Credentials

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<tr>
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<td>Packet III</td>
<td>Shadow III</td>
<td>HF III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type V</td>
<td>Licensed Amateur Radio Operator w/DSW (no credential)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Type IV Communicator credential has essentially the same as the former entry-level Mutual Aid Communicator, minus the requirement to commit to mutual aid support.
## Comparison of Capabilities by Credential Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type V</th>
<th>Type IV</th>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Type II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipped for up to 12 hr shift</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond anywhere in jurisdiction</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Net Usage Procedures</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Damage/status reports</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle low traffic levels</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Party Traffic</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-to-medium traffic levels</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage problems</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped w/ mobile radio, ant</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Nets, Cross band</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-to-high traffic levels</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Comparison of Assignments by Credential Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Details</th>
<th>Type V</th>
<th>Type IV</th>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Type II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Net Usage, Status Reports</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parades, festivals, races</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Checkpoints, flood watch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Damage surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CERT team support (simple rprts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Party Traffic (Low/Med)</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CERT team support (complex rpts)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schools, shelters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jurisdiction EOC (smaller)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hospitals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allied health facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fire stations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Party Traffic (Med/High), 2 nets</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Med Health Joint Ops Ctr (MHJOC)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jurisdiction EOC (larger)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• County EOC</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Credential Requirements

- Prerequisites
  - Communicator Type IV: administrative
  - Other credentials

- Training
  - ARES/RACES Training
  - Emergency Management Training (FEMA, CSTI, SCCo OEM)

- Participation / Experience
  - Nets, exercises, public service events, emergency incidents

- Equipment
  - Standard, credential-specific

- Knowledge
  - Radio/station familiarity, managing problems

- Operator Skill
  - Peer-reviewed performance during an exercise/event/incident
Evaluations

• Communicator Type IV performance is evaluated by the local jurisdiction’s Radio Officer

• All other credentials: evaluated by Credential Evaluator
  – Has same or higher-level technical credential
  – Also holds a credential in how to perform fair, objective evaluation

• Sounds scary, but isn’t
  – Operate your position as normal; evaluator is a silent observer
    • May inject additional traffic, depending on the situation
  – Follow SCCo ARES/RACES Performance Standards & Best Practices
  – Net operations, message passing, paperwork according to our training
  – Do it right and pass
  – If you mess up, study and practice more, then try again
Credential Award Process

• Track progress
  – Each candidate is responsible for tracking their own progress

• Obtain sign-offs
  – Communicator Type IV: local jurisdiction Radio Officer
  – All other credentials: Credential Evaluator

• Submit documentation
  – To the Credential Program Manager or Evaluator

• Records review and update
  – By Credential Program Manager or Evaluator

• Notification
  – Typically by e-mail

• Print and laminate updated wallet card
Endorsement Overview

Builds on minimum technical credentials
Adds agency-specific requirements
Endorsements

- Identify resources that have the required RACES credentials *AND* meet the additional, agency-specific requirements

### Additional Agency-specific Requirements
- Administrative
- Training
- Experience
- Other …

### Prerequisites
- Technical Credentials (F#, N#, P#, S#, H#)
- Other Endorsements
Existing Endorsements

• Mutual Aid Communicator
  – Communicator Type IV credential, plus ...

• County Fire Station Radio Operator
  – Field Operator Type III and Packet Operator Type III credentials, plus ...

• County EOC Radio Operator
  – Net Control Type III or Packet Operator Type III
  – Mutual Aid Communicator endorsement, plus ...

• County EOC RACES Unit Leader
  – Net Control Type II and Packet Operator Type II
  – County EOC Radio Operator endorsement, plus ...
Wallet Card

- Each credentialed operator can print and laminate their own wallet card
- Card expires annually, at end of January
- Reprint each February 1
- Keep with other ID badges from local jurisdiction and county
- Use when checking into resource net or staging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herman Munster W6XRL4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credentials:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Comms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF Comms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Comms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endorsements:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Aid Comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station Radio Oper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC Radio Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC RACES Unit Lead</td>
</tr>
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Program Materials
Program Materials (online tour)

- Web page
  - https://www.scc-ares-races.org

- Program Handbook
  - Takes precedence over all other documents

- Forms
  - Credential Records
  - Endorsement Records
  - Approved Activity Requests

- Wallet Card
Getting Started

Communicator Type IV Credential
Communicator Type IV

1) Read the Program Handbook
   - The whole thing!
   - It’s one of the requirements
   - Familiarize yourself with what’s in there and how to find it
   - Most likely answers any question you might ever have
     • Remember, we’ve been doing this for 10+ years!
Communicator Type IV

2) Go back and review details of Communicator Type IV
   - Most active hams are probably 90% of the way done already!
3) Track your progress
   - Radio officer (or designee) initials each completed requirement
   - Note: Credential Record form is abbreviated version of requirements. Always refer to the handbook for the details.
Communicator Type IV

4) Sign the back
   - Commit to minimum participation level and to operating according to standards
   - Radio Officer also signs
For Radio Officers: Communicator Type IV

- Similar to former MAC program
- Verification process is now written out in one place – easy to follow instructions
Communicator Type IV Award

• Submit to the Program Manager
  – Credential Record (checklist)
  – Training certificates
  – Recommendation from local jurisdiction Radio Officer
  – (BTW, this is all in the Program Handbook!)

• Program manager will
  – Review records
    • Check training and participation records in activities database
  – Update activities database
  – Notify candidate

• Candidate prints and laminates wallet card
Helping Others in Need

Mutual Aid Communicator endorsement
Mutual Aid Communicator Endorsement

• In most cases, impacted cities will be short of resources
  – If your city is impacted, you’ll appreciate help from others
  – Can you offer the same help to others?
  – If not, that’s OK. But if you can, please do!

• It’s easy:
  1. Earn Communicator Type IV (or higher) credential
  2. Agree to accept assignments anywhere in the county
  3. Register as SCCo DSW
  4. LiveScan and background check by SCCo Sheriff
  5. Recommendation from local jurisdiction Radio Officer
  6. Radio familiarity check by Credential Evaluator
What’s Next

Field Operator Type III and more ...
Next Step: Field Operator Type III

- Fully independent operator; 3rd party messages

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Type V</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Communicator Type IV**

Licensed Amateur Radio Operator w/DSW (no credential)
... and more

- Broaden your capabilities ... or specialize ... or both!
- Check desired endorsements for prerequisite credentials

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<td>Type IV</td>
<td><strong>Communicator Type IV</strong></td>
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Support and Program Management

• Credential Discussion Group
  – Group: https://scc-ares-races.groups.io/g/credential
  – Info: https://www.scc-ares-races.org/discuss-groups.html

• Input and improvement to the program
  – Monthly SCCo ARES/RACES Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting
  – 4th Thursday of the Month @ SCCo EOC

• Program Manager
  – Submitting credential/endorsement records or training certificates
    • Use the program manager e-mail alias
  – Questions ... but first
    • Check the program handbook
    • Ask on the Credential discussion group (if not personal/private)
Action Items for Existing Credential Holders

- Communicator Type IV
  - G606 “Intro to SEMS” is new requirement
  - Existing MACs have until 12/31/2020 to complete this class and submit certificate from CSTI (State of California)

- All Type II credentials
  - IS-800 “Intro to National Response Framework” is a new requirement
  - Existing Type II credential holders have until 12/31/2020 to complete this class and submit certificate from FEMA
Most Common Questions

• Why the 2-year time limit for completing requirements for a given credential?
  – We are constantly improving our procedures, training, documentation
  – To be relevant, training and experience needs to be current
  – Note: No time limit on EM courses (FEMA, CSTI, SCCo OEM)

• How/where do I submit records, training certificates?
  – The program manager e-mail alias
End

For more info:
https://www.scc-ares-races.org/credentials