

**The Los Angeles Fire Department Auxiliary Communications Service**  
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The City of Los Angeles Auxiliary Communications Service (LAFD ACS) is a group of volunteers managed by the Los Angeles Fire Department. ACS is a part of the City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department (LA EMD) and is recognized by the State of California Emergency Management Agency (CAL EMA) as a Disaster Service group. They are trained amateur radio operators who are unpaid communications volunteers, not sworn Fire Department personnel. They assist during communications emergencies or as extra "eyes and ears" for the LAFD.

Within LAFD ACS, the group has the advantage of prior training, practical drills, and logistical planning with the guidance of the Los Angeles Fire Department before an actual communication emergency occurs. Members are committed to the ACS program with many volunteer hours in training exercises, bringing their own technical expertise and increasing their knowledge in how to conduct themselves and how to operate efficiently and successfully in the event of a communications emergency. ACS also has the flexibility to set up a communications network without reliance on any existing systems or the need of any additional equipment, even if there were a failure of the primary communications systems.

LAFD ACS is self-contained and ready to be deployed on a moment's notice. ACS members are trained to use their own equipment, which they maintain at their own expense. This prevents wasted time during a communications emergency in issuing and training volunteers on the use of equipment that they may be seeing for the first time on the day of the emergency. This also decreases logistical problems of storing and maintaining emergency communications equipment for volunteers, although members are trained in the use of Fire Department radios as well as their own.

During a communications emergency, ACS would be used to assist in the following manner:

**1. Communications breakdown between LAFD's Metro Dispatch / Department Operations Center (Metro/DOC) and Fire Stations.** ACS operators would be deployed to Division, Battalion or local Fire Stations to establish communications links between Fire Personnel, CERT Radio Communicators and the general public to LAFD's dispatch and operational command center (Metro/DOC). Reports or instructions from Metro/DOC to the fire station would be relayed through ACS (or from the fire station to Metro/DOC). The general public would also be able to report any emergencies to a local fire station. An ACS member would then relay the information to Metro/DOC or to an established incident command post. This would release fire personnel tied to a fire station and allow them to respond to emergencies in the field.

**2. Temporary communications to temporary sites.** ACS operators would be deployed to temporary shelters, evacuation centers, command posts, staging locations, or similar locations where communications were not previously established, were unreliable or constantly moving/portable. ACS would relay information to and from the site(s), Metro/DOC or incident command centers until a solid communications link could be established.

**3. Extra "Eyes and Ears".** During a disaster, fire units would be patrolling local neighborhoods for any emergencies. If an emergency were discovered, they would stop and handle the situation. This would leave the rest of the area "unpatrolled." ACS members would be deployed in mobile units or at stationary observation locations and report back situation reports or emergencies to LAFD's Metro/DOC or incident command center. This would also allow fire personnel to respond to emergencies in the field with the confidence that the area is still under observation or "under patrol" for other emergencies.

**4. Link for the General Public.** ACS members would be deployed to local neighborhood groups Emergency Operations Center (EOCs) or other public locations and act as a communications link between the public and LAFD's Metro/DOC or incident command post. Any emergencies reported by the public would be relayed to the LAFD.

**5. Link for LAFD's Volunteer Support Services (LAFD VSS), Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) or other volunteer groups.** The Volunteer Support Services group (LAFD VSS) provides logistical support to LAFD personnel in the field. Support Services duties may include providing rehab and feeding of personnel at various incidents or delivering vehicles, portable lighting, generator power, equipment and/or supplies. ACS members would be deployed with LAFD VSS members and help with communication between cross-trained VSS members (who are amateur radio operators), VSS units in the field and with the LAFD Supply and Maintenance depots. ACS members would also participate with CERT Communication teams deployed to assess the needs and situation of their local neighborhoods. ACS members would act as a communication link between CERT teams in the field and LAFD's Metro/DOC or incident command posts. CERT teams would be directed more efficiently in the field with commands from the local CERT ICs and emergencies in the field could also be relayed back to the LAFD faster and more efficiently.

**6. Link to outside agencies.** ACS members would be able to contact other agencies, including California State Office of Emergency Services (OES), via amateur radio stations between agencies.

**7. Extra "Eyes and Ears"** (yes, a repeat). During an event involving large public groups or where communications between field units and/or command posts were needed, ACS would be deployed on foot, mobile or stationary to observe and report situation reports, emergencies, or other logistics health and welfare issues from the field to other field units, LAFD's Metro/DOC or incident command post. ACS was deployed successfully at the Hollywood Christmas Parade and the March of Dimes' "WalkAmerica" walk-a-thon in Griffith Park as extra "eyes and ears."

LAFD ACS is a growing and dynamic program that the Los Angeles Fire Department has created as an asset in assisting LAFD, CERT, VSS and other groups in the volunteer community and to assist the people of the City of Los Angeles in time of crisis.

More information about the LAFD ACS program may be found on the web at:

<http://www.lafdacs.org>