

RELAY STATION PROCEDURES

Operating a relay station is one of the most difficult tasks in emergency communications.

A relay station serves as a “go between” between two stations who can not copy one another, making absolutely sure that the meaning of the messages that you are relaying is not changed – and do so quickly, usually under stress.

All Hamnet members should be proficient in performing the relay function.

You may find yourself being assigned as a relay, either as a planned assignment or a on the spur of the moment one. Relay may not be your original assignment, but with the loss of a repeater due to whatever reason, the need for someone in the right position to facilitate communications between stations that can not copy one another. Relays may be needed either within –band or cross-band or even cross-mode. For instance, it may be necessary for you to monitor an HF net and relay important traffic to a Joint Operation Centre which does not have HF capabilities. You may need to pass formal messages from a voice net and send them into a cw network to enable the messages to be forwarded to the JOC.

It is absolutely essential that the established rules be followed, because relays often involve life and safety issues.

The objective is not just to ensure that all relayed traffic is accurate as received, but also to operate as efficiently as possible, to enable a “transparent and professional” function of the net as seen from the agency’s view. Always keep these two points in mind at all times: **accuracy and efficiency.**

The indication that a relay is required is when the message or call is not acknowledged by the called station.

When this occurs the relay station should be prepared to offer immediate assistance. This is done simply by identifying your station and saying ‘relay’, i.e. ‘zs5xyz relay’ and waiting for the control station to acknowledge you. When required to operate as a relay station, you must listen to all traffic on the channel or frequency and anticipate when a relay may be required. If operating conditions are poor, or the signal of the transmitting station is weak, or when the control has to request more than two or three repeats of the message, then the relay station will assist the control station.

Relay Procedures

If there are no assigned relay station, then all members on the net should be prepared to offer assistance. Whenever you hear a relay request, often simply 'relay please', respond with your callsign.

1. Alert the called station to listen: "Control, standby for relay from ??"
2. Tell the calling station, "zs5xyz ready to relay"
3. Copy down the message, with all details on the Hamnet message form.
4. Read back the traffic to the calling station: "I copy (then read the message), confirm?" Wait for the confirmation: "(message) confirmed, over." Or make any corrections which need to be made, read the corrected message back Also request the number of words in the message.
5. Call the called station and ask if they copied the message: most of the time they will have, which is part of the reason for the read-back. If they did not copy the message, then repeat the message. The called station should also do a read-back and ask for confirmation.
6. If there is a reply, handle it in the same way, but in reverse.

There may be occasions when one of two parties can hear the other, but not vice-versa.

This often happens during daytime, the short-path HF operation on 40 metres when there are 'short skip' conditions, or when the band is fading or when one station is mobile and the other station is fixed. If one of the operators indicate that this is happening, tell them that one side of the QSO will be direct, and that you will relay the other half. This reduces the potential for error.

Remember: your job as a relay is to TRANSMIT, not TRANSLATE!
Send all traffic exactly as written, even if you think it makes no sense to you.

Always transmit exactly what is said, not what you think is meant.