GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
COMMUNICATIONS RESERVE UNIT
Frequently Asked Questions

- What is Cal CRU?

The Communications Reserve Unit (CRU) is an all-volunteer public safety EMergency COMMunications (EMCOMM) organization operating under the Auxiliary Communications Service Program (ACS), providing support to the Tactical Communications Branch (TCOMM) of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

- How is Cal CRU organized?

Like the Cal OES structure, Cal CRU is made up of the Headquarters and three Administrative Regions (Coastal, Inland and Southern). Within those Administrative Regions, we have six Mutual Aid Regions (MARs), each served by a CRU MAR Officer and an individual CRU Team. At the Headquarters with the State Operations Communications Center (SOCC) is the CRU SOCC Officer. While each CRU Team is normally responsible for their individual geographic area, common Cal OES equipment, standards and training enable CRU Team members to respond to any emergency situation anywhere within the State of California. The SOCC Officers responsibilities are separate and statewide.

- How many members serve the Cal OES organization?

The Cal CRU program currently has about 70 members statewide.

- Who administers the Cal CRU organization?

Cal CRU is administered by both career, as well as volunteer management. For day-to-day operations, a career Cal OES Tactical Communications Chief manages the overall Cal CRU program as the CRU Program Administrator. The Chief CRU Officer, appointed by the Cal OES Tactical Communications Chief and reporting to the CRU Program Administrator, serves as a volunteer CRU Program Manager. Cal OES Tactical Communications Assistant Chiefs provide advice and support for the CRU Teams within their respective Regions and Headquarters.

During an activation, CRU members fall under the management and supervision of a Cal OES Tactical Communications Assistant Chief for the geographic Region or the Headquarters.

- How does Cal CRU respond in an emergency?

Once activated, most often by the mutual aid system, CRU members provide tactical, logistical and support communications for the Cal OES Tactical Communications Branch. A requesting agency working with one of our Divisions (Law Enforcement, Fire & Rescue, and Regional Operations) and Tactical Communications Chief(s) will make a determination

whether TCOMM assets can meet the requirements of the requesting agency. If so, team members are alerted and polled for their availability. Mission activation or deployments may last from one, to several days.

Once activated or deployed, Cal CRU Teams may establish voice, digital or satellite communications to and from the scene or jurisdiction of the incident, provide needed local or regional communications or backhaul communications from the incident scene or jurisdiction to the Cal OES State Operations Center or a Regional Emergency Operations Center. This is accomplished by the establishment of an emergency communications infrastructure, such as the installation and operation of portable communications repeaters, satellite voice and data equipment, and interoperable public safety radio capability.

Team members may also provide communications support to our Cal OES Regional Emergency Operations Centers, to Mobile Incident Communications Support Units, or to the Cal OES State Operations Center (SOC) in Sacramento or at the Regional Operations Center (REOC) at Los Alamitos.

- I live in a remote area of the State. Can I still become a Cal CRU member?

Perhaps. If you are an Amateur Radio Operator with a General class license or higher, you may become a CRU Relay Station or Net Control Station from your home on the California Emergency Services Network or the federal SHAred RESources (SHARES – *a separate license required*) High Frequency (HF) Radio systems and responsible for passing voice and/or date traffic and information during an incident within one or both of these systems. We generally recruit a few Relay Stations or SHARES Gateway stations from each of our Mutual Aid Regions (MARs).

However, for working within the MAR's, we request that Cal CRU regional staff members live within approximately a 75-minute drive from one of our Cal OES State facilities (where equipment is staged and Communications Centers have been established) to be able to participate in training, meetings and exercises, and to have the ability to respond with those Cal OES assets to an incident in a timely manner.

- Is Cal CRU considered a RACES organization?

Yes. Cal CRU is the State RACES function for State facilities and agencies (CalTrans, Dept of Health, etc.) within California. Cal CRU was originally created to allow all Californians with an interest in providing Emergency Communications the ability to join us and contribute. This is something that was not considered possible under Federal RACES guidelines. While under RACES guidelines, members must be currently licensed Amateur Radio operators. We saw the need for others who were not members of the Amateur Radio community, but who had an interest in Emergency Communications, with an organization that could utilize that interest within the State.

- I'm part of an existing EMCOMM organization within California. Is it part of Cal CRU?

No. Cal CRU is responsible for providing communications, between agencies and facilities at all levels within the state. Public safety registered EMCOMM organizations (RACES, ARES, Communications Reserves, CERT, or VOAD) in individual cities and counties are responsible within their respective jurisdictions, working in support of their public safety entities within that level of government.

While Cal CRU may provide advice, support, and mutual aid to other EMCOMM organizations within California, Cal CRU has no operational authority or jurisdiction

over those organizations. For example, a RACES organization in Santa Luisa County is responsible to the Santa Luisa County Emergency Manager, and not to the State. Cal CRU does provide assistance, support and mutual aid if requested. We will assist with the development of City and County RACES or EMCOMM Plans.

For more information, refer to the 'RACES Guidance Book' under *Publications and Guides* on the Cal CRU website at:

http://www.acscalifornia.org/docs/out/out.ViewDocument.php?documentid=1368&showtree=1

(When asked to Login, please click the "**Login as Guest**" link just under the "Sign in" button)

- What prior background or experience do I need to join?

A good working knowledge of Public Safety communications systems, including voice, digital and satellite, is a plus. While many of our Cal CRU members are Amateur Radio operators, having *a Ham Radio license is not a requirement for membership*. Cal CRU members also should have a good grounding in the knowledge of how the Internet works, as well as digital network connectivity, digital radio and computer systems.

- What classes may I complete prior to joining Cal CRU?

Any of the below:
Cal CRU members must complete the following, within 90 days of taking the oath, as Team members:

ICS 100 – *Introduction to the Incident Command System;*
ICS 200 – *ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents;*
ICS 700 – *National Incident Management System (NIMS);*
ICS 800 – *National Response Framework;*

Cal CRU Team members can and have also received specialized training as Incident Communications Technicians (COMT), and Communications Unit Leader (COML).

Cal CRU Staff Leadership Officers are required to complete FEMA's *Professional Development Series,* and receive training in Leadership and Management skill building.

Information on these free online courses is available at www.training.fema.gov

And, new staff must complete Defensive Drivers Training within two weeks from:
www.dgs.ca.gov/orim/Programs/DDTOnlineTraining.aspx

- How often does Cal CRU respond to emergencies?

Like any other agency providing emergency response, how often Cal CRU responds depends on how often we are requested. While Cal CRU training continues on a regular, ongoing basis, Cal CRU Team activations and deployments will depend on the particular needs of the incident.

Cal CRU members train for all communications emergencies, including earthquakes, floods, fires, or other incidents where the Public Safety communications infrastructure has been compromised. Team members also participate regularly in communications

exercises and simulations, and conduct regular training, testing and maintenance on Cal OES vehicles and equipment in order to maintain readiness.

And while Cal CRU may be requested during an emergency, we do not self-deploy.

- Where may I receive more information on the Cal CRU program?

Visit the Cal CRU website at **www.acscalifornia.org**. Click on the *'Recruitments'* banner at the top of the page. When you click the link, you'll be directed to a form asking for your name, email address and callback number.

Once submitted, a Cal CRU Leadership Official will contact you and further explain the Cal CRU program.

Thank you for your interest!