

SEC Bulletin 003 – 1/4/26

First, I want to wish all Colorado ARES members a happy new year. We are looking forward to great things in 2026. This year we will focus on improving both our training and communications capabilities and at a statewide level we will be providing opportunities to practice our core capabilities. I look forward to working with you and for you in 2026.

Second, following this morning's Colorado ARES 80m SSB net, I had an interesting conversation with Tim, K0CKR. He was asking how ARES members know if an ARES district had launched and HF communications plan. His question was in response to the recent high wind event where several repeaters in the northern Front Range area were off the air due to power outages.

I appreciated Tim's questions and comments, and that conversation got me thinking. For those of us who live in more populated areas of the state, we can get complacent with our communications capabilities because we have many local repeater options. For most ARES districts, using VHF or UHF FM repeaters comprises 90% of our communications.

In the event of a failure of our primary and secondary communications methods, it is important to know and to practice using other radio modes. Instead of having to figure out what to do next, as emergency communicators we should know what are the next best communications options.

This is the reason why we will be learning about and practicing NVIS over HF frequencies. NVIS is only one alternative repeater option. Another alternative is VHF and UHF simplex comms, and it is important that individual districts understand local simplex coverage and how to conduct a simplex net.

Other options could be Free DV over HF, 6m and 10m FM simplex or SSB using ground wave propagation, and several others. The point here is that our ability to communicate must extend beyond only using repeaters; we need to investigate and practice alternatives to being repeater dependent.

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