

UPDATED: Thursday, July 18, 2024

A Statement from Region Two Army MARS Director:

Why do we need your support?

The MARS program mission deals with various communications issues in BAD DAY or WORST DAY events. One of the key civil affairs functions is to gather requested information required by the DoD. Depending on what is required determines how we will attempt to get the data. An assumption is made that we do not have commercial power, INTERNET, or phone capability. If those services are available, we can use them, but we often need information from Ham Operators and others that are on the ground to assist us.

Many of you have worked with us over the last 2-3 years, answering many questions and have been extremely helpful in cross-training with us. We use the term cross training as I release ORDERS and REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION on HF ARMY MARS DoD Frequencies. Our MARS members then switch hats, put on their Ham Radio Hat, and transfer the MARS ORDERS into RADIOGRAM 213 messages. The Hams we contact then gather the information and send it to us so that we may consolidate the data and send it up to HQ. That is the primary process and rationale behind the Civil Affairs Mission.

Why is it helpful to have the information in the requested format?

Our information must be in a proper format so we must often take your data and rearrange it accordingly to answer the questions we are being asked by HQ. We are now moving into a higher level of training whereby we will be providing the questions in a specific format, and you will be able to answer the questions in the format we require. This procedure speeds up the process dramatically. The format we use is known as a "STRIP FORMAT" which makes the consolidation of hundreds of incoming strips easy to analyze.

Simple Example: A basic request just asking for your call sign, name, and county.

Old Method: Ask for individual pieces of information:

What is your callsign? What is your name? What is your county?

New Method: Give you a strip:

REQDATA/CALLSIGN (X)/NAME (X)/COUNTY (X)//

In the past, we would have to take your answers (old) and put them into a proper strip format (new). The new method can easily transfer hundreds of strips into EXCEL files and import those files into any downstream systems for compilation and analysis.

Remember, we are training for a BAD DAY or what we are now referencing as a WORST DAY scenario where lives and property are at risk. Using the proper formats speeds everything up.

I would also like to thank the Maine hams as they have been valuable partners in demonstrating interoperability best practices which hopefully will spread throughout MARS and the Ham population.

Best,

Ron

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US ARMY MARS

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