

An Inside Look At Clark County Nevada ARES®

January 14th, 2026, started off as another uneventful day.

Then Verizon was stung by a partial system outage that dragged on for hours. Internet and cell service for more than a million and a half users across the country went down.

On the surface, outages such as this appear to be little more than an inconvenience. Not so for people who needed to call 911. For hospitals and emergency responders, this outage was disruptive, even dangerous.

Communications experts tell us we should expect more of them.

"We need to treat outages as a routine risk, not a rare event," says Javad Abed, a cybersecurity expert and assistant professor of information systems and artificial intelligence at Johns Hopkins University.

"Even the most reliable infrastructure can fail unexpectedly, and recovery is almost never instant."

No wonder the capabilities of amateur radio take on growing importance, and why ARES®/RACES quietly plays such a vital role in supporting emergency communications.

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Here in Southern Nevada, The Clark County Nevada ARES® is a well-trained team of amateur radio operators ready to provide critical communications support "When All Else Fails®."

ARES® is a private organization sponsored by the Amateur Radio Relay League. RACES is a collection of federal regulations that gives amateur operators permission to support emergency government functions. Clark County ARES® /RACES members are enrolled in each.

The team works with partner agencies during emergencies and disasters. These agencies include...

- State of Nevada Office of Emergency Management
- Clark County Emergency Management
- City of Las Vegas Emergency Management
- City of North Las Vegas Emergency Management
- City of Henderson Emergency Management
- Boulder City Emergency Management
- National Weather Service - Las Vegas Office
- Southern Nevada American Red Cross
- Southern Nevada Health District (including 17 hospitals)

Eric Hobson, KI7MKQ, is the Emergency Coordinator for Clark County Nevada ARES®.

“Our primary served agency, the Clark County Office of Emergency Management, has activated Clark County Nevada ARES® (CCNVARES) only to serve at the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) and at the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). This is done for major events such as New Year’s Eve, F1 events and the Super Bowl.

“The ECC houses our office and has an array of HF, VHF and UHF ham equipment as well as other services such as CB and GMRS.”

Here in southern Nevada, our mountains and our deserts play to amateur radio’s strengths. Each provides a challenging backdrop for practice, training and execution.

“For our January (2026) training we drilled NVIS communications,” says Eric. “We passed voice and digital traffic across the Vegas Valley and to Pahrump, Wickenburg, Salt Lake City and Carson City with modest equipment while in the field.”



40m NVIS Antenna at January 2026 Training

Clark County Nevada ARES® At Formula One

Of all the projects Clark County Nevada ARES® has been involved with lately, Eric points to the city’s first of the renewed Formula One events as the most noteworthy.

“We were tasked to support the MACC, ECC, and two locations for the Sherriff’s Department. We drilled from the relevant locations assuring radio connectivity and organized a roster designed to get as many of our people into the action as possible. We integrated into the county planning processes and supported three days from the MACC and ECC and (also) from home, ready to deploy as needed.

“These are secured facilities and the Sherriff elected to wave us off since they had not conducted background checks on our members. This is a persistent issue we’re attempting to address. We had members ready to be at those locations within 15 minutes if needed.”



Drilling Prior to the third Formula 1 race at the paddock location

Clark County Nevada ARES® At The Silver State Classic Challenge

Less glamorous but more hands on is the support CCNVARES provides for the Silver State Classic Challenge (SSCC) and the Nevada Open Road Challenge.

The team supports the events with a dozen or so amateur operators, who take care of communications infrastructure by setting up repeaters and staffing checkpoints spaced 10 miles apart.

“Each checkpoint supervises non-ham course workers operating FRS radios blocking cattle gates and road crossings,” Eric tells us. “Hams are an integral part of the operational staff and conduct NDOT-required course worker training and training for rookie hams in prior-day meetings. Hams also supervise the course workers (on) race day, passing info to the race director through net control. They also physically drive their area of operations after the road closes to assure the road is empty and ready for racecars.”

Eric, KI7MKQ, tells us the two and half hours before the actual race begins are especially busy.

“We catalog course workers, assure some 150 total highway access points are locked or staffed, track emergency service personnel staging on course and make sure our primary and backup comms systems are operational.

“During the race we all track cars as they pass by, call in broken cars and keep an eye out for wildlife or trespassers entering the course. We have one ham airborne to chase down missing cars. Not every inch of the road is viewable from ground level.

“I consider it a point of pride for the hams when after a couple hours of a very active net, I as net control can report to the race director ‘sir, the course is ready’ and he has no questions for me and immediately starts launching the fastest cars, 200+ MPH.

“That’s a lot of trust, backed up by exquisite planning, crew training, after actions reports and ultimately an affirmation by NDOT that ‘these ham guys know what they’re doing, it’s safe enough to do again.’

“The Silver State Classic Challenge has benefitted from the participation of Clark County Nevada ARES® since 1988.”

As amateur operators, we can appreciate the complexities, and keep in mind that this is actual emergency communications deployment... not a drill and not a training exercise.



Silver State Classic Challenge Start Line (2 Amateur Operators)



Silver State Classic Challenge Checkpoint



Silver State Classic Challenge Crossband Setup

**From Fast Cars To Fast Horses...
Clark County Nevada ARES® At The Pony Express**

One of the most enduring and inspiring chapters in the history of our American West was written by the young Pony Express riders. For a year and a half they rode 1,966 miles carrying mail between Sacramento, California and St. Joseph, Missouri in 10 days or less.

The annual Pony Express reenactment crosses Nevada, and Clark County Nevada ARES® is there to help, with support east to west across the entire state. Team members head north from Las Vegas with their own repeaters, staff a command post at the airport in Austin, and can accompany a horse and rider to avoid vehicle traffic issues and help the rider stay on the correct trail.

“As usual, we start with nothing, provide extensive planning, deploy equipment and operate as critical staff,” says Eric.



Pony Express Base Austin, NV



Pony Express Portable Comms Relay

Clark County Nevada ARES® At The Tonopah Rally

For the Tonopah Rally, “We provided pre-event radio recon to determine what positions required more capable equipment,” Eric tells us.

“During the inaugural event, a CCNVARES member stepped in to organize and deploy hams and course workers on the route when the event staff did not show up on time.

“We also provided a couple members to support the Southern Nevada Off Road Enthusiasts (SNORE) event in Laughlin. We blocked access to the crossing to the course interior based on oncoming race traffic and called in rollovers and other incidents needing assistance. This event doesn’t operate on ham equipment and is another example of CCNVARES members flexing to provide support. We’ve also provided similar support to a rally in Beatty and recommended radio infrastructure changes after off-road on-site signal checks for the Stateline SNORE event.”



Tonopah Rally chicane

Clark County Nevada ARES® Supports Hospitals

Less visible than these events, and in the overall scheme of things more critical, is the EMCOMM support that’s ready to provide hospitals in the event their communications equipment goes down.

JC, KJ7SLF, is the Clark County ARES®/RACES Hospital Coordinator.

“My primary responsibility is to ensure that all equipment procured for each hospital is properly accounted for, regularly maintained, and fully operational in case of an emergency.

“Over the past few years, I have tried to coordinate with each hospital to arrange inventory assessments and confirm that radio equipment remains fully operational for emergency situations.”

It's a preparedness-driven undertaking. When an emergency unfolds, JC tells us, "Members will be dispatched to the hospital to operate communications equipment. This service is intended to assist the hospital by alleviating its communications burden."

JC works mostly with the hospitals' facilities management and security.

"My objective is to facilitate the participation of all hospitals in Clark County in a monthly radio net. This initiative aims to ensure that team members become proficient with the equipment and are able to operate it as effectively as they do their own devices.

"Any assistance with increasing membership and promoting our mission to the local amateur radio community is greatly appreciated."

LVRAC's Relationship With Clark County Nevada ARES®

"The LVRAC has supplied a repeater at the Las Vegas Emergency Operations Center, in part justified by reserving its use for CCNVARES if needed," says Eric. "The memorandum of agreement supporting that is the only formal relationship CCNVARES has with LVRAC.

"We look forward to coordinating with LVRAC to make sure LVRAC's EMCOMM plans dovetail with what we are to provide to various government agencies and to provide training as needed to get hams in the EMCOMM mindset."

The Future of Clark County Nevada ARES®

CCNVARES needs more amateur operators.

"Our roster hovers around 55 now," Eric tells us, "and we project a need for about 470 to fully support government agencies and hospitals in a major incident.

"Government agencies at all levels are levying more stringent requirements to work with them and in their facilities, whether in an emergency or not. ARES® nationally has continued to embrace these requirements. All CCNVARES members are expected to complete numerous FEMA courses, be familiar with the facilities, drill regularly and be ready to go where and when needed.

"Again and again, hams prove their worth by integrating into organizations, passing traffic accurately and efficiently and assisting their community, both for routine events and emergency situations, no matter the operating location."

JC echoes this observation and points out that our perception of CCNVARES may fail to accurately capture what the team is all about.

"There is a perception among some in the community that our members are reluctant to share their expertise, which may be due in part to limited participation in local events or workshops.

“This reputation does not reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences within our group, but it highlights an opportunity for us to engage more openly and actively with others.

“We encourage new and younger amateur radio operators to become part of our dedicated team of professionals, providing essential support during emergency situations. In every organization, it is inevitable that the next generation will assume leadership roles and guide its future direction.

“Individuals who actively engage in practical exercises consistently form the foundation of service excellence and contribute significantly to elevating service standards.”

If you'd like to get involved, help LVRAC forge closer ties with this talented team, and enhance your own skills, learn more at <https://www.ccnvares.org/>

The Weekly CCNVARES Net

If you'd like to get a better feel for CCNVARES activities, check out the team's regular Monday night nets:

Mondays 19:30:

447.325 (-) 100.0 / 147.18 (+) D244 / 145.300 (-) D244 / 147.18 (+) 127.3 (Spirit Mt)

Pre-net Mon 19:00:

3965 or 3960 kHz winter / 7280 kHz summer

Winlink: CCNVARES / Packet K7CCN-1

Pre-net Mon 19:00:

DMR Brandmeister TG 3132

DSTAR REFL14B

C4FM wires-x Nevada--USA