

FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

GRID-DOWN COMMS CARD

Receive first. Talk second. Write the plan down. Leave this sheet with the radio.

1. RECEIVE FIRST — NOAA WEATHER RADIO

Seven NWR frequencies (MHz): 162.400 • 162.425 • 162.450 • 162.475 • 162.500 • 162.525 • 162.550

☐ You need a real NWR receiver or scanner

NWS: NWR requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up the signal. The broadcasts sit in the VHF public service band, not on the commercial dial, so a car stereo will not find them

☐ Reception is roughly a 40-mile radius

NWS: service to a county depends on reception that typically extends about a 40 mile radius from the transmitter, assuming level terrain. Mountainous counties may have partial or no reliable reception

☐ It is all-hazards, not weather-only

Carries NWS warnings, watches and forecasts 24/7, plus federal, state and local hazard information — natural (earthquakes, avalanches), environmental (chemical releases, oil spills) and public safety (AMBER alerts, 911 telephone outages)

☐ Program your county SAME code

So the radio alarms for your area instead of every county the transmitter reaches. Station search and county code lists are on weather.gov/nwr

My station

Frequency _____ Transmitter/site _____

My SAME

County code(s) _____

2. PHONE RULES (TWO DESTINATIONS, TWO RULES)

☐ To 911: VOICE CALL if you can

FCC: always contact 911 by making a voice call, if you can — voice calls provide more information to call centers. Second half of the same instruction: if you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled and text-to-911 is not available, use a TTY or a telecommunications relay service if possible

☐ Text-to-911 is only available in certain places

Each call center decides the particular method in which to implement it; where one does request the service, carriers must deliver it in that area within six months. The FCC publishes a monthly list of areas with the service. Where it is unavailable, carriers must send an automatic bounce-back telling you to contact emergency services another way, such as a voice call or relay service

☐ A chat app is not a route to a dispatcher

FCC rules do not cover apps that cannot text to and from U.S. phone numbers, or that only text other app users or via social media

☐ To family: TEXT, DON'T TALK

Ready.gov's Make a Plan page (Ready Kids section, written for a family to work through together): lines may be tied up, it may be easier to text, and it leaves phone lines open for emergency workers. Pick the same person for everyone to contact, and pick someone out of town — they may be easier to reach

Power is the failure point nobody plans for. Store spare cells outside the device. Know which radios take common cells and which take a proprietary pack. Treat crank/solar as the backstop, not the primary. The vehicle is your 12-volt charging station. Charge before the storm, and test everything twice a year.

3. THE FOUR SERVICES, WITH PUBLISHED RANGES

☐ FRS — no license, 22 channels

Licensed by rule, any age. Channels 8-14 limited to 0.5 W ERP, the rest 2 W. FCC: usual range on 8-14 is less than one-half mile; longer on 1-7 and 15-22 depending on conditions. Must be FCC-certified and may not be modified. All 22 channels shared with GMRS

☐ GMRS — license required, no exam, 10 years

30 channels near 462/467 MHz. New licenses are limited to individuals; apply if you are 18 or older and not a representative of a foreign government. Any family member of any age may operate within your licensed system. FCC range expectation: one to twenty-five miles depending on station class, terrain and repeater use. No direct interconnection with the telephone network or any other network for carrying GMRS traffic, though those networks may be used for remote control of a repeater. Fees are set by the FCC and change — check the current amount on fcc.gov

☐ MURS — no license, 5 channels, 2 watts max

151-154 MHz, licensed by rule if you are not a representative of a foreign government and you follow the MURS rules; no age restriction, no station ID required, transmitter must be FCC-certified. No transmitter may exceed 2 W output under any condition of modulation. FCC: usual range less than a few miles, but an external antenna can extend it to ten miles or more. Antenna limits sit in Part 95 Subpart J — check them before mounting anything

☐ Amateur radio — exam, and the HF option

Volunteer examiners, public question pools. Technician: 26 of 35 correct; 17 bands above 50 MHz up to 1,500 W plus four HF bands. General: another 35-question exam, 26 to pass, privileges in all 29 bands. Extra: 37 of 50 correct, more HF spectrum. Our own read, not the FCC's: HF is the difference in kind, and it really arrives at General

4. OUR PLAN (FILL THIS IN TODAY)

Channels

Primary _____ Fallback _____

Check-in

Window _____ (radios off between) Give up after _____

Contact

Out-of-town contact + number _____

Meet at

In the house _____ In the neighborhood _____

Meet at

Outside the city/town _____

Tested

Batteries and radios last checked _____

Sources

FCC FRS / GMRS / MURS / amateur operator class / text-to-911 • NWS NOAA Weather Radio + SAME • Ready.gov Make a Plan

No channel belongs to anyone. On FRS, GMRS and MURS the FCC states no channel is assigned for exclusive use and users must cooperate in selecting channels to reduce interference. That is why the fallback channel above is written down instead of improvised.

Full guide: tacticalbox.com/blogs/tacticalbox-blog/understanding-grid-down-communication-options

Educational use only. Radio rules, fees, channels and power limits are set by the FCC and change over time — verify current rules on fcc.gov before you buy, apply or transmit. Contact 911 by voice call whenever you can, and follow your local emergency management authorities.

GEAR UP BEFORE YOU NEED IT. NEW GEAR MONTHLY.

TACTICALBOX