Topic:	Net Control Station and EOC Operations
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Date:	Thursday, 04-Jan-01, at 19:30
Event:	Cupertino ARES general meeting, Orientation Training

Introduction

The following is a summary of a discussion held during the January 2001 CARES meeting on the relationship between the Net Control Station Operator and the EOC Operator. The information was reviewed and generally agreed to by those attending the meeting. Additional NCS/EOC drills are planned to test the concepts presented here.

The basis for the discussion was to address the need to better differentiate the roles of the NCS and EOC Operators and how their workload should be managed over the course of an activation. Several scenarios of EOC Operator and NCS were presented and reviewed. additionally, information and process flowcharts were developed and reviewed, and will be incorporated in to the next release of the CARES SOP.

Background: NCS Operator (excerpt from CARES SOP, Section 6.3)

Any individual can assume the role of Net Control Station (NCS) Operator who has the capability to perform the NCS function effectively. While the minimum requirement is a station with the ability to communicate with most CARES member stations under emergency conditions, member and resource availability may dictate otherwise. In other words, any station activating the net is better than no station.

The NCS Operator is responsible for coordinating the efficient use of a communication channel. The NCS will assure that conflicts that arise out of the need to effect multiple communications on the single channel will be resolved on the basis of:
- Priority (FLASH, IMMEDIATE, PRIORITY or ROUTINE)
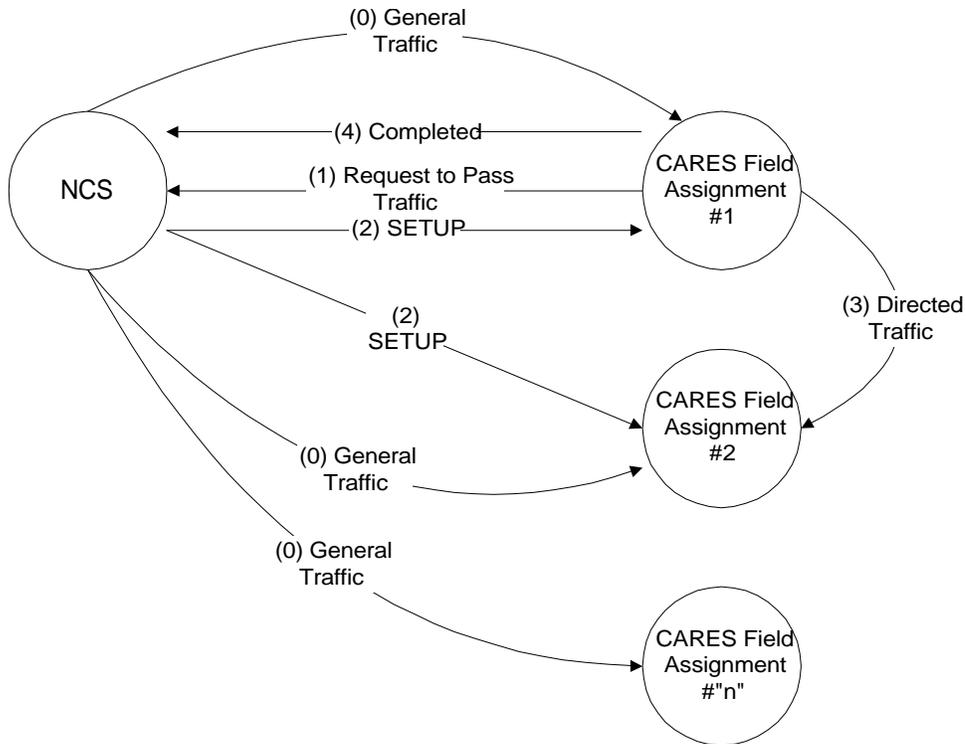- Timeliness (oldest message goes first as soon as a recipient is available)

In addition, the NCS operator will serve as the administrative focal point for all operations being conducted on the communication channel. In that capacity, the NCS operator will maintain a time stamped log of all operations conducted on the channel and use that log as a basis for:

- keeping track of all stations present on the channel
- cataloging all outstanding communication requests by priority and timeliness
- assisting the originating and recipient stations in establishing contact for purposes of passing message traffic either on the same communication channel or an alternate channel also under the control of the same Net Control Station (as may be available)
- determining if the communicating stations can hear one another or if a third station may be required to relay the traffic between them
- periodically polling all stations assumed present to determine their status (as the demand for communication time permits)
- noting any unusual conditions that may be affecting the efficiency of communication on the channel

The NCS Operator should not get directly involved in the traffic passing process. NCS may elect to use an assistant (even a non-radio operator) to maintain the time stamped log of communication channel operations (as resources permits).
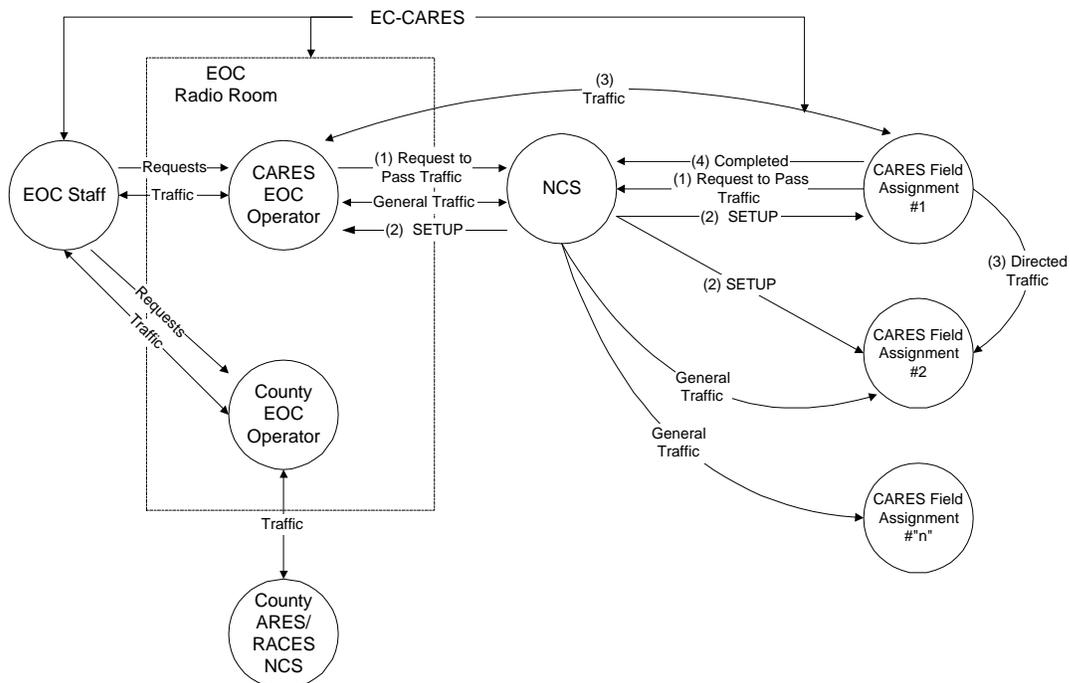
General NCS Model

In general, CARES will operate its emergency net as a directed net. Specifically, the NCS will determine who will use the frequency at a given time, acknowledging those stations first that may have incident related traffic in priority order. Conversations between stations are kept at a minimum, and tactical call signs are assigned to support efficient traffic handling. This net is considered formal in nature, and stations having non-incident related traffic may be asked to move to another frequency.

The typical sequence of events is as follows:
1. One station requests to pass traffic to another station. It makes the request to the NCS
2. NCS sets up the transaction by ensuring the receiving station is available and ready to receive the traffic. It then directs the originating station to send the traffic.
3. The originating station contacts the receiving station and passes the traffic.
4. Once the traffic is passed, the originating station returns control to the NCS.
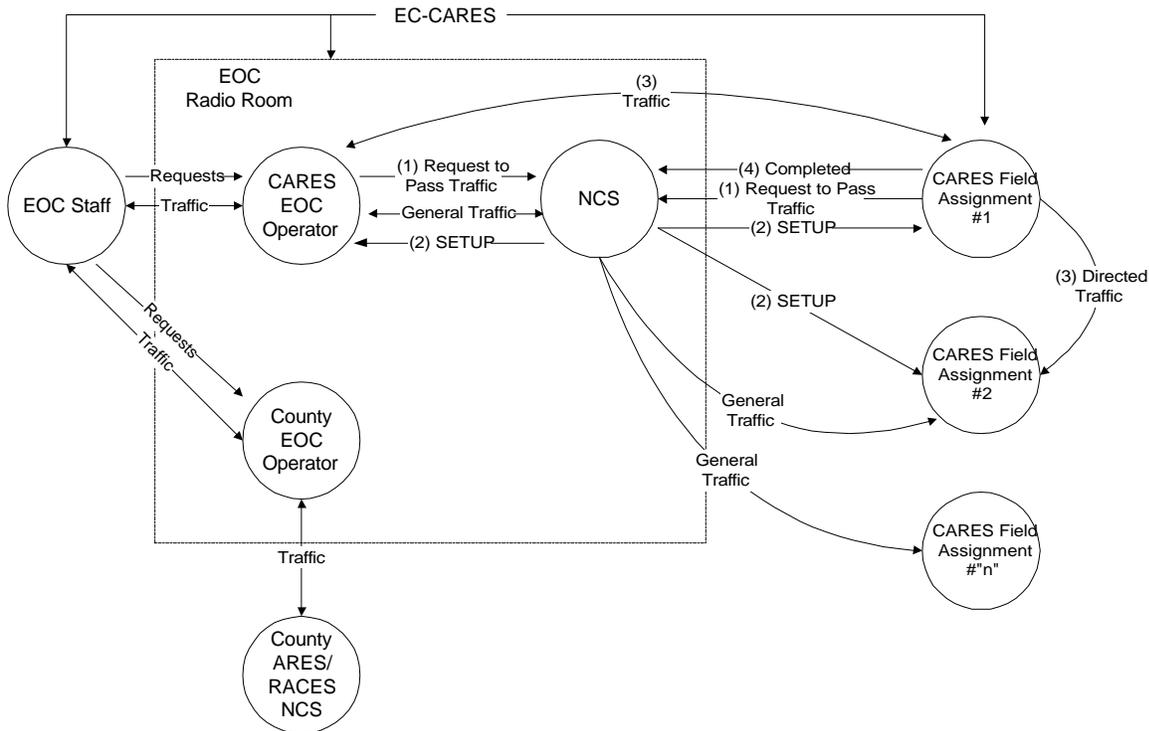
Initial Response Scenario

CARES will initiate Initial Response Operations for all self-evident emergency events (such as Earthquakes), or by other formal activation requests by the City. The first CARES member on frequency assumes the role of Net Control Station, opens the net, and operates from an initial location (home, mobile, the field, etc). The first CARES member qualified as EC assumes the role of EC. The EOC opens and EOC staffing begins. CARES member participation is initially light but builds as members secure their families and homes, and come on line.
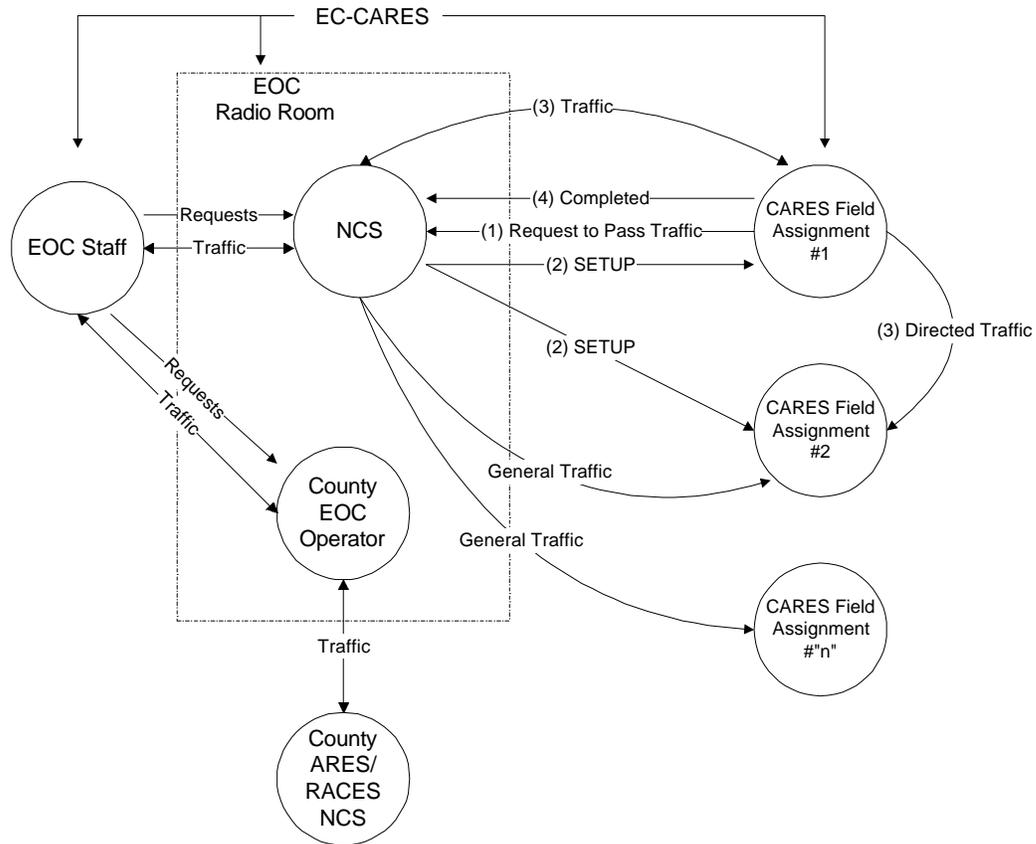
1. The emergency net will operate as a directed net.
2. The CARES NCS Initial Response Procedures are followed and include taking member checkins, calling for Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) Reports, and directing traffic. Depending on staffing, the NCS may need to take PDA reports.
3. The EC makes initial staffing assignments, including an EOC Operator, making frequency guard assignments, and others as necessary.
4. Once the EOC radio room is opened and an Operator is in place, the NCS either passes or directs the passage of pending traffic to the EOC.

Extended Response, High Traffic Scenario

CARES moves into an extended response phase of an event. Traffic flow to and from remote CARES members is relatively heavy. The EOC is fully operational, the bulk of CARES members have checked in, CARES members are staffing field assignments, successive CARES shifts are planned, and city and response services are deployed.

1. The EC directs all CARES activities.
2. The EOC Operator position is staffed.
3. The CARES NCS may be co-located at the EOC radio room (or general vicinity) with the EOC Operator to support more coordinated communications flow and direct supervision by the EOC.
4. The EC reviews staffing plans, updates assignments, and coordinates CARES resources with the EOC staff.

Extended Response, Low Traffic

CARES is still in an extended response phase of an event. Traffic flow to and from remote CARES members is relatively light. The EOC is fully operational, off-shift CARES members have checked out of the net or are filling shift assignments, and city and response services are moving into recovery mode.

1. The EC directs all CARES activities.
2. The role of the EOC Operator and NCS are combined as necessary.
3. If the NCS is assigned to a station not at the EOC Radio Room, then an EOC Operator is still required to staff the EOC.
4. The EC reviews staffing plans and coordinates CARES resources with the EOC staff.

END OF NOTES