

Message Preamble

Information to Track the Message

All messages must have a preamble. The preamble of the message contains information about the message necessary to keep track of it as it passes through the Amateur Radio system. The information in the preamble is not part of the message text and does not need to be delivered to the recipient. Its purpose is for tracking and mitigating possible errors as the message is relayed from origination to destination.

Parts of the Preamble

- A) Number
- B) Precedence
- C) HX -- Handling Instructions (optional)
- D) Station of Origin
- E) Check
- F) Place of Origin
- G) Time Filed (optional)
- H) Date Filed

A) Number

The message number is selected by the station originating the message. It must be on all messages. For an activation of the ACS, message numbers can start at 1 (one). Message numbers must be unique for each message from the station of origin. Message number plus station of origin uniquely identifies every message.

B) Precedence

The precedence indicates the priority and urgency of the message. The precedence in the preamble defines how the message will be handled in the Amateur Radio system; it is not the same as the precedence used by the served agency for they have their own criteria for prioritizing the data in their management process. The definition and order of handling priority of the precedence used in the Amateur Radio system are:

EMERGENCY (always spelled out)

Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons. EMERGENCY messages have immediate urgency and take priority over all other activities.

P (Priority)

Important messages having a specific time limit and official messages not covered in the emergency category.

W (Welfare)

Either an inquiry as to the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area or an advisory from the disaster area that indicates all is well.

R (Routine)

Most traffic in normal times will bear this designation. In disaster situations, traffic labeled routine should be handled last, or not at all when circuits are busy with higher precedence traffic.

Note that there is no prohibition on handling lower precedence traffic until all higher precedence are passed, but common sense dictates handling higher precedence traffic before lower when possible. When circuits are not busy with higher precedence traffic, lower precedence traffic may be handled.

C) HX - Handling Instructions (optional)

Handling instructions are optional. Do not use handling instructions unless a particular need is present. More than one handling instructions may be used on a single message. Handling instructions are used to instruct the relaying and/or delivering operator to handle the message according to the following codes:

HXA__

(Followed by number.) Collect landline delivery authorized by addressee within [...] miles, (If no number, authorization is unlimited.).

HXB__

(Followed by number.) Cancel message if not delivered within [...] hours of filing time; service originating station.

HXC

Report to the originating station the time and date of delivery of the message.

HXD

Report to the originating station the identity of station from which received, plus time and date. Report identity of station to which relayed, plus time and date, or if delivered, report time and date and method of delivery.

HXE

Delivering station get reply from addressee, originate a return message.

HXF__

(Followed by a number.) Hold delivery until [date].

HXG

Delivery by mail or landline toll call not required. If toll call or other expense involved, cancel message and send service message back to originating station.

D) Station of Origin

The call sign or tactical call sign of the Amateur Radio station originating the message is the station of origin. Service and response messages go to this station. Message number plus station of origin uniquely identifies every message.

E) Check

The check is the number of character "groups" in the text of the message. This number is used by operators to verify that the text has been copied with the correct number of character groups. If the message text includes ARRL Numbered Radiograms, "ARL" precedes the check.

A character "group" is any sequence of one or more consecutive characters with no interrupting spaces.

F) Place of Origin

The place of origin is the geographic location (city and state) of the party for whom the message is created, not necessarily the location of the station of origin. The place of origin relates to the signature and should make sense to the addressee as the place the signing party is located.

G) Time Filed (optional)

The time filed is optional and is used when filing time has some importance relative to the precedence, handling instructions, or meaning in the text. In ACS operations, the time field can add context to the message by indicating how old it is. It never hurts to use it. For ACS activations, use local time. The time is written in 24-hour format as four digits with no colon between the hours and minutes (i.e., 1526L). To avoid ambiguity, mark the time with a "Z" for UTC time, the time zone designator such as "PDT" or "PST" for Pacific Daylight Time or Pacific Standard Time respectively, or "L" for local time. Time and date must agree as to the same time zone.

H) Date Filed

The date the message is created. Should be month-day (i.e., May 31) with year being optional for ACS operations. The month abbreviations are JAN, FEB, MAR, APR, MAY, JUN, JUL, AUG, SEP, OCT, NOV, DEC. Speak the full name of the month when transmitting the preamble on voice. In digital and CW modes, use only the three letters abbreviations.

Example Preambles

1 R AB7Y 9 POULSBO WA MAY 28

20 R HXE AB7Y 10 POULSBO WA 2315L MAY 30 2009

36 P HXCE AB7Y 16 POULSBO WA 0919L MAY 31

459 R AB7Y ARL 2 POULSBO WA 1230L MAY 30

712 EMERGENCY HXC AB7Y 16 POULSBO WA 0919L MAY 31

Kitsap County Alternate Communications System

Number	Precedence	HX	Station of Origin		
Check	Place of Origin		Time Filed	Date Filed	
					Radio Operator Only

Addressee:

<BREAK>

<BREAK>
Signature:

					Radio Operator Only	
Operator Notes:				Name or Call Sign of Operator		
From	Time	Date	To	Time	Date	
Received:			Sent:			

<END-OF-MESSAGE>

AB7Y20090603