

ARRL Precedences and Handling Instructions

All messages handled by Amateur Radio should contain precedences -- that is, an evaluation of each message's importance, made by the originating station. A precedence is an "order of handling." There are four precedences in the ARRL message form: Emergency, Priority (P), Welfare (W) and Routine (R), in that order of handling. When and as they appear on a net or any other kind of circuit, messages will be handled in this order.

E = Emergency

Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons, which is transmitted by Amateur Radio in the absence of regular commercial facilities. This includes official messages of welfare agencies during emergencies requesting supplies, materials or instructions vital to relief to stricken populace in emergency areas. During normal times, it will be very rare. On CW, RTTY, AMTOR and packet this designation will always be spelled out. When in doubt, do not use this designation.

P = Priority

Use abbreviation P on CW, RTTY, AMTOR and packet. This classification is for important messages having a specific time limit, official messages not covered in the emergency category, press dispatches and emergency-related traffic not of the utmost urgency.

W = Welfare

This classification, abbreviated as W on CW, RTTY, AMTOR and packet, refers to 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. Welfare traffic is handled only after all emergency and priority traffic is cleared. The Red Cross equivalent to an incoming Welfare message is DWI (Disaster Welfare Inquiry).

R = Routine

Most traffic in normal times will bear this designation. In disaster situations, traffic labeled Routine (R on CW, RTTY, AMTOR and packet) should be handled last, or not at all when circuits are busy with higher-precedence traffic.

The precedence will follow, but is not a part of the message number. For example, a message may begin with NR 207 R on CW, "Number Two Zero Seven, Routine" on phone.