

Start: 1945 L – Stop: 1956 L

NIMS ICS 213 GENERAL MESSAGE FORM

1.1 OVERVIEW.

Thank-you Bob. Good evening to everyone. Tonight, I'll be discussing some of the formal message traffic used during an ACS activation event. We'll start with a definition of a formal message.

1.2 FORMAL MESSAGE TRAFFIC.

Formal messages are structured written messages used to create a permanent record of the message traffic exchanged during an activation event. The use of a formal written message format also reduces the likelihood that an error will be introduced into the message during transport. Most formal message traffic will be authored by the served agency partners being supported by ACS/ARES®. It's important to remember that in almost all cases the radio operator is **NOT** the message originator or the approving authority.

Examples of the appropriate use of formal messages include:

- a. Station activation and closure
- b. Damage assessments
- c. Shelter and EOC status
- d. Situation report updates
- e. Declarations and bulletins
- f. Resource and logistic requests

Although many of the served agencies ACS/ARES® is likely to support have agency specific forms (for example the American Red Cross), the formal message formats used most often during an activation event will be the NIMS ICS 213 General Message and the ICS 213RR Resource Request forms.

Tonight, we are going to concentrate on the ICS 213 General message form.

1.3 GENERAL MESSAGE FORM ICS 213.

When ACS/ARES® is operating under the direction of Pinellas County Emergency Management, members will use the ICS 213 General Message form to record and transfer formal written message traffic.

A copy of this form and the instructions for completing each field of the form are located in the Pinellas ACS communications plan. You can also download the form and its instructions directly from the FEMA ICS Resource Center Web site. A Link to the FEMA web site is located on the PACS web site.

When you first examine this form, it is rather straight forward. It contains eleven numbered fields, only eight of which are used when someone is creating a new message. The remaining three fields are used when responding to an ICS 213 message. So, let’s talk briefly about these fields.

Table I. ICS 213 Field Instructions		
No	ICS 213 Field Name	Field Description
1	Incident Name	<i>Name of the incident – Provided by the ACS RO</i>
2	To (Name and Position)	Name and position of the intended addressee.
3	From (Name and Position)	Name and position of the individual sending the message.
4	Subject	Like any standard email. A short title describing the content
5	Date	Month, day and year of the message
6	Time	Time. Use 24-hour format (Local Time).
7	Message	Content of the message. Unlike a standard radiogram, there is no limit to the length of the section. Although the originator should try to be as concise as possible.
8	Approved by (Name/Position/Title)	Normally, this will be the same as the name in the “From” field of the ICS 213; however, a different individual may be required to approve the message prior to it being sent. Example: Message is from a Shelter Administrator; however, is approved by the shelter Manager.

1.4 SENDING AN ICS 213 GENERAL MESSAGE.

So now let's talk about how to send an ICS 213. When you're handed an ICS 213 from a served agency partner, you have to determine how best to deliver the message to its intended recipient. The first thing you may notice is that the message may contain a significant amount of information and the message form **does not**, contain any of the network management fields (**preamble** and **Delivery Record**) needed by radio operators to send or receive messages via voice or CW.

The easiest way to solve this problem is to send the message via standard email or FAX if the internet is operational or via Winlink if the internet is down. The Winlink development team has created a substantial number of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) based message templates, one of which is the ICS 213, that support both routine and emergency communication environments.

Sending the ICS 213 digitally is the quickest, easiest, and best method to reduce errors you can choose. But what do you do if sending the message digitally is not an option?

Well, we can still send the message via voice over the phone or via a radio net.

1.4.1 Convert Original ICS 213 to Radiogram.

To send an ICS 213 via a voice net, it will be necessary for the radio operator to convert the ICS 213 into a standard radiogram prior to transmission. When users receive a standard radiogram containing an ICS 213 message, users can convert the radiogram back into an ICS 213 prior to delivery to the addressee.

This will require the radio operator to create a message preamble for the ICS 213 and map the contents of the ICS 213 into the appropriate fields of the Radiogram. An addressee OP NOTE will be used to notify the receiving station that the radiogram contains an ICS 213 and to deliver the message subject.

Detailed instructions for converting an ICS 213 into a radiogram and for converting a radiogram back into an ICS 213 are documented in the Pinellas ACS communication plan. I encourage everyone to review this section of the plan for additional information.

1.5 RECORD KEEPING.

Copies of all formal message traffic handled by Pinellas ACS must be retained and delivered to the Pinellas ACS Admin Officer at the conclusion of the exercise or activation event.

1.6 QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS.

I'd like to pause here for a minute and ask if anyone has a comment or question about tonight's presentation. If you have a comment or question, please provide me with your call sign, slowly, clearly, and phonetically so I don't make a mistake when I respond. And then ask your question or provide me with your comment.

This is WA1RYQ.

ACTION - PAUSING FOR QUESTIONS

1.7 CONCLUSION.

That's all I have for this week's training session. Let me conclude with a couple of reminders.

1. The next Winlink Training net is scheduled for this Wednesday, October 13th, at 1930 hours local. This will be a mixed voice and data net with the voice segment taking place on the W4ACS repeater. A Winlink bulletin describing the planned net activities was sent to all registered Winlink net participants on Monday October 11th. A copy of the bulletin has also been posted on the Pinellas ACS Website.
2. I strongly encourage everyone to provide comments and suggestions for future training activities. I can be contacted at WA1RYQ@ARRL.net.

Now with that, I'll turn it back to Net Control.

1.8 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.

The following table contains a summary of the comments and questions provided by the membership during the presentation.

No.	Call Sign	Comments	Response
		No Questions or Comments.	