

# County of Orange RACES Severe Fire Weather Patrol Guide

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## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This guide provides the protocols and procedures for the County of Orange, Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Severe Weather Patrol Guide. This procedure is also known as the "Red Flag" guide.

The purpose of this program is three-fold:

- 1) To provide RACES members the ability to test Amateur and Public Safety radio communications systems in areas of high wildland fire probability. This will provide our organization with a comprehensive list of known poor coverage areas as well as training for our personnel on various radio systems.
- 2) To provide our RACES members the ability to practice Net Control duties.
- 3) To provide the Orange County Fire Authority an extra set of "eyes" during Red Flag weather conditions.

Participation in this program is voluntary, and RACES members should be aware of the following:

- 1) All participants must complete an annual training session conducted by the Orange County Fire Authority. This will usually be conducted during a normal RACES monthly meeting.
- 2) RACES volunteers should understand that DSW coverage might not apply during this activity.
- 3) Observers may later be subpoenaed to testify on their previous observations, requiring the RACES member to appear in a court of law.
- 4) This guide covers all operational protocols and procedures. Many of these procedures are not applicable to our function. **The primary purpose of our participation is to test the various radio systems and be on the lookout for smoke and flame.** Our focus is not on the many other considerations listed in this guide, but are included should you encounter such a situation when on Red Flag patrol.
- 5) The following RACES volunteers have been trained and may participate in this activity: KM6BV (Harvey), KR6J (Kenan), W6HK (Ken), N6NTH (Martin), N6ZRB (Nancee), KG6UJC (Chuck), KG6LXT (Ernest), N6PRL (Randy), KI6WZS (Brian), AB6VC (Jack), W6JOR (John R.), KC6HAM (Walter), KF6PRN (John B.).

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### OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. The primary function of the patrol member will be to provide the local fire agencies with eyes and ears during critical fire weather conditions that exist when a RED FLAG alert is called.
2. The patrol member will be trained on what to look for and what action to take in any given circumstance while patrolling.
3. The patrol member will **not**, possess any law enforcement authority other than that given to the average citizen.
4. The patrol member will have **no** authority to enter fire closure areas, restricted areas, or private property.
5. The patrols will be implemented in those predetermined areas where major life and property loss would result if there were to be a fire.

**NOTE:** Any unreasonable deviation from rules as set forth in the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Guide are subject to review by the local fire agencies and the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator which could result in being removed from the RACES program.

6. The coordinator will supply each team with the required amount of Severe Fire Weather Patrol guidelines to implement the program.
7. The local fire agency, prior to the Santana wind season, will meet with the participants of this program at their regular meeting to review the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Guide with all members of the team. The time and place of the meeting will be at the discretion of the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator.
8. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator will meet to check progress and make recommendations on any necessary changes in the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Guide.
9. The local fire agency when available will periodically check each patrol area to ensure that the Team Member is observing that the instructions and intent of this Guide are being met.
10. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Member shall receive a minimum of one (1) hour of training prior to being assigned a patrol area.
11. At any given time there must be a minimum of two (2) persons assigned to any given patrol vehicle.

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## THE NATIONAL FIRE WEATHER SERVICES RED FLAG FORECASTING SYSTEM

The intent of the National Fire Weather Service is to earmark those weather situations that could produce conditions that would result in increased chances of fires starting and rapidly spreading.

They earmark extremely severe weather conditions as Red Flag Alerts. These alerts are warnings to wildland fire control agencies that extreme fire weather conditions are predicted in their respective jurisdictions. The fire weather service broadcasts these alerts to each affected fire agency.

### CRITERIA FOR RED FLAG ALERTS INCLUDE:

1. Dry thunderstorms, meaning thunderstorms producing a general wetting rain in a specific area, but more lightening than rain showers.
2. Winds sustained at ~~25~~<sup>15</sup> mph or more. These are usually Santana winds.
3. When relative humidity is EXPECTED or actually drops to values less than ~~75~~<sup>25</sup> percent.

### Red Flag Alert Stages:

#### **WATCH:**

The criteria for the Red Flag Alert are expected within the next 72 HRS.

#### **WARNING:**

The criteria for Red Flag Alert are expected within the next 24 HRS.

#### **ALERT:**

All the criteria for Red Flag ACTUALLY EXIST. In this stage Severe Fire Weather Patrols are sent to predetermined areas outlined in local plans. Even though the National Fire Weather Service predicts an alert for a large area, local conditions may not have reached Red Flag criteria. This is why only certain Severe Fire Weather Patrol areas are activated for patrolling. Patrol area activation is determined by weather information received by local fire agencies.

#### **CANCELLATION:**

When forecasters consider current weather conditions no longer meet the Red Flag criteria.

**NOTE:** Remember, extremely severe fire weather conditions as described in the Red Flag criteria developed by the National Fire Weather Service usually occur less than six (6) times a year in Orange County and only for a period of twelve (12) to seventy-two (72) hours per occurrence.

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## JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### **Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller):**

1. Coordinates the Severe Fire Weather patrol program with local fire agency.
2. Assists the local fire agency in activating or canceling Severe Fire Weather Patrols.
3. Responsible for relaying Severe Fire Weather Patrol information to the respective Team Members.
4. Responsible for moving Severe Fire Weather Patrol Teams between designated areas to maintain adequate patrol coverage.
5. Responsible for advising the other Teams Member about the movement of Patrols into different routes.
6. Ensures that the Team Members are fully qualified.
7. Establishes necessary patrol area communications between patrol areas. (Ham Radio / Cell Phone / County Issued Public Safety Radio).
8. Immediately notifies local fire agency via Ham Radio or 911 emergency telephone communications of any fires or potential fires.
9. If Marten Miller is unavailable, activation will follow the normal RACES activation tree (Robert Stoffel, Ken Bourne, Joe Saddler, Emergency Management, in that order).

### **Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Members:**

1. Responsible for relaying Severe Fire Weather Patrol information to Net Control and the respective Team Members.
2. Responsible for advising Net Control about the movement of Patrol into different routes.
3. Establishes necessary patrol area communications between Net Control and patrol areas (Ham Radio / Cell Phone / County Issued Public Safety Radio).
4. Immediately notifies local fire agency via Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or 911 emergency telephone of any fires or potential fires.
5. Patrol the assigned patrol area until relieved or Red Flag Alert is cancelled.
6. Complete all necessary paperwork (Log or ICS 214 Activity Log) and forward via US Mail or FAX to the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller) at the end of scheduled patrol.

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## **Severe Fire Weather Patrol Net Control:**

1. Establish Net Control on the frequency(ies) designated by the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee) at any available and convenient location. Establishes necessary patrol area communications between Net Control and patrol areas (Ham Radio / Cell Phone / County Issued Public Safety Radio). The Loma Ridge RACES Radio Room may be utilized if desired.
2. Receive and log information received from the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Members.
3. When requested, immediately notifies local fire agency via 911 emergency telephone of any fires, potential fires, or other emergency traffic.
4. Initiate contact with the Team Members if contact has not been made after 20 minutes of the previous contact. If contact can not be established after 30 minutes, notify the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee).
5. When notified by the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee), deactivate each Team member when the Red Flag activation is cancelled.
6. When all team Members have no further need for Net Control, stand down Net Control operations.
7. Complete all necessary paperwork (Communications Log and/or ICS 214 Activity Log) and forward via US Mail or FAX to the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller) at the end of the activation.

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### PATROL AREA PROCEDURES

1. Any vehicles used for patrol shall have a valid vehicle registration and current proof of insurance in the vehicle.
2. Patrol will commence and terminate at the discretion of the Fire Department.
3. Patrol assigned areas continuously.
4. Patrol units shall stay on designated roadways. A unit that is stuck or broken down serves no useful purpose and can no longer provide the fire departments with the eyes and ears of the patrol area.
5. While on actual patrol, vehicles will have headlights turned on.
6. Be alert to all vehicles and persons in your patrol area. Record all suspicious activities, if possible.
7. If you should come across a situation that is definitely a hazard to public safety other than a fire, report situation via the Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or "911" system.
8. A Severe Fire Weather Patrol volunteer **shall not follow** or tail any person(s).
9. Severe Fire Weather Patrol units will check-in with Net Control every 15 minutes to confirm status and safety of the unit.
10. Patrol units are not to assume any fire control responsibilities. Contact the fire department immediately utilizing the Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or "911" system. Net Control will then contact the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator.
11. Each Severe Fire Weather Patrol member will be required to fill out a Patrol Log and turn it into the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator.
12. Patrol units are to make themselves aware of available telephones on their patrol routes.
13. Be familiar with the roads, landmarks and locations within your patrol area for purposes of accurate reporting of fire locations.
14. Traveling onto private property or closed areas is prohibited!
15. The recommended routes of patrol will be marked on patrol plan maps.

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## REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

1. 2-Meter/440 Mobile Radio with external antenna
2. Drinking water
3. Map (Thomas Brothers Guide)
4. RACES I.D. card / Class-B Uniform
5. Severe Fire Weather Patrol Guide
6. Clipboard with pencil, paper, forms and current Yellow "Official RACES Guidebook"
7. Change for pay phone
8. Cell phone (Recommended) *ONLY 10 digit # program*
9. First Aid Kit (Recommended)
10. Food/snacks (Recommended)
11. Camera and film (Recommended) *DIGITAL OK*
12. Field Glasses (Binoculars) (Recommended)
13. Eye protection (Recommended)

## PATROL REPORTING ACTIONS

1. **Report any and all fires**, no matter how small, via the Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or cellular telephone system. Use the appropriate 7-digit fire department emergency number found in the Yellow "Official RACES Guidebook" when making a report by phone. If the proper number is not available, dial 911. Dialing "911" from a cell phone will connect you with an operator from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Sheriff's Department or City Police Department. Advise the operator that you wish to report a fire and to please transfer this call to the *proper jurisdiction* fire dispatch center.
2. Make no contact with person(s) that may be responsible for the fire. Log the description of person(s) seen in the vicinity and report this information to the fire department. (Use the forms provided, ICS-214)
3. **Take NO suppression action!**

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### OFF ROAD VEHICLE ACTIVITY

1. Report suspicious or irregular vehicle/motorcycle activities via Ham Radio or "911" to the local police agency.
2. Do not make any contact with drivers.
3. Note the area/vicinity that you observed the vehicles in. Record this on the ICS-214 form. This information may be useful later if a fire does occur in the area.

### ABANDONED VEHICLES

1. Record on the ICS-214 form the location, type of vehicle, color, license plate and any other distinguishing information.
2. Observe the area closely and make extra passes through the vicinity while on patrol.

### SUSPICIOUS OR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

1. Record on the ICS-214 form the location, type of activity, and the description of any individuals seen involved with this activity.
2. Take no action and make no contacts with the individuals involved.
3. If the activity is serious enough in nature report this information to the local law enforcement agency.

### FIREWORKS / FIREARMS

1. Fireworks are **illegal and prohibited** in all of the patrol areas.
2. Report the use of fireworks immediately via Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or "911" to the local law enforcement agency.
3. Record the location of the fireworks and the description of person(s) seen using or in the vicinity on the ICS-214 form.
4. Take no action and make no contact with the person(s) involved.



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### CONSTRUCTION / YARDWORK

1. The use of gasoline powered equipment next to or in the open space / wildland vegetation areas is strongly discouraged and may be illegal in certain circumstances during RED FLAG days.
2. Record on the ICS-214 form the location, type of activity, and the description of any individuals seen involved with this activity.
3. Take no action and make no contacts with the individual(s) involved.
4. If the activity is serious enough in nature report the activity via Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio or dial "911" and report this information to the local fire and law enforcement agency.

### HIKERS / BICYCLISTS

1. Hikers, bicyclist and other individuals should not be in the open space preserves on RED FLAG days. The parks usually remain open on declared red flag days.
2. Notify the park authorities or the local police department if you observe persons off the road in these areas.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS CITIZEN CONTACT

1. If contacted by a citizen inquiry, you should advise them that you are on a Severe Fire Weather Patrol acting as the eyes and ears for your local fire department. Any additional information that a citizen would ask about can be obtained at the nearest fire station.
2. If contacted by a mass media person (radio, press, or TV) refer them to the local fire department.
3. Do not take any verbal or physical action upon an irate citizen(s) under ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. Remove yourself from the situation immediately. Contact the local law enforcement agency immediately if you feel threatened in any way. Record any occurrences of this nature on the ICS-214 form.
4. The quoting of laws, policies, procedures, fire occurrences and causes or any confidential information will not be discussed with the public. Refer individuals to their local fire department.

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### SAFETY

The following safety factors will be observed while on patrol:

1. All traffic laws shall be obeyed.
2. Two members will be assigned to each patrol team.
3. Safety checks shall be made every 15 minutes with Net Control.
4. Headlights shall be turned on during Red Flag Patrol.
5. NO alcoholic beverages or any other type of stimulants, or being under the influence of said substance is allowed.
6. Weapons shall not be carried on the person or in the vehicle during Red Flag Patrol operations.
7. Follow the prescribed routes while on patrol. Do not go off the road on to any trails or private property.
8. Note the locations of pay telephones in the area, in case you have Ham Radio / County Issued Public Safety Radio and/or cell phone problems and are unable to check-in. (Carry change for use in the pay-phone).
9. Make sure your vehicle is in good shape and not in need of any repairs. The vehicle shall be properly registered and insured. All drivers shall be properly licensed to operate the vehicle being used.
10. The use of seatbelts is required by STATE LAW !
11. Start each patrol shift with a full tank of gasoline.
12. It is important to remember that you are the eyes and ears for early detection of fires within your patrol area. You are NOT to assume any responsibilities as a law enforcement official nor a firefighter.
13. Smoking is not permitted while on Severe Fire Weather Patrol due to the obvious fire hazard.

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### ACTIVATION / DEACTIVATION PLAN

1. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee) will receive a notice to activate from the local fire department. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Coordinator will activate the OCRACES pager system with a "RED FLAG ACTIVATION" message, indicating the immediate need to mobilize RACES resources for the Red Flag activation. Necessary components include one Net Control operator, and two RACES members per patrol team. The number of patrol teams activated will depend on the nature of the activation request.
2. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee) will determine the appropriate frequencies to be utilized. This decision will be based on the location(s) that the teams will be deployed. The following frequencies shall be considered:

#### Amateur Radio:

- a. 146.895 (-) 136.5 Simulcast System
- b. 449.180 (-) 107.2 Sierra Peak Repeater
- c. 449.100 (-) 110.9 Santiago Peak Repeater
- d. 448.320 (-) 141.3 Santiago Peak Repeater
- e. 449.680 (-) 131.8 Sierra Peak Autopatch

#### Public Safety Radio:

- a. County Admin (VHF)
- b. Tan South (800 MHz)

3. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Team Coordinator (Marten Miller or designee) will receive a notice to deactivate from the local fire department. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Coordinator will contact Net Control who in turn will contact each Severe Fire Weather Patrol team and advise them of the deactivation.
4. At the end of each patrol, all Severe Fire Weather Patrol members will complete the ICS-214 form and submit them to the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Coordinator (Marten Miller) via US Mail or FAX.

### SEVERE FIRE WEATHER PATROL FORM

1. The Severe Fire Weather Patrol Program will utilize an ICS-214 form (Unit Activity Log) to record all unit/team activities.
2. The ICS-214 form should be filled out at the beginning and end of each patrol. Total miles driven and the hours of the patrol should be logged.
3. Additional information and/or observations should be recorded on this form throughout the patrol shift.
4. At the end of the patrol shift, the ICS-214 form should be submitted to the Severe Fire Weather Patrol Coordinator (Marten Miller) via US Mail or FAX.

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### SEVERE FIRE WEATHER PATROL AREAS

#### Area-1 (North)

**Thomas Bros. Map**   **Major Streets/Highways/Freeways**

- 709                      57 Freeway from Lambert to the County Line. Brea Canyon Road from the County Line to Brea Blvd. Brea Blvd. to State College Blvd. Lambert Road between the 57 Freeway and Carbon Canyon Road. Carbon Canyon Road between Valencia and the County Line.
- 710                      Carbon Canyon Road between Valencia and the County Line
- 741/771/801            91 Freeway between Imperial Highway and the County Line. 241 Freeway between the 91 Freeway and Santiago Canyon Road.

#### Area-2 (East)

**Thomas Bros. Map**   **Major Streets/Highways/Freeways**

- 801                      Santiago Canyon Road between 241 Freeway and Silverado Canyon
- 802                      Silverado Canyon Road from Santiago Canyon Road to the end (approximately 5 miles)
- 832                      Santiago Canyon Road between Silverado Canyon Road and Modjeska Canyon Road
- 832                      Modjeska Canyon Road from Santiago Canyon Road to the end (approximately 2 miles)
- 862                      Santiago Canyon Road between Modjeska Canyon Road and Live Oak Canyon Road
- 862/863                Live Oak Canyon Road from Santiago Canyon Road to Trabuco Canyon Road
- 893/863                Trabuco Canyon Road to Plano Trabuco Road to Santa Margarita Parkway to the 241 Freeway
- 893/892/862/861/  
831/801                241 Freeway from Santa Margarita Parkway to Santiago Canyon.

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## SEVERE FIRE WEATHER PATROL AREAS

### Area-3 (South)

**Thomas Bros. Map**   **Major Streets/Highways/Freeways**

- 972/952/924/864   Ortega Highway between 5 Freeway and the County Line
- 952/972   La Pata Avenue from Ortega Highway to the end
- 952/922/892/893   Antonio Parkway from Ortega Highway to the 241 Freeway.

### Area-4 (Coast)

**Thomas Bros. Map**   **Major Streets/Highways/Freeways**

- 859/889/919   73 Freeway south to Macarthur Blvd. Macarthur Blvd. south to Pacific Coast Highway. PCH south to Newport Coast Drive. Newport Coast Drive north to San Joaquin Hills Road. U-turn and back to PCH via Pelican Hill Road.
- 919/920/950/951   PCH south through the City of Laguna Beach
- 971/972   PCH south through the City of Dana Point
- 972/992/1023   PCH south through the City of San Clemente to the County Line
- 1023/993/992   5 Freeway north to Avenida Pico, north on Avenida Pico to the end.