

POLICY STATEMENT

There has been a considerable amount of controversy over the question of Hamnet versus League membership. At the May '97 Council meeting, the matter was discussed at length and the longstanding policy was re-affirmed. This statement seeks to clarify the League's position and presents the argument supporting that position.

The South African Radio League is the recognised representative of the Amateur Radio Service in South Africa. This status is acknowledged in South Africa by the Regulatory Authorities, Government and the Emergency Services and Disaster Management Association of South Africa. The SARL's status is internationally recognised by the International Amateur Radio Union, the ITU and other national Amateur Radio Societies.

HAMNET was originally established by the SARL in co-operation with the Civil Defence authorities which at that time fell under the Chief of the Defence Force. HAMNET is the South African equivalent of similar organisations established by other national Amateur Radio Societies world-wide. For example, in Britain the RSGB's emergency division is known as RAYNET.

HAMNET and its equivalents in other countries, operate under Article 25.3 and 25.9 of the ITU Radio Regulations, which permits the Amateur Radio Service to be used to pass messages of a type normally disallowed in the Amateur Service, during times of Natural or other disasters when the safety of life and personal property are endangered. <http://www.iau.org/reI030703att3.html#tpm>

Disaster management in South Africa evolved out of the original Civil Defence network, and encompasses local and regional authorities, the SANDF and suppliers of essential services to the country and community. SATEPSA (South African Association of Telecommunications and Electrical Power Supply Authorities) whose members include Telkom, Eskom, SANDF, Local Authorities, Transnet and the Amateur Radio Service, is responsible for ensuring that the country is able to provide an effective Telecommunications and Electricity infrastructure during natural disasters and other civil emergencies. The SARL is the representative of the Amateur Radio Service on SATEPSA.

As the representative member of the Amateur Radio Service on SATEPSA, the SARL has an obligation and responsibility for ensuring the proper management of Hamnet. Responsibilities include ensuring that members conform to the policies and practices of Disaster Management, that they submit themselves to the authority of the command structures and a guarantee that members are adequately trained and experienced in message handling procedures. It is therefore essential that all members of Hamnet subscribe fully and commit themselves to the aims, objectives and authority of the SARL. Many radio Hams have the ability to assist in times of disaster, and their assistance will be called upon if needed but this does not imply that the Ham will be a member of Hamnet. If individuals are permitted to join and participate in Hamnet without being League members then the SARL is clearly unable to meet its obligations.

A parallel situation is the case of a volunteer fireman who assists the fire department to put out fires. He must be a member of the volunteer brigade, subscribe to the rules and submit himself to their authority. A member of the public who sees a bush fire and voluntarily helps put it out will probably be thanked for his assistance. This is however different to his being officially involved.

The reason that Hamnet provides training and recognises specific skills and abilities, is to give the authorities confidence that they are dealing with capable people on whom they can rely. Many of Hamnet's activities are in times of disaster, and involve more than just message handling, and include civil defence type work.

The SARL council re-affirms the policy previously established, namely that :

In order to become a member of the SARL division known as HAMNET, individuals must be paid up members of the South African Radio League.

Signed :

Chris Turner, ZS6GM, President

Jan Schubart, ZS6ARV, Previous Hamnet Nat Dir.

10 June 1997

Reaffirmed by Francois Botha ZS6BUU Hamnet National Director.

August 2007

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As a result of input following the issuing of the Policy Statement Chris Turner, ZS6GM, President of the SARL provided the following additional explanations.

Hamnet is not a separate organisation from the League, but is indeed an integral part of the SARL. The council of the SARL is responsible for the conduct of its members, and in terms of the constitution of the SARL may expel any member who does anything to harm the League or any of its members. When joining the League, members subscribe to and agree to abide by its constitution and rules. If anyone objects to joining the League, then that person indicates that they do not subscribe to the constitution and rules. How then can they then expect to join a division of the League which has the same constitution and rules.

I have said before, that anyone who would like to be a member of the League, but is genuinely unable to do so for financial reasons, will be given financial assistance by the President's fund, to pay a portion or all of their subscription.

It is not the intention of the SARL to exclude anyone from assisting in times of disaster, however, the League can not guarantee the level of proficiency of radio operators unless they are members of the organisation.

Regional divisions of Hamnet are encouraged to elect their own committees and office bearers, including Regional and Local Directors and Assistant Directors. In terms of all sub-committees and divisions of the League, Council will need to ratify the appointment of such local office bearers. However I assure you that ratification will never be unreasonably withheld.

In many disaster situations, the disaster is of a local and regional nature, and therefore does not require national co-ordination. It is however important when working and liaising with National bodies such as the Disaster Management Association, SATEPSA, the army and others involved in disaster relief, That the Radio Amateur Community speaks with one voice and is able to provide National Assistance. I therefore implore you to consider the importance of a unified body such as Hamnet and not allow regional or local fragmentation which would serve no real purpose. Local relationships and direct communication with local authorities is invaluable. I therefore urge you to develop these local ties on behalf of Hamnet and the SARL and act as the local agent and representative. It is the council's responsibility to assist you all to develop strong and effective regional and local organisations.

Remember, the SARL is not the council or a head office, but rather an Association of its members. Each of you who is a member of the SARL, IS THE SARL.

signed

Chris Turner, ZS6GM
President, SARL