What Do You Do Now That You're Licensed?

Consider volunteering for ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) to help in disaster response. Amateur radio is a federally-sponsored activity that was established in part for communications assistance in the event of emergencies.

Active ARES chapters in Travis and Williamson Counties organize hams to work effectively during emergencies. They provide additional training that allows hams to help out during disasters.

ARES organizes hams into a recognized corps of volunteers who can go to disaster sites and participate with emergency responders and disaster workers to alleviate the suffering of the victims. When telephone lines are down, power is out, and cell phones are unavailable, hams send critical messages for disaster organizations, to keep supplies moving and crews dispatched to the point of greatest need. Hams provide important health and welfare messages from victims within the disaster area to worried relatives in distant communities.

This doesn't mean traveling to the coast for weeks for hurricane relief. Our hams will be helping right here by running communications for a Red Cross shelter at a school in Travis County for evacuees from Galveston. And we'll be working with emergency responders and county officials when the next wildfire devastates a community. We'll send teams out when the next set of floods occurs and homes near our rivers are in danger of being washed away. And we'll activate SKYWARN nets when tornadoes threaten our cities.

To perform this critical national function, ARES needs more hams to help fill its ranks and stand by for the next disaster. ARES offers good training in HF radio, VHF repeater, and packet networking, plus how-to talks on deployment essentials, such as what to pack in your go-kit, how to set up a generator, and how to report on severe weather. All licensed hams are welcome to join.

Travis County ARES (www.TCARES.org) meets at 7:00 PM on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Applied Research Laboratories, 10000 Burnet Rd, Austin. The county Emergency Coordinator is Glen Reid, K5FX, whose e-mail is K5FX@ARRL.NET.