

# How to Request Tactical Call Signs for the Santa Clara County Data Network

The Santa Clara County ARES/RACES data network recognizes any valid call sign for connect/login. It uses call sign formatting rules to validate call signs. The network also allows connect/login by any valid tactical call sign. Validation of the tactical call signs prevents accidental logins to the wrong mailbox and prevents misdirected messages.

Each city or agency in Santa Clara County has the option to define its own list of tactical call signs that will be recognized as valid by the county data network servers. These tactical call signs can be used by operators who are dispatched to various strategic locations within the city's or agency's jurisdiction. For example, some cities anticipate the potential need to locate operators at each school, fire station, shelter, library, emergency supply cache location, and park.

## File Format

The format of the tactical call sign file is simple. But several specific rules must be followed in order to maintain consistency across cities/agencies:

- The file must be a plain text ASCII file written in English.
  - MS-Word, rich text or other formats are not acceptable.
- The line format is as follows:
  - Blank lines are ignored.
  - Lines beginning with “#” are ignored and can be used for comments.
    - To keep the file size small, avoid a large number of comment lines. For example, including the revision date is recommended. But including the revision history, listing each previous revision, is discouraged. See the sample file below.
  - Lines containing tactical call sign definitions must contain the tactical call sign beginning in column 1, followed by white space (such as one or more <TAB> characters), followed by a description.
    - Example: XNDFS2    Xanadu Fire Station 2
  - For maximum readability, the length of each line should not exceed 78 characters.
    - This prevents line-wrapping if the contents of the file are distributed via packet or email to the local city or agency users. It also enhances readability on smaller screens.
- The tactical call sign format is as follows:
  - Each tactical call sign must be six (6) characters in length and must be comprised of uppercase letters and, optionally, numbers.

- Each tactical call sign must begin with the 3-letter tactical prefix assigned to the submitting city or agency.
  - In the example above and the sample file below, “XND” is the assigned 3-letter prefix for the fictitious city of Xanadu.
  - The assigned 3-letter tactical prefix for each agency in Santa Clara County is listed on the county ARES/RACES web site at: <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/freqs/packet-freqs.html>.
- The last three characters of the tactical call sign are chosen by the submitting city or agency.
  - The fourth character of a tactical call sign may not be the number zero (“0”).
  - It is recommended to avoid using the letter O (“oh”) since it can be confused with the number 0 (“zero”).
  - Tactical call signs ending with “EOC” or “DOC” are typically reserved for the primary city or agency operating location. See “Primary Tactical Call Signs” below.

## Primary Tactical Call Signs

The primary tactical call sign for an agency is the call sign that other agencies, including the county, will use when sending messages to that agency. It usually ends in “EOC” or “DOC”, depending on the agency. For example, “XXXEOC”, where “XXX” is the 3-letter tactical prefix for the agency. Each city/agency that uses the packet network has a primary tactical call sign, whether they submit a tactical call sign file or not.

The primary tactical call signs are selected by the agency ECs or designated AECs. To add, change, or remove a primary tactical call sign, the agency ARES/RACES EC or designated AEC should e-mail their request to: `bbssysops@sccl-ares-races.org`

The primary tactical call sign is configured in a separate file in the network servers and is not affected by the tactical call sign list that an agency may submit. But an agency may choose to include their primary tactical call sign as a comment in their tactical call sign file as a convenience to their users, so that all of their tactical call signs are listed in one place. See the sample file below. The list of primary tactical call signs and BBS assignments for all agencies is posted as a bulletin in the packet network.

## Tactical Call Signs for Ad Hoc Use

Each city/agency will automatically be configured with ten (10) additional tactical call signs for ad hoc use, whether they submit a tactical call sign file or not. These ad hoc tactical call signs will begin with the assigned 3-letter tactical prefix for the city or agency, followed by “001” (zero zero one) through “010” (zero one zero). For example: “XXX001”, where “XXX” is the 3-letter tactical prefix. These tactical call signs can be used at any time, but are primarily intended to cover situations where a packet operator is deployed to an unanticipated location which does not yet have a pre-defined tactical call sign.

These ad hoc tactical call signs should not be included in the file submitted by the city or agency. However, a comment can be included in the file as a reminder to users that the ad hoc tactical call signs exist. See the sample file below.

## To Submit a New Tactical Call Sign List

The city/agency ARES/RACES EC or designated AEC can submit a new tactical call sign list. To submit a new list:

- E-mail your list of valid tactical call signs to: `bbssysops at scc-ares-races dot org`
- Your submittal must be a text file (see example below) attached to your e-mail.
- You will receive a confirmation that your submittal has been received.

## To View an Existing Tactical Call Sign List

The city/agency ARES/RACES EC and AECs have access to the existing list of tactical call signs. To view the existing list:

- Go to: <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/activities>
- Login with your call sign and password
- Scroll down to the EC/AEC menu
- Click on “Tactical Call Lists for Packet”
- Links are provided at the bottom of the page to download the file

## To Update/Replace an Existing Tactical Call Sign List

The city/agency ARES/RACES EC or designated AEC can update their tactical call sign list by submitting a replacement list. To submit a replacement list:

- Follow the instructions to view and download the current list for your city/agency
- Edit the file to make any adds/changes/deletions
- E-mail your list of valid tactical call signs to: `bbssysops at scc-ares-races dot org`
- Your submittal must be a text file (see example below) attached to your e-mail.
- You will receive a confirmation that your submittal has been received.

## To Delete an Existing Tactical Call Sign List

The city/agency ARES/RACES EC or designated AEC can request the removal of all previously submitted tactical call signs. To submit a deletion request:

- E-mail your request to delete your tactical call sign file to: `bbssysops at scc-ares-races dot org`
- You will receive a confirmation that your submittal has been received.

## **Time to Complete**

Changes to the network configuration are performed on an as-needed basis and usually within one week of a properly submitted request. The person who submitted the request will be notified if the delay is expected to be longer than one week.

## **Notice of Completion**

The person who submitted the request will be notified when the change has been completed.

## Sample File Contents

Following is a fictitious tactical call sign file submitted by a fictitious city named Xanadu, with a 3-letter tactical prefix of XND.

```
# City of Xanadu - Tactical Call Sign List
# Revised: 23-Jul-2010 by Herman Munster, W6XRL4

# Emergency Management
# XNDEOC    Xanadu Emergency Operations Center
XNDALT     Xanadu Alternate Emergency Operations Center

# Public Safety
XNDFS1     Xanadu Fire Station 1
XNDFS2     Xanadu Fire Station 2
XNDPOL     Xanadu Police Station

# Schools
XNDCHS     Xanadu City High School
XNDCMS     Xanadu City Middle School

# Other locations
XNDCRC     Xanadu City Recreation Center
XNDCPK     Xanadu City Park
XNDLIB     Xanadu Library

# Ad hoc tactical call signs: XND001-XND010
```