



**US AIR FORCE**



### **What is MARS?**

The Military Auxiliary Radio System is a Department of Defense sponsored program, established as separate managed and operated program by the Army and Air Force.

The program consists of licensed amateur radio operators who are interested in military communications.

### **MARS History**

In November 1925, the Army Amateur Radio System (AARS) was formed by a few dedicated pioneers in the United States Signal Corps. This organization continued until the start of World War II when operations were suspended.

Army amateur radio was authorized to resume operations in 1946 and the Army Amateur Radio system was reactivated and functioned as such until 1948 when the Army and the Air Force established the Military Affiliate Radio System. (MARS) In 1962, the Navy-Marine Corps MARS program was launched making MARS a joint service program. In 2009 the name was changed to Military Auxiliary System (retaining the MARS acronym). The Navy/MC portion was closed the end of 2015.

### **MARS Mission**

- Provide the Department of Defense sponsored emergency communications on a local, national and international basis as an adjunct to normal communications.
- Provide auxiliary communications for military, civil, and/or disaster officials during periods of emergency
- Assist in effecting normal communications under emergency conditions.
- Create an interest, and furnish a means of training members in military communication procedures
- Provide a potential reserve of radio communication personnel trained in military communication.
- Handle morale and quasi-official record communications for Armed Forces and authorized U.S. Government civilian personnel stationed throughout the world.

- Conduct an appropriate Amateur Radio program as part of the annual celebration of Armed Forces Day.

### **Typical MARS Frequencies Required for Region 5 Membership**

MARS member stations meet periodically in scheduled networks on military frequencies outside of the amateur bands. There are various types of networks and each accomplishes a specific goal. For example, Region Administrative and State networks take care of much of the day-to-day management of the program; traffic networks which exist solely to pass third party traffic; and of course, emergency networks which are established to provide communication needs during periods of emergency. There are also technical nets and training nets. MARS nets operate in different modes. Although high frequency (HF) single sideband (SSB) is predominant, HF digital modes such as PACTOR, ALE, and sound card modes such as MT63, Olivia, and M110A as well as newer developing modes are in use. Operational capability on at least one digital mode is required of all new members.

Operational capability on at least two of the three HF SSB frequencies listed below is required for all Region 5 MARS members.

33xx.0 KHz USB  
45xx.0 KHz USB  
73xx.0 KHz. USB

## **How to Join US Air Force MARS in Region 5**

**(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)**

Before applying for membership, contact the State MARS Director in your state via email first. Ask him/her any questions that you may have regarding the MARS program. Email contact is available via the Region 5 Web Site,

<https://afmars-nc-mil.us/Region5/> under 'REGION INFO' then select 'AFMARS REGION V' then scroll down to the State you are in.

As a new member you will be assigned a trainee call sign AFT5xx.

You will be assigned to the two Training nets as your primary net assignments. You will be required to complete your training in 180 days. Training will consist of proper net procedures, proper use of call signs, formatting plain dress and encrypted traffic, how to pass and receive traffic. You will be required to format and pass one plain dress message and one encrypted message in order to complete your training requirements.

### **Access the web page**

<https://afmars-nc-mil.us/Region5/>  
**Select JOIN MARS and then**

## **APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP NOW and select the State you are in.**

**Follow the instructions and your application will be automatically forwarded to the proper offices.**

### **Eligibility to Join USAF MARS**

The Applicant must –

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Be a United States citizen or resident alien.
- Have a valid Technician, General, Advanced, or Extra amateur radio license issued by the Federal Communication Commission.
- Operational capability on at least two Region 5 MARS HF SSB frequencies. This means a functional radio AND an antenna.
- Have radio equipment with a frequency stability of +/- 20 Hz.
- Operational digital capability, using either hardware (TNC) or software (sound card modes). Modes used in AF MARS are: OLIVIA, MT 63, and M110A. Use of Pactor is optional at this time.

### **Participation Requirements**

For Air Force MARS: A minimum of 12 hours per calendar quarter. That's only one hour per week. You can participate more often and are encouraged to do so.

## **Benefits of MARS Membership**

- Add to the enjoyment of your amateur radio hobby through the expanded horizon of MARS.
- Increase your communication skills and capabilities. Operate on specially assigned military frequencies in voice, as well as various newer digital modes.
- Join a group of dedicated fellow radio amateurs participating in meaningful public service.
- Affiliate with the service branch of your choice and become part of the professional military communication family.
- Gain a feeling of being associated with a military mission and contributing to the welfare and preparedness of the nation.
- Participate in regulated, disciplined radio nets with structured lines of organization and very specific operating rules.

For information on our Sister Service MARS programs visit:

Army MARS:

<http://www.netcom.army.mil/mars/>

**US AIR FORCE  
Providing the Reins of Command in  
Emergencies**