Some tips on how to participate in an Amateur Radio Emergency Net

The best way to learn to participate in a net is to listen to nets as much as possible, because you will learn how the local net is run and become familiar with the stations that comprise the net. Here are some general pointers.

Checking in
- Don't try to check in during heavy traffic, unless you have time-value traffic.
- Listen to the Network Control Station (NCS) for check-in requests & procedure.
- Unless instructed otherwise, transmit your call sign, and wait to be acknowledged. Example: "N9 Romeo Golf India mobile checking in" or "N9RGI base checking in".
- If you have specific resources or information, you may indicate that with a "tag line." Example "N9RGI with radar information"
- Never speak for more than 5 seconds with a check-in.
- Once you check into the net, you should request permission to leave the net.

Transmitting
- All traffic must be authorized by NCS.
- If another station calls you direct, do not answer without permission of NCS.
- Be short and concise. If you need to speak more than 20 seconds, take a 2 second pause to allow NCS or urgent traffic to break in. If no station breaks in, continue for another 20 seconds, etc. When done, say "back to net control." Do not be long-winded or trivial.

Common conventions
- During a formal net, you may hear the term "tactical call sign." If you are not assigned a tactical call sign (e.g. "Red Cross 1") then use your call sign. (Use of suffix. RGI, may or may not be appropriate. Listen for instructions.)

Scope of operations
- Generally the larger the geographic area involved, the more stations will be needed.
  - Example: Severe Weather: Wide area -- net needs lots of stations.
  - Example: Cave rescue: highly localized -- don't check in, unless requested.

Severe Weather nets
- *Generally* local severe weather comes out of the west or southwest. Stations in the direction of the approaching storm will initially be the most valued and active weather spotters, since they can report on initial storm intensity, and once the front-end of the storm passes, they can observe the rain-free base from the back-side of the storm.
- NCS may ask for the following liaison stations:
  - National Weather Service (NWS) 146.97 MHz. Requires a "muscle" radio to reach Indianapolis Airport and punch through inclement weather.
  - Radar monitoring. Requires a good connection to the WWW and the ability to convert radar data into information and predictions. NCS will generally not be interested in a lot of data. The net wants to know *concisely* where, when, type, and anticipated intensity of weather expected, for south central Indiana only.
  - Telephone liaison (e.g. emergency agencies)
  - Liaison to other VHF/UHF stations
  - Liaison to HF stations liaison (e.g. statewide/regional/national nets)
  - Etc

Cave emergencies
- Generally, you should not check into a cave emergency unless check-ins are requested. These events are very localized, and can be of long duration.