Using The Red Cross Message Utility

Introduction

The Red Cross Message Utility is intended to primarily create messages for transmission by radio when cell phone and Internet is unavailable. However, it can be used to create and print out messages locally.

Clicking on the Message Utility shortcut (Figure 1) loads the interface which then resides on the desktop on your Red Cross laptop (Figure 2).

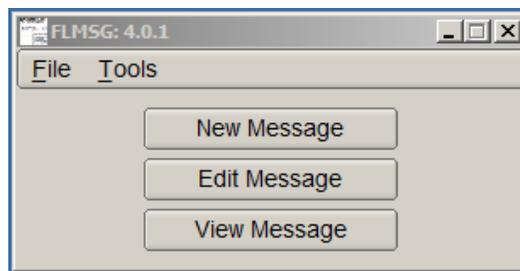Figure 1 Message Utility Shortcut

Figure 2 Message Utility Interface

 Designed to be very easy to use, one only needs to be familiar with using a browser (e.g., Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, etc.). Selecting the desired message template "pops" it up in the default browser on the user's computer. When done, clicking "Submit" at the bottom of the form opens the familiar Windows Explorer, in which the user names the file to be saved), navigates to a target directory (e.g., on a flash drive). Using the "Print" function of the browser, the user can print the completed message at anytime to save a paper copy of the message for hand-off or archival purposes.

When the user saves the message, the message utility removes the browser formatting to create a small object file. The utility automatically adds its ".k2s" default file extension.

The addressee / recipient of the file uses the same interface on his or her computer desktop to respond on the message form or to simply read ("View') the message.

Create and Send a New Message

1.   Click "New Message" on the interface (Figure 2, above). A list of available templates appears in a window adjacent to the main message window (Figure 3).
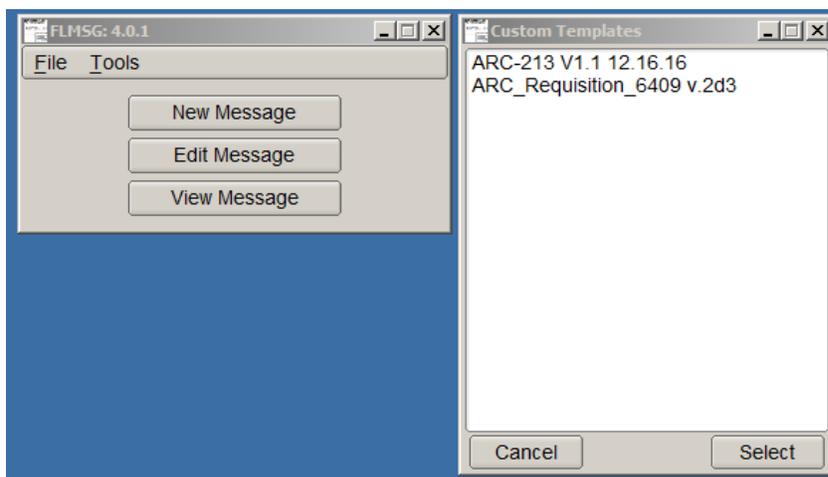
Figure 3 Templates List

2. Highlight the desired template then click "Select". The template immediately loads into the default browser (Figure 4 Red Cross ICS 213 General Message in this example).

Figure 4 Red Cross ICS 213 General Message Form

3. Enter the message data in each of the fields as appropriate. In the case of the ARC 213 form, the "Message #" field is a tracking reference for the user. Use the "Precedence" field to set how quickly the message is to be handled: Routine, Priority, or Urgent.

Note: Do *not* use the Red Cross 213 General Message for an emergency message. Use cell phone (if cell service is available) or the Ham Radio operator to communicate the emergency by voice.

4. When done, click "Submit Form." A "Save data file" window opens (Figure 5). Use a filename that is meaningful for the context of the message (e.g., "Hayfork Shelter Statrep 04-14-15," "Tarboro DHS Status 10-28-16 Msg 01, etc.)" and save the file to a flash drive. As appropriate, save / copy the file to a directory on the Red Cross laptop for archival retrieval.
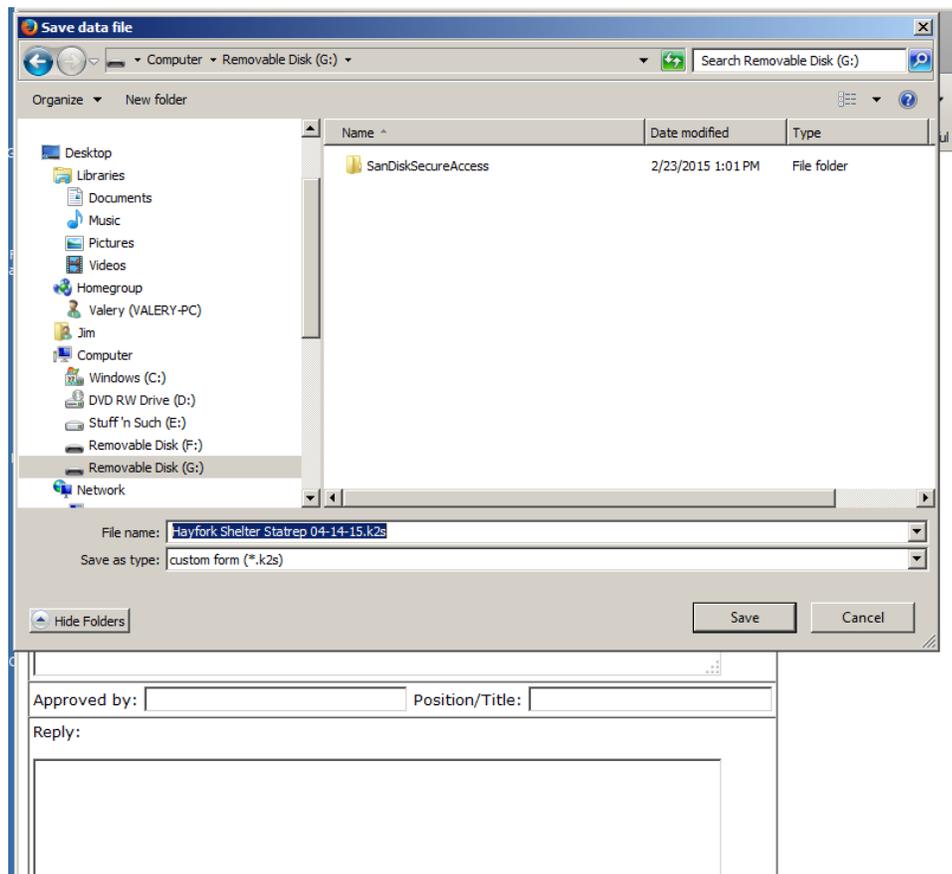
Figure 5. Save Data File Window

5. Give the flash drive and the intended addressee and destination (e.g., "Sheltering Lead at the Disaster Operations Center") to the Ham Radio operator for transmission. If available, give the Ham Radio operator the email address and telephone number of the intended recipient. Be sure to ask the Ham Radio operator to return the flash drive once (s)he has sent the message.

6. Alternatively, use the browser print function for a paper copy of the form or, if Interent acces is available, form can be attached to an email in the normal manner with your email utility.

Edit and Respond to a General Message

1. Click "Edit" on the interface (Figure 2, above). The "Open data file" window appears. Navigate to the folder where the file of interest is located (e.g., "Tarboro Shelter DHS 11-13-16 Msg 02.k2s").
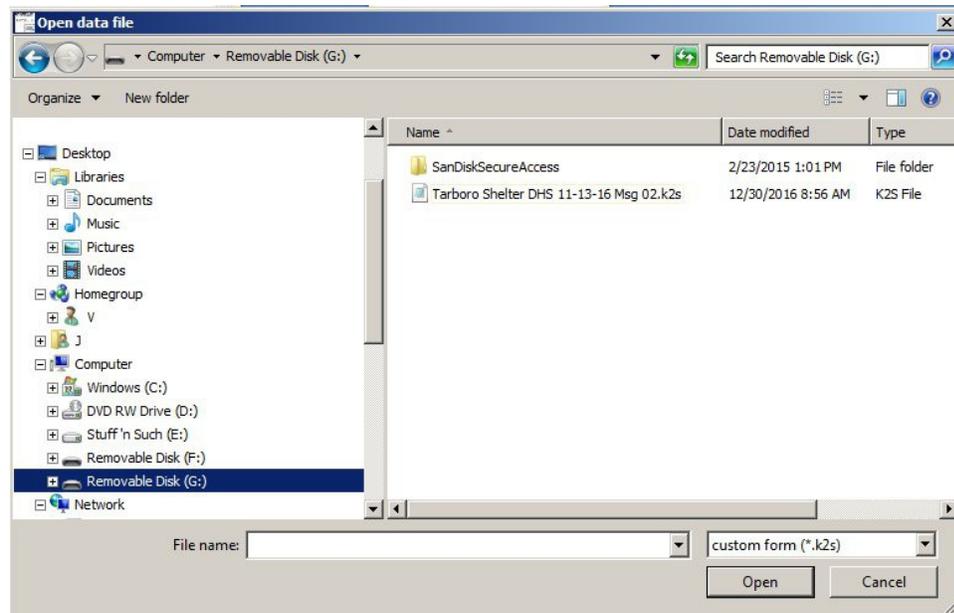
2. Select the file and click Open. The file appears in the default browser (Figure 7). Enter response as appropriate in the "Reply" field plus complete the "Replied By:" and "Replied Time and Date" fields.

3. Save the message and hand off to the Ham Radio operator as described above in Steps 4 and 5 above under **Create and Send a New Message**.

American Red Cross	ARC 213 General Message	

DR #: 117-17   **Incident Name:** Hur. Matthew   **Message #:** 002

Precedence: Priority ▼   Do NOT use this form for an Emergency message!

To (Name/Position: Rita Smith, RN CLS/HS/MN

From (Name/Position): Jim Piper, RN, DHS Supervisor Tarboro Shelter

Subject: Shelter status re medically fragile clients   **Date:** 10-19-16   **Time:** 1000 hrs

Original Message:

Remaining 4 have multiple co-morbidities and multiple medications requiring replacement ASAP. Each client evacuated from home with minimal or no RXs and no durable medical goods.

>> NO Rx available here. <<

Six of these clients require special needs beds. Only one bed in trailer. Need 5 more ASAP plus want 2 more for poss addt'l need. Do you want a formal req completed for them or can the beds be dispatched with paperwork to follow later?

Approved by: Jim Piper, RN   **Position/Title:** CLS/HS/SV

Reply:

 Message acknowledged.

Additional special needs beds will be on the next ERV headed to Tarboro shelter. Should arrive early afternoon.

Replied By (Names /Position): Rita Smith RN CLS/HS/MN

Replied Date &Time: 10-19-15 1045hrs

ICS 213 General Message Form adapted For American Red Cross	Version 1.1 12/16/2016

Submit Form

Figure 7. Responding to a Red Cross 213 Message

Reviewing a Message

1. To review a message, click "View Message," navigate to the folder that contains the message (file extension ".k2s") of interest, select, and it opens in the default browser.

2. As appropriate, print using the browser print function or review on-screen and close when done.