QST NFL

Newsletter for the Northern Florida Section

Come join the FUN!

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From the Shack of the Section Manager

Scott Roberts, KK4ECR (kk4ecr@gmail.com)

Excitement is building as we gear up for **Orlando Hamcation 2025!** It's always a fantastic opportunity to reconnect with friends, learn from experts, and explore the latest in amateur radio technology. Whether you're a seasoned operator or new to the hobby, Hamcation is an event you won't want to miss!

One of the weekend's highlights is the **All Florida Section Forum**, happening on **Saturday, February 7, at 11:45 AM**. This forum is a chance for all Florida hams to come together, hear updates, and discuss the future of our great hobby. It's an excellent opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and get inspired by the work being done across the state. Be sure to mark your calendars and join us!

Be *Radioactive* in 2025!

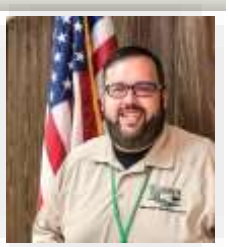
As we move into a new year, let's challenge ourselves to be more engaged, more active, and more connected in the amateur radio community. Being *radioactive* means more than just getting on the air—it means being involved! It means mentoring new hams, testing and improving our emergency communication skills, and making amateur radio a bigger part of our daily lives.
One of the most important ways we can grow our hobby is by **encouraging the next generation** to get licensed and involved. If you know young people who are interested in technology, electronics, or emergency communications, invite them to a club meeting, help them study for their license, or take them out for a hands-on experience in the field. The future of amateur radio depends on us inspiring and mentoring new operators.

Support Your Local Club—Every Month!

Local amateur radio clubs are the heartbeat of our hobby. They provide education, camaraderie, and service opportunities. But they can only thrive if we **show up, participate, and volunteer**. If you're not already active in a local club, make 2025 the year you change that! Attend meetings, help with club activities, and consider stepping into a leadership role. Even small contributions—helping set up for a meeting, teaching a workshop, or assisting with a public service event—can make a huge difference.
By supporting our clubs, encouraging new operators, and staying active on the air, we can ensure that amateur radio continues to thrive for years to come. Let's make 2025 a year of growth, learning, and connection.
See you at Hamcation!

VISIT YOUR CLUB

I'd love to be able to visit every club in our section. As hard as that may be to do in person, virtual visits can be much easier to schedule for some. If you would like me to visit your club in person or virtually, and speak, please email me so we can schedule it – kk4ecr@arrl.org.



From the Section Emergency Coordinator

Arc Thames, W4CPD

A new year brings on a new season of preparedness. This time of year is what we generally refer to as "blue skies" when we aren't pending the threat of a major severe storm system (although I think our "snowmagedeon" might have thrown that off some.) With the start of February, hurricane season is now just 5 months away.

Those 5 months contain valuable time that you can utilize to train, practice, and prepare. As a representative for your county, it's your responsibility to ensure that you are prepared to provide communications to and from the State Emergency Operations Center and your local county should traditional methods such as cellular, internet, and landline fail. From an auxiliary communications standpoint, there are 3 main ways to reach the State EOC during a declared event:

Voice over HF (either amateur or SHARES frequencies)
Voice over SARNET
Digital messaging via Winlink (either amateur or SHARES)

The frequencies and callsigns utilized during a declared event are communicated out to all leadership POC's that I have statewide as well as provided in our ICS 205 on the State AUXCOMM website, floridaemergency.net. The auxiliary communications frequencies are also provided to ESF-2 (Emergency Support Function – Communications) at the State Division of Emergency Management and shared with communications resources in the impacted area.

Over the last 2 years we have continued to build our relationship with the State and I can say, without hesitation, that we have an incredible partnership with our State leadership. Amateur and SHARES radio both are not an afterthought during a declared event. From the moment that we know a storm will be making landfall within the state of Florida, we begin joining conference calls and planning meetings alongside the State communications resources. We absolutely have a "seat at the table" and a mission to be at the ready to provide communications when all else fails.

If you don't have a relationship with the communications teams in your surrounding counties, I encourage you to reach out and establish those relationships. Practice alongside each other and participate in exercises and drills such as establishing simplex communications with your neighbors. There are some counties that may not have HF capability at their Emergency Operations Center. If you're one of those, it's critical that you establish relationships and communications with neighboring resources that can relay information for you should the need arise.

Updates to the NFL ARES NET

To better align with our emergency preparedness mission, we have moved to a check-in format of calling for check-ins by section, district, and county. This went into place on January 1, 2025. This will better help us identify where our resources are located, where we have gaps in amateur radio coverage, and (hopefully) speed up the check-in process. Please be sure to check-in daily on 7197 LSB at 0900 ET/0800 CT.

Monthly Radiogram Challenge

I brought back the monthly radiogram challenge this year to help our volunteers and new operators practice using the NTS. Sadly, last month we only had one participant (thanks Mike W4BZM.) As such, I'll keep last month's practice again for this month or just send me a radiogram and say "Hi Arc, I read your article" just for the practice. Please remember, this message must be sent via the NTS. You can use Winlink to inject a message into the NTS but it must be sent to via the NTS, not direct to W4CPD. We have full videos and instructions on using the NTS on our website at arrl-nfl.org/nts/ Check out that link for the January 2025 challenge.

Hamcation

As I write this, I'm currently in Orlando to be here to support the upcoming AUXCOMM class and will be at Hamcation Friday & Saturday. Be sure to swing by the ARRL booth and say hello!

Website updates

If you find information that is out of date on the section website (arrl-nfl.org), please fill out the online form and one of the team will take care of it as soon as possible.

NFL Officials

Section Manager
Scott Roberts KK4ECR

Assistant Section Managers
Kevin Bess KK4BFN
Helen Straughn WC4FSU
DJ Stewart KI4ZER
Joe Bassett, W1WCN

Section Emergency Coordinator
Arc Thames W4CPD

Section Public Info Coordinator
Jim Bledsoe, KI4KEA

Section Technical Coordinator
Frank Haas KB4T

Section Affiliated Club Coordinator

Section Traffic Manager
Helen Straughn WC4FSU

Section Official Observer Coordinator
Robert Leasko WB8PAF

Section State Government Liaison
Darrell Brock N4GOA

NFL Committees

Webmaster, www.arrl-nfl.org
Kari McClure, NW4R

Newsletter, *QST NFL*
Earl McDow, K4ZSW

QST NFL *is a monthly publication of the ARRL Northern Florida Section.* ***QST NFL*** is intended for wide distribution within the NFL Section, including club Leaders and all licensed Amateurs in Florida. A current issue of this publication can be found at the ARRL Southeastern Division web site, Northern Florida Section. www.***ARRL-NFL.org*** Opinions expressed by contributors are their own, and may not express the positions of the ARRL.

Submissions may be made to the editor: Earl McDow earl.mcdow@gmail.com.

All submissions are subject to editing prior to publication.

Looking for Something?

Gordon Gibby, KX4Z, has taken the time to index the articles from all the 2021 issues of ***QST NFL***!
https://arrl-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021QSTNFLIndex.pdf

What's Inside…

NFL Section Member of the Month!

We are always accepting nominations for the NFL Section Member of the Month. To submit a nomination, please email Section Manager Scott Roberts at kk4ecr@gmail.com. Include the nominee's name, call sign, county, reason for the nomination, and a photo of the nominee. Arc and I will review the nominations and contact you with any questions

Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications

Marty Brown, N4GL

Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications is now archiving ***QST NFL*** issues. DLARC is a project of the Internet Archive (the not-for-profit online library best known for The Wayback Machine.) DLARC is growing to be a massive online library of the past and present of ham radio and related communications. It is funded by a grant from Amateur Radio Digital Communications. You can see what we have so far at https://archive.org/details/dlarc .

Three years of QST NFL are now online, and I am working with the curator, Kaye Savetz, K6KJN, to eventually get all the issues that I have edited since 2014. DLARC can also scan paper issues. So if you have any stashed in your attic, let me know.

The Playground Amateur Radio Club will host a testing session at 10 AM CST, March 15th, as part of our 55th Annual Hamfest. Candidates must pre-register and have a Federal Reservation Number (FRN) or copy of their current license. Email PARCFWB@GMAIL.COM to pre-register or for more information.


ORLANDO
HamCation®
2025
CENTRAL FLORIDA FAIRGROUNDS AND EXPO PARK
February 7th, 8h, & 9th
Host of the 2025 ARRL Southeastern Division Convention
Start the 2025 Hamfest season by visiting the 2nd largest Hamfest in the United States. Come check out the latest in amateur radio electronics, accessories, and gear. Stroll thru the largest tailgate in the Southeast. Find great deals in our swaps building with more than 200 swap tables. You can even catch a great lecture or forum while you're here. Bring the family and spend some time before or after HamCation at one of our area attractions. Attending is so easy because we partnered with a select group of preferred hotels to provide you with great accommodations at special rates. So make HamCation your next vacation destination!
• Special Guest Speakers
• Over 150 Commercial Booths
• More than 200 Swap Tables
• Largest Tailgate in the Southeast
• Testing on Friday and Saturday
• Forums on Great Topics
• Onsite Scooter & Wheelchair Rentals
• Guest Friendly Florida Atmosphere
• RV Camping on Premises
• Free & Convenient Parking
• Visit Nearby Theme Parks
• Casual or Fine Dining Nearby
WWW.HAMCATION.COM
Friday/Saturday 9AM - 5PM, Sunday 9AM - 1PM.
Tickets are $25 at the gate.
Orlando HamCation®
4046 N Golden Road STE 150
Winter Park, FL 32792
(407) 841-0874
Orlando Amateur Radio Club

What's There to Like About Ham Radio

Lorilyn Roberts KO4LBS

I was intrigued by what I had learned, but more than that, I was shocked I had passed the test. Hey, maybe I CAN do this. I was so excited about ham radio that within a few months I had my Extra license and then went on to learn CW (Morse Code). All those dits and dahs—what can be more fun than talking to people around the world using a binary language of dits and dahs? As time passed, I discovered there was so much to learn, I couldn't possibly know it all. I needed to focus on just having fun. And that's where the real "fun" is. What you don't know, somebody else will help you with, and what you do know, you can share with others. It's like a big community of eccentric (in a good way) folks who like to do something most other people don't know how to do—mainly because they don't know about it.

When I showed up at Winter Field Day during COVID-19, I'd never even seen a ham radio before. Except I had bought one of those hand-held Baofengs off Amazon that my brother-in-law, who is a prepper, said I needed. Then, I discovered I needed a license to operate it. Where did I get one of those? I had no idea. But I was on a journey to learn about a world I never knew existed.

So, I asked a few folks in the local GARS group (Gainesville Amateur Radio Society) what they liked most about ham radio, and I share their responses below. Imagine yourself embarking on this fantastic journey, connecting with people worldwide. And if you are a woman, you'll love it.

I confess that I've talked to some of the most admirable men on the planet, who are always willing to help me. There aren't as many women in Ham Radio, so I guarantee that if you need help, there will be a kind gentleman to help you. And my goal is to get more women in it so we can return the favor in kind—get young adults in ham radio, even children. Who knows, if SHTF, we may play an essential role in emergency communications. And, as a prepper, it sure is nice to know I can talk to people anywhere, not just my neighbors, even though they are friendly people. Wouldn't you want to know what was happening if the internet went down, your phone went down, and satellites went down? Just saying.

Here's why ham radio operators love ham radio. Enjoy.

What do you like about Ham Radio?

Barbara Mathews, KO4TWZ

What I like about it is that I'm very curious and don't know what I will find when I get on the radio— a new person, an interesting person, a new place. It's like a treasure hunt; you never know where that radio signal will land. I love that.

Pete Winters W4GHP

Camaraderie amongst the amateur radio operators.

Tom Gause W4YGT

I found my spot in ham radio, which is Morse code. I enjoy studying it and using it.
You can talk all over the world with Morse code, and it's just a lot of fun.

Larry Rovak WB2SVB

Being a ham has been very enjoyable because whenever I meet someone, and they see my call sign, it's like a brotherhood. It's like you become friends. I'm also a firefighter. Again, it is like a brotherhood. It's a closed organization. People that you don't know suddenly become friends. It's everyone around the world.

Andy Bryson KO4MLY

What I like about amateur radio is all the people out there and the new people I meet.
You can enjoy good conversations.

Reid Tillery KO4RFT

My favorite thing about ham radio is emergency communications.

Glen Johnson KO4ILJ

My favorite is digital, where you don't talk. You sit and type. Digital is very low-power, so you can still reach a long distance even if you don't have a big antenna.

Mike Martell KK4KRZ

I like that you can communicate anywhere in the world without using any infrastructure.

I like that there are so many areas of interest in ham radio, and additions are being made all the time. No one can know all about ham radio.

I like to say to new hams and seasoned hams— never feel bad about not knowing something. Hams are always learning. I've never talked with a ham that we both didn't learn something during the discussion. I like that we keep ham radio clean and respectful. I would like to see more folks involved instead of mostly older men, but we can change that if we remain in contact with the youth and everyone we meet.

Lorilyn Roberts KO4LBS

Ham radio is fun. Women are much better at Morse Code than men, and I want to connect with women about a world they may have never considered. And, as a former homeschooling mom, what better way to teach young folks than with hands-on skills involving communication, math, science, physics, radio, history, outer space, and connectedness that goes to the ends of the earth? Ain't nothing else like it on the planet! What's holding you back? Go to ARRL.com to learn more.








Loften High School

Bob Lightner W4GJ

School students teamed up with the UF Gator club again this year for Winter Field Day. Our students learned how to put together a Cushcraft A3 beam with a 40-meter kit, safely operate a gasoline generator and equip our ECOMM trailer for a 30-hour operating event.

We moved the high school's ECOMM trailer to our Winter Field Day site at the UF NATL. It will be used tomorrow and Sunday! We will be teaming up with the UF club, so we will use **W4DFU**, since it is on the UF campus.

GARS Gets Going- At the Tour de Felasco:

Barbara Matthews, KO4TWZ

When the going gets tough, Amateur Radio operators get going! For the second year in a row, the Gainesville Amateur Radio Society (GARS) teamed up with the talented crew of people hosting the Tour de Felasco, a bicycle event set in a remote location without usable cell signal and no guaranteed access to repeaters. The Tour benefits care and preservation of the Trail. The Tour is not a race, but it is an endurance event of 50 or 62 miles through a challenging series of trails comparable to the difficulty level of a hilly century (100 mile) road bicycle route. It tests bike skills and endurance with rolling hills, short climbs, sinkholes, creek crossings, and log bridges. It never crosses a paved road!

This is where Ham Radio comes in. Members of GARS spent hours planning and setting up an off grid Net Control station, as well as three other stations along the rough and unpolished trails. GARS members who helped plan and coordinate (along with leadership from Ken Miller, KF4ULO) included President Terry Gordon, K4TMG, VP Shannon Boal, K4GLM, Barry Nason, KD0QIX, Andy Bryson, KO4MLY, and Larry Rovak, WB2SV.

GARS members on the trail were: SAG 1 Rest Stop: Dave Dockus KO4GGZ, Karyn Shander KQ4JBR. SAG 2 Rest Stop: Mike Martell, KK4KRZ, Hugh Minnich, KN4IIM. SAG 3 Rest Stop Terry Gordon, K4TMG, Dave Kaufman, K9OBW, Reid Tillary, K9RFT and Net Control: Debra Boal, KI4CVS, Shannon Boal, K4GLM, and Ken Miller, KF4ULO. Mike Martell, KK4KRZ, recapped Rest Stop #2: “The station we had used for the 146.550 simplex was a battery power supply, an HT with mic (setting in the cup holder), and a 2 meter, 30 watt amplifier. This was connected to a roll up J-pole antenna about 25 feet up in a pine tree. We used a separate HT to connect with the 146.820 repeater (in a separate cup holder: cup holders are handy).”

GARS event coordinator for the race, Kenneth Miller, KF4ULO, said that “Communications went smoothly this year, using simplex and primary frequency and the 820 repeater as backup. We were able to handle all communications on simplex after throwing a couple of antennas in nearby trees. It was a safe event, with no reported major injuries. Several times the operators helped vector support staff to stranded riders or others who had to retire early (due to things such as leg cramps). The day started in the low 50s, but as the race went on it got colder and skies got grayer. The wind became particularly biting. By the end of the day, everyone was looking forward to going home and getting warm.”

The sponsors of the event, the Friends of Felasco, were very happy to have GARS participate in the event and are counting on us to assist again next year. GARS provides something they cannot get otherwise: communication. It is Amateur Radio doing what it should: providing service while increasing skill sets and having a great time doing it! GARS encourages other clubs to seek out similar opportunities. For more information about GARS, see our website at https://www.Gars.club.







Winter Storm Enzo Jan 21 2025

ARES After Action Report

ARES® - Escambia County, FL

Submitted by:
Eugene Bannon KB4HAH

Continued on next page...

Summary

On Tuesday, Jan 21, 2025 at 1200, Escambia County Emergency ARES activated with the Level II (limited Activation) of the Emergency Operations Center for Winter Storm Enzo Jan 2025. Escambia County ARES initialed a voice net on the 146.76 (W4UC Repeater) as well as Citizen Band Radio Channel 19. Escambia County made ½ hourly announcements throughout this activation for any Emergency or Priority traffic and of Area Road Condition and closures. By Mid-Morning reports were already being received of snow accumulations of excess ½ inch from the north end of Escambia County (specifically north of the Cantonment area). By 12:38 (CST), Snow fall and Ice were reported to the Escambia County EOC with snow accumulation of over a ½ inch throughout the Escambia County including Naval Air Station, Pensacola Beach and Gulf Breeze.

At 12:49 (CST) Baldwin County Emergency ARES reported that Baldwin County Emergency Management has closed all roads in Baldwin County. By 12:56 (CST) reports of deteriorating road condition on US Hwy 29. BY 13:00 (CST) Escambia County announced that only essential use of vehicle transportation on Escambia County roads should be persons seeking shelter and Emergency Medical Services Traffic only.

BY 15:00 (CST) sporadic power outages were being reported in various neighborhoods in Baldwin and Escambia County. BY 18:00 (CST) Florida Highway Patrol Closed Intestate -10 Expressway from Mile Marker 5 to Mile Marker 31 (US Hwy 90 Interchange to Gonzalas Hwy Interchange). At 1900 CST Florida Highway Patrol further closed Interstate 10 From Mile Marker 5 to Mile Marker 70 (US Hwy 90 Interchange to the Okaloosa County Line). This also when Escambia County Closed all Bridges and overpasses including the 3 Mile Bridge to Gulf Breeze, and the Intercostal Bridge to Perido Key, Closing the Intercostal Bridge, Isolating the Perido Key Island from all normal EMS service.

By Direction of Escambia County ESF-2 (Andrew Hamilton), the following was **NOT** announced on our ½ hourly ARES Net announcements or made public. "*Any Immediate EMS care need in the Perido key area was to contact a Dr. Gordon for Initial treatment and then if any further medical treatment was required, the patient was to be transported to the Oyster Bay Dock (foot of Theo Baars Bridge) to be further transported by U. S. Coast Guard via appropriate fast water craft to the Palafox Piers for Immediate transport by Escambia County EMS, for further deliver to the nearest Hospital facilities deemed safe to access*".

21:00 (CST) Escambia County ARES shifted their ½ hourly schedule announcements to hourly scheduled announcements with continued road condition and closures.

By 2100 (CST) all Escambia County roads were to be closed. The only vehicle traffic allowed was EMS traffic only. By Wednesday Jan 22 2025; 08:00 (CST). It was determined that Escambia County ARES services were no longer required. Escambia County ARES demobilizes its operations and returned to condition III status awaiting any further reactivation of services if called on.

ARES was active for 20 hours during this event.

- Unknown number of local area Amateur Radio Operators were listening and standing by.
- 3 ARES members staffed the ARES room at the EOC throughout the event.
- Received weather, road conditions and power outages report from various amateur radio operators in the area.
- Assisted drivers (including truckers) with road and bridge conditions and directions on both 2-meter VHF ham radio repeater and on CB radio.
- At least 63.5 personnel-hours for this operation.

Radio Modes used

- Tactical net – VHF – Local ARES net on 146.76 repeater
  - Tactical Traffic with weather conditions, road/bridge conditions, and directions for drivers
- Citizen Band (CB) radio
  - Used to give directions to the truckers from the interstate to US 90, which was open.
- Operational use of the CB radio at the EOC for emergency operations

Continued on next page...

Observations and Recommendations

- Did not experience any major problems with WebEOC during this operation.
- Operations seemed to go well.
- The computer at Work Station 2 main Monitor was not operational. ESF2 will order new one after Emergency event is completed
- men's bunk room was full. Unable to find appropriate sleeping area. Slept in the ARES floor.
- Escambia County ARES Emergency Net Preamble need to have a check in by areas at the top of every hour. This will allow more activity from local amateur radio community and allow them to participate in the event without taking over the net with no operational traffic/chit-chat.
- Enclosure 1 is Escambia County ARES emergency Net Pre-amble for future ARES Emergency activation events.

VHF Log

Communications Log (ICS 309)

1. INCIDENT NAME				2 OPERATIONAL PERIOD	From:Date 250121	Time 0830
WINTER STORM ENZO					To: Date	Time
3. RADIO NETWORK NAME				4. RADIO OPERATOR (Name, Call Sign)		
ESCAMBIA COUNTY EMERGENCY NET - W4U(				PAUL - K7PCS | JOHNNY - KQ4JMS		
5. COMMUNICATIONS LOG						
Time (24:00)	FROM		TO		Message	
	Call Sign/ID	Msg #	Call Sign/ID	Msg #		
1037	W4UC		WB4EMA		CHECK IN - VERIFY ROAD CONDITIONS	
1226	W4SJ		W4UC		NATIONAL SEASHORE - GULF BREEZE - ICE	
1238	KE6MYV		W4UC		BACK OF NAS 1/2 SNOW W/ ICE	
1249	WB4EMA		W4UC		BALDWIN COUNTY ROADS CLOSING	
1256	W4UC				ANNOUNCEMENT - HWY 29 DETERIORATING	
1315	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1331	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1342	W4UC		WRUC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1400	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1415	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1427	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1500	WRUC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1503	W4BWB		W4UC		REPORT POWER OUTAGE IN SIMONOLE	
1532	W4UC		W4UC		JOHNNY - KQ4JMS ASSUMES THE WATCH	
1532	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1600	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1630	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1700	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1710	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY RESTATEMENT	
1730	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1800	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
					I-10 Is closed from mile marker 5 to mile marker 31	
1830	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
1900	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
					The I -10 bridge is closed	
1910	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY RESTATEMENT	
1923	KJ4PWA		W4UC		COPPER RIDGE IS WITHOUT POWER	
1929	N4DIA		W4UC		CANTONEMENT IS WITHOUT POWER	
1931	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT	
6. PREPARED BY (Name, Position)	Johnny/ Radio Operator		SIGNATURE		7. DATE & TIME PREPARED	1/21/25193

ICS 309-CAN

Continued on next page...

VHF Page 2

Communications Log (ICS 309)

1. INCIDENT NAME	2 OPERATIONAL PERIOD
WINTER STORM ENZO - PAGE 2	From:Date 1/21/25 Time 2000 To: Date _____ Time _____
3. RADIO NETWORK NAME	4. RADIO OPERATOR (Name, Call Sign)
ESCAMBIA COUNTY EMERGENCY NET - W4U(	PAUL - K7PCS | JOHNNY - KQ4JMS

5. COMMUNICATIONS LOG

Time (24:00)	FROM		TO		Message
	Call Sign/ID	Msg #	Call Sign/ID	Msg #	
2000	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2030	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2100	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2130	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2200	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2300	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
2400	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
250122					
0100	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
0200	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
0300	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
0515	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT
0630	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY TRAFIC ONLY ANNOUNCEMENT

6. PREPARED BY (Name, Position)	SIGNATURE	7. DATE & TIME PREPARED

ICS 309-CAN

Continued on next page...

Citizen Band Ch. 19
Log

Communications Log (ICS 309)

1. INCIDENT NAME				2 OPERATIONAL PERIOD From:Date 250121 Time 0830 To: Date Time	
WINTER STORM ENZO					
3. RADIO NETWORK NAME				4. RADIO OPERATOR (Name, Call Sign)	
ESCAMBIA COUNTY EMERGENCY - CH 19				JOHNNY - KQ4JMS | PAUL - K7PCS	
5. COMMUNICATIONS LOG					
Time (24:00)	FROM		TO		Message
	Call Sign/ID	Msg #	Call Sign/ID	Msg #	
1530	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
1630	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
1730	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
1800	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
1830	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
1929	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2033	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2103	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2133	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2202	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2232	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2300	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
**2033					Radio operator Johnny/KQ4JMS late entry
2330	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
2359	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0038	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0101	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0130	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0201	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0233	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0300	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0338	W4UC		W4UC		EMERGENCY ROAD CLOSURE ANNONCEMENT
0400	W4UC		W4UC		ANOUNCEMENTS RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT
6. PREPARED BY (Name, Position)			SIGNATURE		7. DATE & TIME PREPARED

ICS 309-CAN

Continued on next page...

ICS 211A CHECK IN LIST (COMMUNICATIONS)	1. INCIDENT NAME: Winter Storm Enzo Jan 2025	2. DATE: Jan 21-22 2025	3. INCIDENT NUMBER:	4. CHECK IN LOCATION ARES room at EOC

5. INFORMATION

PERSONNEL NAME	CALL SIGN	AGENCY	TIME	TIME	HOURS	LOCATION
Jan 21- 22, 2025						
Eugene Bannon	KB4HAH	ARES	0830	0800	23.5	EOC
Paul Stefon	K7PCS	ARES	1000	0700	21	EOC
Johnny Schaffer	KQ4JMS	ARES	1200	0700	19	EOC
		3 ARES members		**Total people-hours at EOC: 63.5**		

ICS 211A Escambia County ARES	6. NUMBER OF PAGES: _____1_____ of _____1	7. PREPARED BY (RESOURCE UNIT): Eugene Bannon	8. MISSION NUMBER

Time calculations:

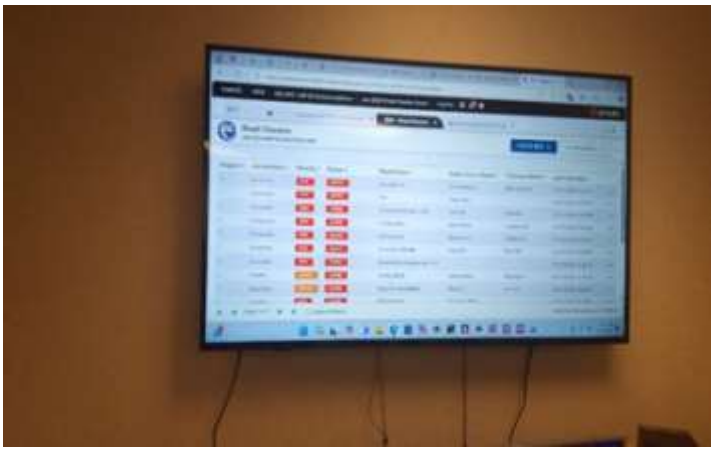
At EOC: 63.5
Planning, preparations, and documentation (including After Action report): 3 Total: 66.5 hours.

Paul- K7PSC Vehicle in front of the EOC Tuesday Jan 21st Night

Escambia County Public Safety Emergency Operation Center Wednesday Jan-22 Morning

Continued on next page...

Traveling down Hwy 29 Wednesday Jan 22 Morning



WEBEOC status of Road Closures for Tuesday Jan 21st 2025.

Johnny Schafer KQ4JMS CB-Ch. 19 station Operator

Paul Stefon – K7PCS VHF station operator

Picture of Gene-KB4HAH Tuesday Jan 21st afternoon during the height of the snow fall

Video shot of the Pensacola Beach during the Snow fall Tuesday Jan 21

Continued on next page...

Pensacola Beach Tuesday (Jan 21) afternoon

Video shot of the Pensacola Beach during the Snow fall Tuesday Jan 21

ENCLOSURE: 1

Escambia County ARES Emergency Net Preamble (Jan 2025)

Does ANYONE need the use of this repeater prior to starting the **Escambia County ARES Emergency Net?**

This is W4UC now activating the Escambia County ARES Emergency Net. THE 146.76 REPEATER is NOW in Emergency ARES operations Mode.

Calling all Amateur Radio Operator, this is W4UC activated in Emergency Operations Mode. This is a Directed Net. Station should not transmit until directed to do so by the Net Control Station (NCS). If for whatever reason we lose this repeater the alternate frequency is the 145.45 repeater which also requires a 100hz tone.
If any station not making this repeater can transmit on 146.76 simplex and ask for a relay.

Are there any **Emergency or Priority** traffic that need to be handled at this time?

This net WILL ALWAYS stand-by for any Emergency or Priority Traffic. Any station holding Emergency or Priority traffic **MUST** use the prowords:

"BREAK, BREAK, BREAK"

(Operator Note: the following is for initial activation and Repeated at the top of each hour (or when directed to do so otherwise)
Escambia County ARES Members:
At this time, we will take a list of ARES stations wishing to check in for this Emergency activation. To assist Net control station, in matching operators to nearest required location during this Emergency activation, the Net check-in will be done by area. Please hold your check-in until your area is called.

(**operator note:** follow the area check in sheet)

Now any NON-Ares check ins, please give me your call sign, county, Name and area location, when checking in.

(END of Repeat)

Continued on next page...

Ending the Emergency ARES Net:

This concludes the Escambia County Emergency Activation. We like to thanks the Amateur Radio Community for allowing us to operate this net without interference. We appreciate your patience during this emergency operations and allowing us to complete this mission. We want to thank the Five Flags Amateur Radio Assoc for the use of this repeater. This is W4UC now securing this net at (**Current time**) and returning this repeater back to normal amateur radio conditions. 73 and good (day/evening/night).

Playground Amateur Radio Club Testing

The Playground Amateur Radio Club will host a testing session at 10 AM CST, March 15th, as part of our 55th Annual Hamfest. Candidates must pre-register and have a Federal Reservation Number (FRN) or copy of their current license. Email PARCFWB@GMAIL.COM to pre-register or for more info.

Ham Radio Open House—World Amateur Radio Day 2025

To help promote amateur radio science and technology, and to honor the 100th anniversary of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU), ARRL is inviting radio clubs and schools to organize a Ham Radio Open House in April, built around World Amateur Radio Day (WARD) on April 18.
The event is intended to highlight the Amateur Radio Service for its development and practice of the latest radio communications and technology, and as a hands-on pathway into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields for the next generation.

In April, amateur radio clubs, school stations, and other groups will have the opportunity to advance public knowledge about ham radio by welcoming their communities into their stations for the Ham Radio Open House, as part of World Amateur Radio Day. The focus will be on scientific advancement and demonstrating cutting-edge technology. This is a chance to not only shape the conversation about modern ham radio but also to show how it serves as a steppingstone and testbed for many young people pursing STEM education and future high-tech careers.

ARRL has teamed up with HamSCI -- Ham Radio Science Citizen Investigation -- and the science community organization SciStarter to invite the public to participate in One Million Acts of Science during April, which is Citizen Science Month. By hosting a Ham Radio Open House at your group's station on April 18, you'll introduce individuals who might never otherwise find out about today's amateur radio, where science and technology intersect with fun and learning.

ARRL Public Relations and Outreach Manager Sierra Harrop, W5DX, said ARRL is excited to work with HamSCI and SciStarter on this project. "This is an exciting opportunity to really reclaim the public's image of ham radio and show them the modern, cutting-edge technology that's in use by many amateurs," she said.

Clubs are encouraged to showcase the latest weak-signal modes, such as FT8 using WSJT-X, or other digital modes. This could be a great opportunity to explore new areas of amateur radio and demonstrate how the service is at the cutting edge of electrical engineering.

Look for resources to help organize and promote the event soon. Find details at www.arrl.org/world-amateur-radio-day.

If You Teach Them

Reid Tillery K9RFT

There are around 750,000 ham-radio operators in the USA. There are about 2.6 million SCUBA divers. About 1 to 2 percent of the USA population has been skydiving at least once, that's about 3.5 million to 7 million people. I don't know how many are actively jumping.

People do all sorts of stuff. Why so many SCUBA divers and Skydivers and so few ham-radio operators? Well, for one thing, SCUBA divers and Skydivers offer regularly scheduled lessons to get you certified. Just about every dive shop in town has SCUBA lessons ongoing most of the time. And Skydivers offer lessons. You're not left to go online and try to figure stuff out by yourself as so often happens in ham radio. And who would want to be a SCUBA diver or skydiver whose only training was online?

Nothing wrong with online stuff per se. In fact, it's a great tool. I use it in my classes. But, the way I see it, it takes a high-quality classroom environment to bring ham radio to life for people. And it takes time (weeks) to do that. There are no quick fixes. You can't cram everything into a short, short class and hope to get great results. It's not about passing the test. It's about having a great and enthusiastic introduction to this radio adventure.

If we want to grow the ham community in our area, we would do well to start offering regularly scheduled classes. Anyone or everyone who wishes to teach, please let me know. I can help you with the curriculum for the Technician class. And you can probably get students through Facebook word-of-mouth.

One idea to attract new hams to the classes is to have fox hunts. You don't need a license to receive a signal, and that's all fox hunters need to do. Imagine using cheap Baofengs and homebrew directional antennas to track down a fox (a Baofeng HT and a Byonics controller) hidden somewhere around Gainesville, maybe San Felasco if the park folks agree. We all start within signal distance of the fox and have fun from there. The first to find the fox wins. Non-hams will rub shoulders with seasoned hams and some may decide to take a ham class and get licensed.
"If you teach them, they will come." Maybe not in droves, but a few each time adds up. Let's fill up GARS and ARES to overflowing. We can do it.

Call for QST Articles About ARRL Field Day.

QST, the membership journal of ARRL, seeks manuscripts about ARRL Field Day for possible publication in the June 2025 Field Day issue. This is your chance to share your -- or your club's -- Field Day successes and lessons learned, so other hams will benefit from your experience. Here's what *QST* is looking for:

- 1,200 to 1,800 words -- Tell the story of your Field Day operation with a "how-to" angle, so readers will understand how to duplicate your success.
- 2-5 high-resolution images -- Include captions that explain what's happening in the photos, the names and call signs of any hams pictured, and the name (and call sign, if applicable) of the person who took each photo.
  Send the manuscript and photos to qst@arrl.org by April 1.

GMRS and FRS radios

Karyn Shander KQ4JBR/ WRXH258

Tower Road Public Library Meeting Room / 3020 SW 75th Street / Wednesdays 2/19/25, 3/19/25 5:00-6:15 PM

These classes are designed for non-ham radio operators who want to know more about the use of GMRS and FRS radios.

If someone you know comes to mind, then please invite them. Classes are free.

Suwannee ARES® News

James Gordon Beattie Jr W2TTT

The month of January was somewhat quiet during much of the month, but finished with an active Winter Field Day weekend!

MONTHLY ACTIVITY

Coming out of the Christmas and New Year's holiday period, we were somewhat thankful that the weather in January 2025 was much quieter than that of January 2024. Last year we had a severe wind and rain event on January 9th that threatened, but spared Suwannee County of the tornadoes that fell on the Florida Panhandle and south Georgia. We activated the Amateur Radio station at the Suwannee County EOC for that event in a standby mode.

The weekly Suwannee County ARES Net was held on each Sunday evening at 8:30 pm on the 145.27 (offset -600 kHz, tone 123.0 Hz) W2TTT repeater. Additionally, several of us checked into the morning ARES HF net a few times during the month, but the weekly afternoon SARNET check-in perhaps only once. We need to do better, but our most active members have day jobs from which they can get away in an emergency, but have conflicts for routine daytime nets.

NFL SECTION ARES MEETING

Gordon Beattie W2TTT attended the North Florida Section ARES meeting in person hosted by the welcoming Orange County ARES team and our Section Emergency Coordinator Arc Thames W4CPD. The newly remodeled Orange County EOC was spectacular with ample information screens around the room and plenty of well-marked desks.

Additionally, there are several conference rooms that have clear windows that can be made opaque by throwing a switch.

Each desk position has AC power, Ethernet and a large pop-up screen with an HDMI cable for a user's laptop. These pop-up screens were quite impressive!

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The meeting had about a dozen people attend in person and another dozen online. Arc went over preparations for this year's hurricane season, the reality of boredom when providing a backup communications capability, the necessity of being communicators first and Amateur Radio operators second, and taking a low-key but helpful approach when helping in an EOC. Arc also asked for more inputs to the North Florida Section Newsletter covering our activities both in ARES and in Amateur Radio in general. Arc also covered procedures for contacting the State EOC from your local EOC and elsewhere.

The Simulated Emergency Test (SET) will be on Saturday, April 11th from 9 am - Noon Eastern Time. He noted our Spring date puts us outside and ahead of hurricane season and it deviates from the national SET date in October as at that time, we are either anticipating a hurricane, dealing with one or recovering from one.

Finally, it was mentioned that there will be an AUXCOM course during the week before Hamcation. This course is good training for all EOC-based Amateur Radio operators to expand their perspective on the broader requirements for communications. Further, operators who are willing to deploy to other counties should take the course and are encouraged to let Arc know of their availability for deployment. We need more volunteers in this role. Ideally, the operator will have completed the AUXCOM course and are working on completing their task books. However, others with suitable experience could be deployed to other counties if recommended by their Emergency Coordinator and by Arc as Section Emergency Coordinator.

WINTER FIELD DAY

This year the original plan was to combine the resources and personnel from Madison, Suwannee and Columbia County ARES teams. However, Madison County was able to secure a site and had a great experience under the leadership of Madison County EC Bryan Phillips K4BHP and AEC Jim Shanklin K4DBC. They had a solid operation with plenty of visitors.

The Suwannee ARES team and the Columbia Amateur Radio Society gathered at the Parish Hall of St. Francis Xavier Church on Rt 90 in Live Oak for a successful Winter Field Day operation bright and early on a cold and crisp sunny 24 degree morning to set up and operate.

Dalton KK4KSM and Daniel K4TWT prepping the coaxial cable for the 80m dipole.

As our group objectives were to expand individual skills, we started the day by building and erecting an 80m dipole and conducting an Anderson PowerPole tutorial session. The Pastor, Fr. Manuel Puga came by to see our operation and to offer a blessing which we appreciated.

In addition to the 80m dipole, we had an old Drake MN-2700 antenna tuner which allowed operation on several bands. Our other antennas were an HF end-fed and a 2m/70cm J-Pole.

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At that point, Jim KK4JIM and his son Hank KK4HNK started to make their first "contest" contacts on SSB and did well!

Daniel K4TWT brought his Yaseu FT-710 and 50A and 100A LiFePo4 batteries and solar panels and provided both CW and SSB contacts. Gordon W2TTT brought an ICOM IC-7300, an ICOM IC-705 and a Hiroyasu IC-780 Pro, 100A and 200A LiFePo4 batteries, various computers for digital modes and the antenna paraphernalia.

In the afternoon, Daniel and Dalton KK4KSM captured the bulletin and then set about making some digital contacts.

At mid-evening we shutdown and Jim, Hank and Gordon came back and operated starting early on Sunday morning.

Gordon W2TTT operating as the event winds down.

Contact totals were about 200 across at least six bands and all Winter Field Day objective multipliers were achieved except for QRP and those related to satellite operations. We had a visitor on Saturday that came from a GMRS contact in Lake City and several on Sunday from curious members of the Knights of Columbus and other members of the Parish. Overall the event was a huge success and reflected the spirit and practice of an emergency operation.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

February brings warm, comfortable weather. Use this time to complete or at least get a good start on your outdoor projects before it gets hot, buggy and stormy. Enjoy this time and be safe!

Get On The Air!

PlayGround ARC—Snow Days in the Panhandle!

DJ Stewart, KI4ZER

Tis it almost February? What an amazing month in Amateur Radio! This month has seen growth in multiple areas! Licensing is up, interest is at a peak, projects are being built, tested and utilized! The entire community is just in sync and Hams everywhere are communicating!

Circling back to the beginning of the month, the teams in the area are a buzz with planning for the new year! Upcoming events, Hamfests, Community Support, Nets, and Contests! The month of January has seen so much activity and excitement it is hard to know where to start! Of course, we here in Okaloosa County will start at the top!

The new year brought about the completion of a paint job on the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club's trailer! This design was inspired by KM4VKY! This is a major step in representation for the club and reinvigorates the progress that they wish to pursue to have a mobile commutations capability that has not existed in the area for over 30 years!

But wait, there is more! The North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club also assembled to perform work on their Club Station! As a team their members gathered to rework many lines of coax, install new connections, troubleshoot and repair antennas, and adjust the security of their tower. In sections on amateur radio towers is paramount! NOARC understands this and they periodically assess and improve their design as well keep in tune with their desired communication preferences! If you are curious, just reach out to the versatile team at the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club at W4AAZ.Org! We guarantee you will have a great time with their technical capabilities and love for all things communication!

Moving on in the month we found ourselves with the Playground Amateur Radio Club! They gathered on the second Saturday to administer testing resulting in one new Technician who also passed his General and four upgrades to General! If that was not enough, a few non-hams "walked-in" to the Club seeking information on how to become active Hams! Training, and Mentoring is underway by several Elmer's! PARC also is continuing upgrades to their Clubhouse and while not specifically Amateur Radio, the improvements are for their facility to keep everyone cool this coming summer!

Not everything is about facility improvements. Case and point, they began to invest in others interest in learning how to do things that take considerable time to master. A Repeater site visit inspired some members who have been filling vital roles and the learning of proper repeater maintenance is underway! Why is that exciting? Because this is one of those skills that often goes under looked until there is only one or two people that truly understand the maintenance and upkeep of repeaters that are in line to supplement nominal and emergency communications!

Speaking of signal transmissions, did you hear a FOX?! Multiple Hams in Fort Walton Beach sure did as the Team from the Playground Amateur Radio Club turned on their hidden transmitter! This one was complex yet fun as the PARC Team continues to find new ways of hiding it in plain sight while using reflectivity to confuse the signal seeker! Capping off the day, the participants gathered and held a small BBQ at anther members house who could not (but wanted to) make the event! Talk about inclusion!

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SNOW DAYS IN FLORIDA! Wait, what did you just say?! Yup! We had snow in the Florida Panhandle! Talk about fun in the sun! This rare event blanketed beaches and more and many had a good time taking full advantage of the rare opportunity to just enjoy nature! There may or may not have been some snowmen made and snowball throws occurring as well! It sure was a buzz all over the nets and radio frequencies to listen to the reports in local and external areas as to the amount of snowfall!

Following the snow event it is Winter Field Day 2025! With all the work that the North Okaloosa Club accomplished on their Club Station, they were able to host ant the Clubhouse and participate from their very own indoor station! This has not happened in a while and is a true representation of the Club coming together to achieve a common goal! Contacts were made via CW, voice, and on digital modes! Visitors came by and took the microphone while also learning logging software and traffic handling! What a great effort and hats off to NOARC especially the Activities Director and Vice-President KN4UDS for all the work put into leading the charge to ensure NOARC is always on the map!

NOARC is a diverse Organization and is always involved in the community as well as invested in each other! As they continue to grow and host events, participate in the community and host Hamfests in the fall they are mindful of focusing inward on the needs and desires of its members and affiliates. They plan and practice this wonderful hobby together! If you are looking for a robust organization with a great purpose, NOARC invites you to come and check them out and join their ranks! Bring your ideas here as NOARC expressively attends to its people in a very positive manner!

Speaking of Field Days, The Team at the Playground Amateur Radio Club (after verifying their chosen location had opened following the snow) mobilized to operate on nothing more than battery and solar power1 They met at Fred R. Ganon State Park in Niceville Florida operating a mix of Digital, VHF/UHF, HF, and satellite! Limited to park hours, the team and the visitors made the most of their time to transmit and make contacts! Some of them easy, and some of them exceptionally challenging! While PARC has a clubhouse and could have done it all from indoors, they chose to go and brave the elements in a public setting operating with deployable and extremely portable gear only! Even the Activities Director KQ4FRB took the helm and made multiple contacts on multiple bands! Why is that noted? Because she is typically being productive learning about all the set ups and the equipment involved! Her desire to learn and then turn around and teach others is a very large inspiration to the club and positively represents all who attend the events that take place. Think we are done there? Nope. The PARC team shut down ops on Sunday the 26th and returned to the Clubhouse for their Weekly Pile-Up to discuss how to make things even more portable as inspired by SOTA contacts they made! What a way to capstone an event designed around communicating with gear and each other!

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Upcoming Events of Note:

- **Feb 2, 2025 @ 1500**, the Playground ARC Pile-Up! Informal meeting/project/training day! 17 First St SE, Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 6, 2025 @ 1930**, the Playground ARC Tech Night! The Art of Direction-Finding Antennas! 17 First St SE. Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 8, 2025**, @ 1300, the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club in unison with the City of Crestview handles radio communication for the Crestview Mardi Gras Parade on Main Street! Historic Main Street, Crestview Florida! W4AAZ.ORG
- **Feb 9, 2025 @ 1500**, the Playground ARC Pile-Up! Informal meeting/project/training day! 17 First St SE, Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 13, 2025 @ 1900**, the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club Monthly Meeting! 4565 Live Oak Church Road, Crestview Florida! W4AAZ.ORG
- **Feb 15, 2025, @ 1000**, the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club hosts "Coffee in the Shack"! This occurs during the International DX – CW Contest! 4565 Live Oak Church Road, Crestview Florida! W4AAZ.ORG
- **Feb 16, 2025**, **@ 1500**, the Playground ARC Pile-Up! Informal meeting/project/training day! 17 First St SE, Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 20, 2025**, **@ 1930**, the Playground Amateur Radio Club Monthly Meeting! 17 First St SE, Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 22, 2025**, @ 3pm, the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club in unison with the City of Crestview operates the Crestview Community Unity Flashlight Walk! Volunteer Operators welcome! Meet at 198.N Wilson St. Crestview Florida! W4AAZ.ORG
- **Feb 23, 2025**, **@ 1500**, the Playground ARC Pile-Up! Informal meeting/project/training day! 17 First St SE, Fort Walton Beach Florida W4ZBB.ORG
- **Feb 27, 2025 @ 1930**, the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club Tech Night with KN4UDT! 4565 Live Oak Church Road, Crestview Florida! W4AAZ.ORG

Looking forward to **March** as well on the great schedule of Thursdays and Sundays, the Playground Amateur Radio Club invites all Vendors, Patrons, and Attendees for the 55th Annual Playground Amateur Radio club Hamfest! Get your tables now! W4ZBB.ORG

Join us for the 55th Annual Playground Amateur Radio Club Hamfest!
1958 Lewis Turner Blvd Fort Walton Beach Florida
Friday 3pm to 6pm
Saturday 8am to 1pm
Vendors set up Friday starting 8am. No public show until 3pm.
Vendors set up Saturday 6am. No public show until 8am.
The show closes at 1pm.
We offer:
Testing, *must pre-register must have FRN* (Federal Registration Number)
PARCFWB@GMAIL.COM
Testing will be at 10:00 AM CST
Indoor Booths
Food Concessions
National Vendors
Local Ham Radio Dealers
Area Club Tables
ARRL Representatives
Camping
Rv's Welcome
Reserve your tables and spots: PARCFWB@GMAIL.COM
$8.00 admission
$15.00 per table/spot
Boy Scouts in Uniform Free 12 and Under Free
90 and Above Free
Contact Information: PARCFWB@GMAIL.COM

Alachua Simplex Connection

Mike Martell KK4KRZ

The Alachua County Simplex Connection is a process to test area VHF simplex communications. The goal of the Simplex connection process is to determine what area amateurs can hear other amateurs and in-turn what amateurs can hear them using VHF simplex.

The process starts by designating a date, time, and test/net controller. This information is advertised to the Alachua area amateur community.

Next is the creation of an "Alachua County Simplex Test Data Form" (form). An Alachua County Simplex Test Team member (team member) collects the name and call signs of area amateurs who would like to transmit during the next simplex test. These collected names are used to complete a form (by another team member) and the form is posted on the Gainesville Amateur Radio Socie-

Alachua County Simplex Test Data Form

Simplex Frequency	Date/Time	Net Controller	Listening Station Callsign
146.55	11/20/24 7pm	Sample	GO4FY
NAME	**CALL**	**If heard mark "X"**	**COMMENTS**
Mickey Mouse	DI4SNY		
"	"		
"	"	X	Week Signal
"	"		
"	"		
"	"	X	
"	"	X	
"	"	X	
"	"		
"	"		
"	"		
"	"	X	
Minnie Mouse	M4CAT		
Location	**Antenna**	**Ant. Height**	**Radio (circle one)**
Boston	**J-pole**	20 Feet	Base Station Mobile HT

This form is for recording simplex transmissions.
Mark an X if heard or leave blank if not heard.
Put your call sign in box below "Listening Station".
After the simplex test please send this completed form via email to donaldduck@gmail.com

Continued on next page...

Once the form is posted area amateurs can down load the form and use it during the simplex test.

Amateurs participating in the simplex test must be able to switch between the VHF simplex frequency (now testing 146.550 MHZ) and the Alachua area repeater (146.820 MHZ).

The test begins on the 146.82 repeater with the test controller providing a brief introduction. The controller provides these following instructions.

1. Do not transmit unless requested to do so.
2. Talk slowly giving your name and call sign phonetically two times. (This insures there is time to switch between repeater and simplex frequency. Also there will not be two amateurs transmitting at the same time.)
3. When the transmitter is finished they contact the test controller by using the repeater.

The test controller than goes through the list of transmitters on the form one by one. Amateur stations listening (includes those transmitting) can follow the progress of the test on the 146.82 repeater even though they may hear only a few simplex transmitting stations.

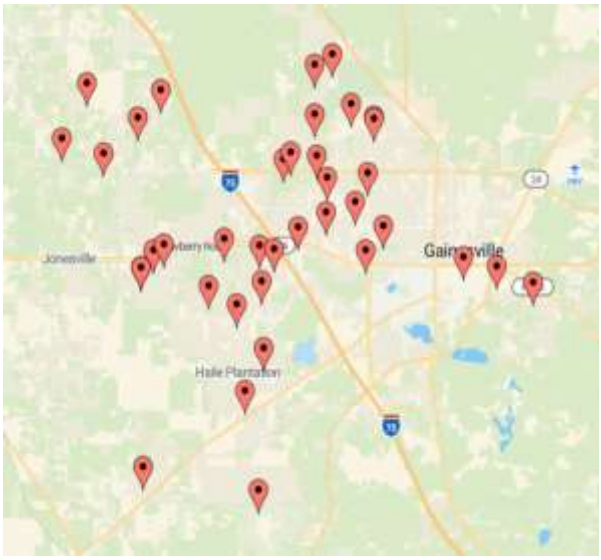
As the stations transmit amateurs will mark on the form stations they have heard and can make comments about signal strength or noise.

When all transmitting stations on the list are complete the test controller will ask for volunteer transmitters. If there are any volunteer transmitters the process is repeated for volunteer amateur transmitters.

When testing is complete the controller will remind the participants to email the completed forms to the email address at the bottom of the form.
The simplex data is collected in a spreadsheet which is available on-line. Area amateurs can look at the spreadsheet and determine who could hear their simplex transmissions. This is helpful to know who can hear them and also to determine how well their equipment works. Some participants check their VHF base stations, mobile stations, and HT's to see what coverage they have.

The spreadsheet has Listening stations going down the first column and transmitting stations across the top row. Where an "X" appears in the spreadsheet that is where a station in the first column can hear a transmitting station in the top row. There is a lot more information on the spreadsheet but it would take up to much space to show in this report.

The Alachua Simplex Testing Team also maintains an on-line interactive map showing the approximate location of the amateur stations (security prevents exact locations). (see sample below)



By clicking on the map bubble markers the call sign will appear.

Please note this simplex testing does not replace emergency simplex testing procedures. The Alachua area ARES team conducts emergency simplex testing to include relays and proper procedures to use during an emergency. The ARES team works with the simplex testing team to include using simplex team format during a recent simplex weekly check-in.

The following are the members who make the simplex testing possible;
Lorilyn Roberts KO4LBS Maintains the Alachua County Simplex Connection spreadsheet and co-manager of the simplex testing.
Eric Please KO4ZSD Maintains the Test/Net controller script and update the GARS simplex website.
Debra Bowl KI4CVS Maintains the Alachua Cty Simplex Test Data Form
Karyn Shander KQ4JBR Provides testing support
Dave Dockus KO4GGZ Provides testing support
Jeff Capehart W4UFL Provides ARES support of the simplex testing
Ken Miller KF4ULO Maintains the interactive map

If you would like more information about the Alachua County Simplex Testing email me at mikeham73@yahoo.com

What's The ARRL Done For Me Lately

James Kvochick K8JK

There is seldom an amateur radio event that happens without someone mentioning they are not joining the ARRL, because "they do nothing for me". If I'm in an inquisitive mood, I will ask them if they can name 5 things that the ARRL does…. sometimes they make it to three or four. Be sure and share this with everyone, ARRL members or not.

Founded in 1914 by Hiram Percy Maxim and Clarence D. Tuska, the original purpose was to create a documented network of relay stations to assist in furthering communications and amateur radio information. The awesome power of this was demonstrated in 1917 when a message was passed from New York to Los Angeles and an answer received in about an hour and 20 minutes. Yes, this was completed with CW – the original "digital mode".

Today the ARRL is the primary representative organization of amateur radio operators to the US government. It performs this function by lobbying the US Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Additionally, the ARRL serves as secretariat of the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) which performs similar lobbying activities before the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Administrative Radio Conferences (WARC).

Most of the operations of the ARRL is supported by a minimal paid staff, who function under the longer-term direction of 15 member elected board members, who are each backed up by an assistant board member. The directors are also responsible for appointing the executive team that runs the day-to-day operations of the league. Volunteers at several levels even within the headquarters location take on many tasks.

The divisions are divided up into sections. Each of the 71 ARRL sections are led by a volunteer Section Manager (SM), who is elected by their membership. The SM will most likely appoint several others to their team to fulfill various positions (Assistant Section Managers (ASM), Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) and others). There is a popular misconception that SMs report to Division Directors, and although many division leads seek data from the Section Managers in their area, Section Managers are connected directly to the ARRL Field Organization, and to the ARRL Field Services Manager.

ARRL Headquarters, Newington, CT

What Is The ARRL Doing For Me?

Here's my short list of what the ARRL is up to. Feel free to fill me in on what I've missed.

Advocacy Programs

- PRB-1 and Antenna Protection Legislation
- Lobbies for spectrum protection from intruders
- Continued lobbying for additional frequencies
- Represents the interest of US amateurs at the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU)
- FCC Rules Enforcement – education, Amateur Auxiliary and Official Observer programs

ARRL Laboratory

- Technical Information Service
- Testing and reporting of new equipment
- RFI assistance
- Social media programming

Continued on next page...

W1AW Station

Training and Bulletins
Operating "studios" for visiting amateur radio operators

Volunteer Exam Coordinator (VEC)

Supports the activities of many Volunteer Examiner (VE) teams who license or upgrade amateur radio operators

Publications

QST – Monthly journal of amateur radio
QEX – Bi-monthly journal of advanced amateur radio experimentation
NCJ – Bi-monthly National Contest Journal
On The Air – Bi-monthly publication explaining topics especially targeted at new amateur radio operators
ARRL Handbook – reference of many amateur radio topics updated annually
ARRL Antenna Handbook – the one stop source for antenna design and building information
More than 150 other manuals and books on a wide range of topics related to amateur radio and complementary technologies

QSL & Logging Support

Incoming and Outgoing traditional QSL card support
LOTW – Logbook Of The World – electronic support for contacts made everywhere

Training and Outreach

Training courses and material for all amateur radio license classes currently offered from the FCC
ARRL Teachers Institute – program to aid in education of qualified academic instructors who may be integrating amateur radio in various programs
Volunteer Instructors – supporting instructor volunteers in many geographies
ARRL Outreach program – supporting youth groups and schools
ARRL Foundation – Scholarship awards

Public Service

National Traffic System (NTS) – One of the core values that is still exercised when traditional communications channels may not be optimal
Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) – Amateur radios' unique blend of abilities and resources blended into many public agencies
EmComm education – continued education and training in support of the public agencies amateur radio can serve.
Public Service Honor Roll – local and national recognition of those amateur radio operators who serve in many of these volunteer roles

Volunteer Services

- Volunteer Counsel Program – helping to track and sometimes educate about local ordinances that may not serve the best interest of the public and the amateur radio community
- Volunteer Consulting Engineer Program – assistance ARRL members who may need help in meeting structural requirements in local zoning issues
- Technical Specialists – volunteers who bring their expertise in helping fellow amateurs resolve tough detailed challenges
- RF Safety Committee – helping members sort out and document RF safety issues
- Electromagnetic Compatibility Committee – reviewing and advising on both devices that might be interfered with or to amateur radio operation

Continued on next page...

On The Air Awards

- DXCC – Awards for communications with 100 countries
- WAS – Worked All States – contacts with all US states
- WAS – Worked All Sections – contacts with all ARRL sections
- VUCC – VHF/UHF Century Club – award given for a minimum number of Maidenhead grid location contacts per band
- A-1 Operator – Not just about the equipment, but also about how you utilize your amateur station
- Triple Play – confirmed communication with all US states on Voice, CW, and Digital modes
- Fred Fish Memorial Award – This award created to honor the achievement of W5FF for working stations in all 488 Maidenhead grid squares in the contiguous United States
- Morse Code Proficiency - evaluate morse code ability
- Mentor Award – recognizing the individuals who help in a positive way
- First Contact Award – acknowledging your first on the air experience

Contests

- Straight Key Night – sending (and hopefully) receiving stations that are not using anything but a traditional telegraph key
- Kids Day – getting young people on the air
- RTTY Roundup – another mode for transmitting text messages
- VHF and UHF contests – January VHF, June VHF, 222 MHz and up, 23GHz and up
- EME (Earth Moon Earth) contests – EME 23GHz and up, EME 50MHz to 1296 MHz
- IARU HF World – special callsigns for IARU member Societies
- Field Day – operations from many types of locations
- School Club Roundups – increased awareness of amateur radio club stations in schools
- Rookie Roundup – A contest targeting amateur radio operators licensed 3 years or less
- 160 and 10 meter contests – challenging operators on both a traditional low and high HF bands

It should be apparent that the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) has expanded their scope just a little from the days of Hiram & Clarence, and why I'm surprised that many amateurs can't name more than 3 or 4 things on what appears to be quite a list.

Visit ARRL Headquarters

You can really get the sense of how the ARRL runs by scheduling a visit. Details about this are on the ARRL website (https://www.arrl.org) . If you plan accordingly, you could even operate on of the 4 "guest stations" there!

You also have the opportunity to enter the ARRL Sweepstakes Contest (until December 2025).

ARRL Guest Operating Position

Sumter County ARES

Amateur Radio Emergency Service

501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Non-Profit Organization

2024 END OF THE YEAR REPORT

The year 2024 was an exciting and rewarding year for Sumter County ARES. The Sumter County amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) LLC has continued to play a crucial role in our community's emergency communication needs throughout the year. Our dedicated team of volunteers has provided communications support during local emergencies and pre-planned non-emergency events throughout Sumter County.

1. Sumter County Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Inc. was incorporated in the State of Florida as a Non-Profit Corporation. The Board of Directors are Mark Newby - President, / Treasurer.
2. Sumter County ARES became recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(C)(3) Tax- Exempt organization.
3. We established a bank account with a local financial institution.
4. General liability insurance was obtained for Sumter County ARES, Inc.
5. All positions in the organizational structure were filled except for the Assistant Emergency Coordinator.
6. Our membership grew to 19 active members.
7. Sumter County ARES obtained club call sign KS4SCA.
8. We convened twelve (12) general membership meetings and three (3) Board of Directors meetings.
9. We convened twelve (12) Sumter County ARES radio nets.
10. Several training sessions and exercises were conducted throughout the year.
11. A number of donations of equipment were made to Sumter County ARES.
12. SCARES activated and provided local support during Hurricanes Helene and Milton.
13. Partnering with local amateur radio organizations, SCARES participated in a number of non- emergency, pre-planned events throughout the year:
    a. Special Event Station K2S.
    b. Winter Field Day and ARRL Field Day.
    c. Presentation of amateur radio to a local Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics class.
    d. Fox Hunt locating a hidden transmitter.
    e. Presentation at the local Hurricane Exposition.
    f. Annual Halloween event.
    g. Hearts For Hour Hospital Bicycle Charity.
    h. Annual Lake Panasoffkee Christmas Parade.

We are looking forward to again serving our communities in 2025 !

Sumter County ARES PO Box 1034, Webster FL 33597 Main: (352) 254-4420 FAX: (352) 254-5861 www.sumterares.org

Want More Members?

Reid Tillery K9RFT

Would we of GARS and ARES® like to have more members? I'm pretty sure the answer is YES.

So, how do we get new members? We start by attracting new people to radio. How to do that?

There are numerous ways, I'm sure. I have an idea for one way that might work.

It's called ARDF--amateur radio direction finding, sometimes called radio orienteering, or fox hunting. The "fox" is a small transmitter such as this one or this one. Participants in the game use HTs and Yagis to hunt down the fox. When you get close, you may have to attenuate the signal by using an attenuator or just by removing the HT's antenna. You proceed in the direction of the strongest signal until you locate the fox. You may decide to get one line of direction and home in on the fox along it. Or you may decide it would be quicker to move to a different location and triangulate the fox. If you're a team, you may want to spread out and triangulate the fox that way. There can be several foxes on a course, each fox transmitting on a different frequency. Whoever finds all the foxes first, wins.

The beauty of fox hunting is that non-hams can use HTs and Yagis in the sport. Imagine teams of hams and non-hams working together to compete. Do you think some of those non-hams might get interested in radio and want to get a license? I'm pretty sure they would. Do you think some of them would want to join GARS or ARES? I'm thinking they would. Do you think everyone would have a good time? I'm thinking they would.

It seems to me that Gold Head Branch State Park in Keystone Heights would be a great venue for such an event. I've taught numerous land-navigation classes there and the terrain is great for cross-country traveling. It's wooded but not so thickly wooded in most places to be a problem. They currently use the park for orienteering events, so cross-country, off-trail, travel doesn't seem to be an issue.

Imagine a joint event put on by GARS and ARES. But before we do an actual event, I'm thinking some practice events out at Gold Head would be in order. These would be smaller, informal events in which we search for a transmitter or two to get familiar with the equipment and how to best work things. In short, we need to learn the art of fox hunting. Some of us are going to need to build a Yagi for our HT. Or maybe we want to use a homebrew loop. This sounds like a lab-and-lunch activity. Once introduced to the sport, I could see non-hams eagerly building antennas along with some ham friends. I'm guessing some of the non-hams will end up getting licensed. Some of those new licensees will join us in GARS and/or ARES.

Do we want to use attenuators or not? They're not absolutely necessary. How well do loop antennas and attenuators work in this activity?

Once we're thoroughly familiar with the activity, we can start to promote it. To start with, it could be just an informal gathering of hams and their non-ham friends to have fun and use radios. At some point, I suppose, it could transition to a full-fledged ARDF event. Heck, this sport even has world championship events.

We could start out with a simple weekend fox hunt out at Gold Head. Some of you may even want to camp out there. If you really want to get rough and ready, I suppose this event could even take place at night. Whoa! That adds a whole new dimension.

Maybe we need more rough-and-ready events to attract younger and more rough-and-ready hams to our activities. After all, they will be the ones to carry ham radio into the future.

Communication Chaos Post Helene

Brett Wallace NH2KW

I volunteer with the ARES group that supports the Alachua County EOC, NF4RC. When shelters are stood up prior to hurricanes, I take my radio and make sure we have comms with the EOC. When the call for radio operators to help out in eastern Tennessee and north-western North Carolina, I again grabbed my radio and went.

The key to effective disaster response is adaptability. Many "Lessons Learned" have come out of the responsa and recovery in the wake of Hurricane Helene. This article looks at the relief efforts of a non-profit Organizations utilizing an Amateur Radio réépater in the vicinité of Jonesborough, TN in an attempt to provide a view from two angles and derive practices that may be adopted by any organization interested in utilizing amateur radio services for support. This case study shows how a response organization adapted to unforeseen challenges effectively.

"This repeater is for amateur use only and for emergency situations. There'll be no more traffic on this repeater unless authorized by the trustee, XX4XXX, otherwise the repeater will be shut down and no further use will be allowed, XX4XXX."[1]

Side One: Grindstone Ministries normally performs disaster relief and recovery to tornadoes out of Oklahoma. When Hurricane Helene and flooding waylaid vast swaths of communities in eastern Tennessee and northwestern North Carolina, Grindstone Ministries responded. When they realized the magnitude was greater than previous responses and were unprepared to be able to communicate with their teams, they reached out to AmRRON in the HAM radio community for help. More than a dozen licensed Amateur radio operators went to help with communications. As with any time you're traveling, they looked up the repeaters in the area and programmed the radios. All of the repeaters in the area were listed as "open" and the access codes were available. A licensed amateur radio operator would travel with the chainsaw and heavy equipment teams to very remote locations to open travel routes and bring needed supplies. The teams performed this dangerous work knowing that a radio operator would be able to pass emergency information and coordinates to helicopters if they were injured. There was no cell phone coverage and no ambulance would be able to come to their rescue. The Federal government as well as both Tennessee and North Carolina governments had made state of emergency declarations. In FCC parlance, there is no pecuniary interest. In anyone's book; this is life-saving communication. Everything should be good-to-go, right? During these volunteer disaster recovery operations, the trustee declared the repeater off limits *and* someone started keying their microphone, also known as jamming, to prevent the repeater from providing communication.[2]

Side Two: The members of the local HAM radio club already had their utilities restored and no remnant of the hurricane in their visibility. Life was back to normal, until others outside the club start using the repeater…….. As Paul Harvey would say, "And now, the rest of the story."

A tiny community around Little Germany Road had been completely cut off from the outside world. Most of the homes had not been damaged by the raging waters, although some were. After the storm, many neighbors greeted neighbors that they had never met before. The community pulled together with help hinging on the good will of a particular person, Gordon, KK4FPD. He was the only licensed Amateur in the community. He used his 5 watt Baofeng radio to reach a person he'd never talked to before through a repeater. This person, Terry, KQ4MDM, reached out to the Sheriff who was crucial in coordinating support to this cut-off community. The Sheriff coordinated with military helicopters through the EOC to bring supplies into the town as well as evacuating citizens that desired to leave.

One of the well meaning activities that took place; a local HAM radio club donated Baofeng radios to the community. The Sheriff brought them over on one of the helo trips. These radios had the repeater frequency programmed. As per FCC regulations, the repeater can be used by unlicensed individuals in an emergency. Well, unlicensed individuals began using the repeater right away; with no training on radio etiquette or procedures. It started making coordination with the Sheriff difficult. People began chatting about everything and spreading rumors. Additionally, there was an instance where one of the new radio owners interjected into a discussion with the Sheriff that he was not a part of.

Now, add this into the equation for Side Two, and the tolerance level for their repeater being used for unintended purposes had significantly diminished. It must be recognized that the trustee that made the statement at the beginning of this article is an upstanding member of the community. He even hiked a propane tank on his back to the top of the hill, where the repeater is, to allow for it's continued operation.[3] Was the trustee within his rights? Yes, the FCC does allow this: "Limiting the use of a repeater to only certain users is permissible [97.205 (e)]."[4]

An option for the trustee may have been to provide guidance for proper usage of the repeater when he overheard it being used in an incorrect or illegal manner to find a mutually agreeable accommodation that would allow the club members to return to their normal lives while allowing for outside volunteers to help people in dire need of assistance.

I want to take a moment and address a recurring comment. "Shouldn't the non-profit organization have brought their own gear, to include a repeater if they needed one?"

Continued on next page...

While it is important at an individual level, and an organizational level, to be as prepared as possible, let's look at some of the obstacles to complete comms independence.

1. This is a non-profit organization, every dollar spent on radio gear represents resources not directly helping the affected community.
2. The radio communicators were all volunteers and brought their own gear. An extra repeater to throw in the truck is not a common load-out item. Repeaters and duplexers, and the equipment needed to tune the duplexers, can get expensive real fast.
3. Many of the volunteers had a Technician license, ruling out the possibility of using HF in every case. HF digital modes were used frequently and successfully throughout this response.

It didn't cross anyone's mind to think a HAM radio club would be unwilling to share the airwaves with the volunteers, yet it was.

How Grindstone Ministries responded was to no longer use this specific repeater. They received a donated 50W GMRS mobile station which allowed them to utilize a GMRS repeater in the area. Fortunately, most of the HAM radio volunteers already had a GMRS license or were able to attain their license and continue to assist using handhelds.

Lessons learned:

1. During a disaster response/recovery, it may be advisable to designate two or three individuals with access to a repeater and provide just-in-time training, and provide FRS radios to the rest of the community to coordinate with the designated individuals.
2. The volunteer organization may want to take a few minutes and reach out to the owners of the repeaters they intend to use.

I will be publishing an AAR/LL on Amazon, "Hurricane Helene, How HAM Radio Helped the Helpers." All proceeds will go to Grindstone Ministries.

1. How a Baofeng Radio Operator Saved Little Germany, KM4ACK, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2MrbHckviE Timestamp 1:11:59
2. ib. Timestamp 48:06
3. ib.Timestamp 40:48
4. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-97/subpart-C/section-97.205

Growth Over Time Through Amateur Radio

J. Gordon Beattie, Jr. W2TTT, ex-WN2CAM, ex-WB2CAM, ex-N2DSY

I am about to turn age 67 this month and am in my 50th year as an Amateur Radio operator. As I turned 17, I was anxiously waiting for the extremely slow process of getting my license to come to fruition. Both the Novice and Technician exams had been taken and the waiting game was in process, not to be fulfilled until July of 1975. That got me thinking about where the last fifty or sixty-seven years have led us.

Much of my initial ham shack was based on 1940s Army ARC-5 receivers and transmitters, a 1940s Navy TDQ 2m transmitter and some older 1950s and early 1960s ham gear. Today, I have numerous SDR and hybrid SDR radios going up to 10 GHz.

Reflecting on this dramatic change of equipment, I asked myself, "What communications gear and technologies did we use across that period that we no longer use?" Further, "To what fundamental purpose do I use the communications equipment today?"

In answering the first question a few ideas came to mind. Some of us have used a phone with no dial. Some of us have had a six button (1A2 Keyset) phone in our homes and an acoustic coupler modem with a pre-Apple/pre-IBM computer. Some of us can remember and recognize their first use of the strings, "ATDT" and " +++ " and know that they are in use in cell phones today. Some have used a Morse Code key because we were required to do so. Many of us have used a first, second, third and then the rare fourth (digital) generation facsimile machine and have used both Telex and TWX machines and know that their paper tape formats are different. Some may recall the requirement to identify in CW when using RTTY (Radio Teletype) with Baudot code and the prohibition of ASCII in Amateur Radio. A few may recall when packet radio wasn't yet AX.25 or VARA, and when mesh networks and MANETS were only described in papers and not on the air.

Finally, we can recall the magic of live international television "Via Telstar" and can contrast that with today's global interactive video meetings with virtually no appreciable delays because of extensive worldwide fiber networks.

Because of advanced communications, we have seen much acceleration in global awareness and friendships on a scale never before seen in human history. Groups with common interests can emerge organically and globally in a few hours.

Now the question is whether we can leverage these highly evolved communications tools and our experience as communicators to enable personal and community growth and resilience, or will the communications technologies just become efficient channels of suspicion, conflict and privation? While we've grown up, have we as a society grown, too?

We as Amateur Radio operators have a lot of experience with electronically-mediated communications. Sometimes it's been good, sometimes not, but as experienced communications practitioners, we have the opportunity to reflect and bring forth wisdom. This wisdom is best expressed by being a good example to, and with, others. Young people won't respond well to preachy, cranky or territorial "old farts", but with a twinkle in our eyes, and an unbridled enthusiasm for Amateur Radio activities, others will be drawn in. Think about that as you talk about and demonstrate your operations and activities to others and our wonderful Amateur Radio community will grow.

Postscript: Back in the 1980s at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Dr. Murray Turoff (dec.) and Dr. Roxanne Hiltz created an electronically-mediated lab, the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES), where different interest groups with wide geographic spreads could conduct their business while being studied. They are the authors of *The Network Nation*, a book that is described as "the seminal book that helped define the electronic frontier".

My friend, Tom Moulton W2VY was a student at NJIT and worked in the EIES lab. Through Tom, the nascent Amateur Packet Radio community became an interest group to be studied as we worked out protocol and network issues interactively online. We caused, experienced and endured the same nonsense that you see online today in social media. Some of us learned from that experience and have grown to be more temperate and wise online thanks to Tom's efforts and those of Drs. Turoff and Hiltz and other members of the EIES staff. Many thanks to all of them for that growth opportunity!

Alachua County ARES(R) / North Florida Amateur Radio Club

January Happenings!

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

Busy Year 2024 In Review. A few years back, one of the Emergency Manager staff asked me to write an overview document of what we had gotten done that year -- so of course, I did. Every year I've tried to compile such a report. In 2024 we had an *amazingly busy year*, with over 2,800 hours reported to ARRL, and 328 volunteer hours deployed in 3 hurricanes, potentially netting the county $60,000 in federal reimbursements We were in the top 10% in our category in two Field Days, and pursued a bunch of building projects. Some of the blow-by-blow can be seen here: https://www.nf4rc.club/club-history/2024-year-in-review/ Our Emergency Manager responded that she found it "beyond impressive."

Learning new skills

We're gearing up for Winter Field Day; we plan to try a "remotely controlled station" to help give us more frequency-diversity, possibly putting stations on both DIGITAL and CW of 20meter for example. **Earl Sloan KI4OXD** has good experience at using Windows Remote Desktop, and we also examined TeamViewer. We think we can do Remote Desktop over the 2.4 GHz Mesh system that **Earl McDow K4ZSW**, **Mark McDow KN4POZ**, and **Susan Halbert KG4VWI** are planning

January TechNite (our every-first-Thursday night zoom technical talk) was on remote-controlling stations (https://www.nf4rc.club/how-to-docs/tech-nite-compendium/psk31-2025-winter-field-day-remote-operations/) with great information from Fred Glen K9SO (https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=zn6XEORCTsg). We think we can operate PSK31 by remote control, and likely with video overview of the equipment for better situational awareness. The equipment will be in a travel trailer, and can also be operated in person. It is going to be COLD!! Because of the huge RF separation between that station's antenna and our EOC antenna, they have complete freedom within the rules to change bands.

Incident Action Plan. Organization of our WFD effort can currently be reviewed (https://www.nf4rc.club/winter-field-day-2024-iap/) but that document will move to a permanent location after the event. (Yes, the title has the wrong year, oops.)

Better Power Systems. We struggled over whether to try for the WFD "emergency power" multiplier. We did this as a 4A during 2024 Field Day, but it is very difficult at the Alachua County EOC because we have NO penetrations for power cables. (The facility has its own magnificent generator, but that doesn't count in Winter Field Day.) We even held a LabNLunch to make accurate worst-case measurements of radio frequency interference from DC inverters used to power computers....and got great data that leads us to better purchases. David Huckstep W4JIR's BESTEK 1kW pure sine wave inverter (pictured) did quite well in our tests, and with an outboard simple commercial filter, was fairly "quiet." (https://www.amazon.com/BESTEK-Inverter-Digital-Display-Charging/dp/B07XYR1BS3) **Rosemary KI4QBZ's** 350W unit also did well. More of those will soon show up in our group! Several of our group purchased 100-AHr car-battery-sized LIFEPO4 batteries that even have Bluetooth power management! (https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09L89LW3P) But our group is consensus-driven and at our January 2025 meeting after good discussion we concluded it was a "bridge too far" for our EOC situation, so we'll use "shore power" inside the EOC.

Antenna Multiplexing. Our EOC has only ONE high-frequency coaxial cable, so once again we'll be using our 6-band Antenna Multiplexer....cobbled together by our group and occasionally needing a bit of "maintenance." (https://www.nf4rc.club/how-to-docs/antennas/adding-6th-band-alachua-county-sextuple-multiplexer/)

Continued on next page...

Growth? We aren't really doing great at "growing." Many of us have hit the 5-year expiration of our background checks and the Emergency Manager is trying to get us into the Alachua County volunteer system for background checks. **Leland Gallup AA3YB** with his background as a JAG Judge, has helped with a MOU they have written to apply to individual volunteers. **Reid Tillery K9RFT** is holding his SECOND Technician Course with great results, using an interesting set of instructional materials. The photo to the side shows a group of new Technicians visiting our EOC under Reid's tutelage (far right) with **David Huckstep W4JIR** answering a question.

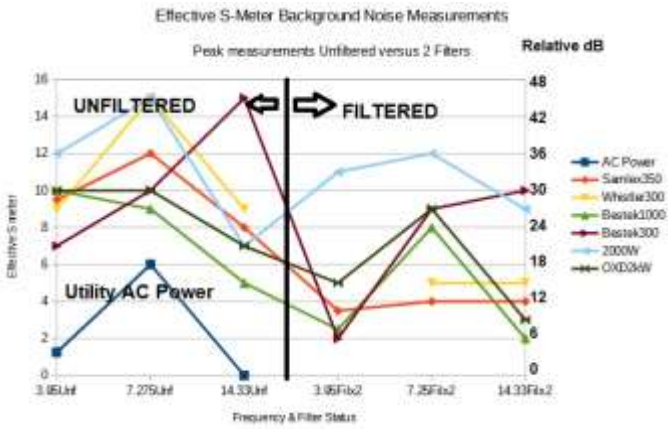
I picked up the same materials and am working with an 8th grade student where I part-time teach. Our skill sets are really doing great, but capturing new people who are altruistically willing to get out there and serve where the Emergency Manager deploys them -- well, we aren't doing so fabulous at that.

Alachua County ARES(R) NFARC Website:	https://www.nf4rc.club/
Contact Email:	docvacuumtubes@gmail.com
Groups.io forum (open to all; 91 members)	https://groups.io/g/NF4RC
TechNite (7PM 1st Thur every month)	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89530741792
Calendar:	https://qsl.net/nf4rc/CALENDAR.html

Alachua County Jan 2025 LabNLunch: Mitigating DC Inverter Noise

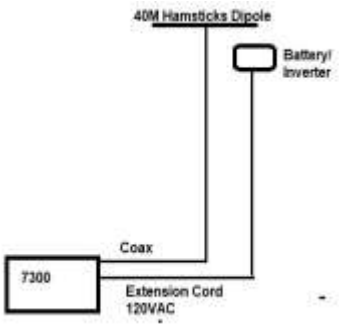
Gordon Gibby KX4Z

Our group is often confronted with the need to operate standard laptop computers for many hours, alongside HF transceivers. Many laptops require voltages in the 18-20VDC range, and DC-to-DC converters can be problematic for producing radio frequency interference. Also there is the concern of damaging expensive laptops with an incorrect voltage. Often it is simpler to use the manufacturer-supplied laptop charger, and simply provide it with 120VAC. Many of these chargers are in fact their own switching power supply, with an input DC power supply stage, and thus can function well even with a modified-sine wave "AC" input. Having 120VAC available also has many advantages in a disaster environment.



The problem remains that many DC inverters also produce quite significant radio frequency interference by themselves. Our group has produced several versions of common- and differential-mode filter systems to mitigate inverter-produced RFI. The January 11, 2025 Alachua County LabNLunch made measurements of baseline RFI from multiple volunteer-owned DC inverters, and measurements after adding mitigating filters.

MEASUREMENT SYSTEM



We set up a measurement system **designed expressly to emphasize noise from the inverters**. A compromise antenna of two 40-meter "ham stick" type elements connected to make a dipole was set at about 8 feet outside the front door and porch. Only about 10 feet from this compromised antenna, battery and inverter systems were placed (so the antenna could easily pick up radiated noise). Further, both coaxial cable and 120VAC extension cord spanned about 50 feet from the front of the house back to a table with the ICOM 7300 measurement radio, near each other. A coaxial RF common mode filter at the transceiver was bypassed to further increase sensitivity to common mode currents in the extension cord, which was used to power the 7300 for inverter tests. **This is obviously a truly worst-case situation, designed to make inverter noise quite visible and allow us to work at mitigating it!**

Getting objective readings requires some effort. The S-meter scale on the ICOM 7300 is known to approximate 3 dB per S-unit. (See: https://geekblog.febo.com/?p=378) However, the dB markings above S9 are roughly correct. Those dB markings were converted to equivalent "Icom S-meter readings" and relative dB values are also indicated in the graph of the measurements.

Preamp #2 was used for all measurements, to increase sensitivity. For each measurement, an LDG auto-tuner was used to maximize impedance matching (with proper identification). A baseline was first taken with the system powered by utility AC through an MFJ 4230 switching power supply. The baseline is shown in the lower left portion of the measurement graphs in dark blue.

The obvious "peaks" in the 7 MHz reading compared to the other bands may likely result from the compromise antenna being originally manufactured expressly for this band. The S6 reading for noise on AC utility power is typical in my home situation for that band. The 3.5 MHz readings are quite low and probably result from the poor antenna performance at that band. However, the same antenna was used for all tests, and optimally tuned for each test.

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As detailed above, the physical setup was designed to make inverter noise prominent. Our group was properly surprised after making the baseline measurements with the 7300 powered from a battery and then using utility AC to the MFJ power supply. **Powering from one of the DC inverters made a horribly obvious increase in noise! Everyone was quite impressed.**

For each type of inverter tested, measurements were first made without any filters, and then with two filters on the AC output of the filter:

(1) Right at the AC output of the inverter under test out on the porch, a CW4L2-20A T EMI Filter rated at 20Amps AC, available at https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09NND96FQ. This utility filter appears to be similar to https://www.reelenelectric.com/product/20A-Single-Phase-Double-Pole-Guide-Rail-Type-EMI-Filter.html, with a published common- and differential mode specification of 60 to 80 dB reduction in common- or differential-mode noise in the 1-20 MHz range-- but those measurements are made in a laboratory 50-ohm environment.

(2) At the end of the extension cord by the radio and DC power supply, a simple common mode filter of 9 turns of extension cord around a FT-240-43 ferrite was used for all tests, after initial tests with the Samlex 350 inverter showed the addition of the 2nd filter reduced noise by approximately 10 dB at 3.5 and 7 MHz. We built these filters in a 2020 Lab-NLunc (https://www.nf4rc.club/how-to-docs/lab-n-lunch-projects/common-mode-ac-line-choke/) (Additionally, only for the Samlex 350, the measurement also included a five-turn wrap of the DC inverter input wiring around an FT-240-43 core; this was judged too difficult for most other inverters due to physical wiring issues and lack of time.)

CONCLUSIONS

The results some clear conclusions and some inverter winners as well. **Using two filters on the AC line was a clear winner over simply one at the inverter output.** Adding common mode filtering on the inverter inputs was difficult to impossible on some of the filters due to their size of wire and lengths available. We judged it should be done if possible. The Bestek 1000 watt sine wave inverter (https://www.amazon.com/BESTEK-Inverter-Digital-Display-Charging/dp/B07XYR1BS3) had impressively reduced RFI compared to most other inverters, and the Samlex 350 (https://www.donrowe.com/Samlex-SSW-350-12A-p/ssw-350-12a.htm) also performed quite well. While we have less experience with the Samlex unit, two of our members have used the BESTEK unit and reported little problem. I would recommend either of those modestly priced inverters for groups needing emergency access to 120VAC power.

Filtering Solar Panel MPPT Charger with Industrial Filter: Initial Data on Noise Improvement

Gordon Gibby

Switching power supplies generate large amounts of harmonic signals, due to the Fourier Transform of abrupt level changes. The fast switching reduces heat dissipation and increases efficiency, but increases harmonic generation. The MPPT (maximum power point target) chargers currently favored for maximum efficiency in solar panel power systems not only use switching power supplies, but they vary the switching parameters often, tracking the maximum power transfer point as the solar radiation on the panels changes minute by minute. They are a significant part of the high frequency 3-30 MHz (HF) undesired radiations produced by solar power systems.

In this test, an industrial 50-amp single stage common- and differential-mode AC line filter was utilized to attempt filtering of the RF signals emanating from an Outback FM-80 MPPT controller through the heavy-gauge wiring to the solar panels. (https://www.mouser.com/ProductDetail/TE-Connectivity-PB/50FC10B?qs=3sBZtWOgbifJ3hS9Momjeg%3D%3D) The filter is the silver box in the lower right of the photograph. I was able to get AWG #6 stranded wires to insert into the screw-tightened connection points. In a permanent installation, the filter would need to be inside a protective box. As the switching system makes abrupt transitions, RF energy is transferred back to the input wiring from the solar panels. The lengthy wiring from the basement to the rooftop then appears as an "end-fed antenna" for the interference, with the mass of the solar panel equipment/inverter/batteries and ground connection as the counterpoise for this undesired antenna.

My physical situation in our Black Mountain NC family home is worse because the solar panels are only yards from the feed-end of an end-fed 135-foot amateur radio back yard antenna. There aren't many other options with the available space and roof.

The monitoring amateur radio station used for measurements utilized an HF Signals sBitx Version 2 transceiver, which presents signal levels in a "waterfall" with a graticule that approximates 10dB per vertical division, based on an examination of the underlying software. While absolute measurements aren't given, relative measurements to possible improvements are easily measured.

Background noise levels (between obvious true signals) were measured by observing the waterfall graph between local time 11AM and 12:15 PM during very sunny conditions on Dec 31 2024., for three conditions:

(1) solar panels disconnected from system;

(2) MPPT controller activated with solar panel input; and

(3) MPPT controller activated with industrial filter on input from solar panels.

The intermediate frequency amplifier gain was maintained constant at 100% for all bands; upper side band was utilized, with a bandpass of 2.8 kHz, and frequencies near the bottom of the 80, 40 and 20 meter amateur USA bands were studied. MPPT interference signals were easily recognized by their digital music type sound and the loudest signals were attempted to be measured.

Arbitrarily assigning "0" to the bottom visible graticule on the waterfall and positive dB numbers to the lines above, the following data were collected:

Approx Frequency	Background Noise without solar	Noise from MPPT controller with solar	Noise from MPPT controller with filtered solar	Improvement due to Filter (dB)
3.5 MHz	40-50 dB	90-110 dB	90-110 dB	minimal
7 MHz	20-30 dB	80-90 dB	60-70 dB	~ 20 dB
14 MHz	10-20 dB	30-40 dB	10-20 dB	~ 20 dB

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Confirmation of typical receiving situation: The baseline noise measurements, when translated to generally match the published rural HF noise levels by the ITU-R, visually appeared to match the rate of decreased noise expected on the higher bands, suggesting the measurement system is sufficiently accurate.

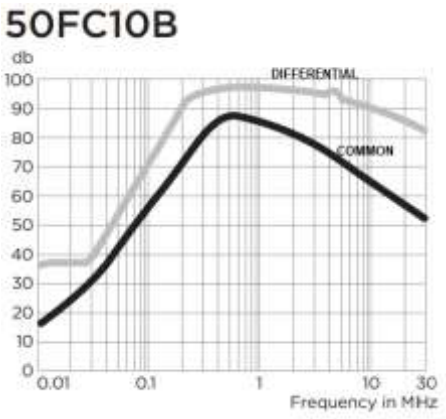
DISCUSSION

Little improvement was noted on the 3.5 MHz frequency, while a very significant 20dB improvement was noted on both 7MHz and 14 MHz bands. For the 14MHz band, which is popular during the daytime for long distance contacts, the effect was to virtually **eliminate all interference from the solar panel system**. On the 7 MHz band the improvement was not as dramatic. If one "S" unit is considered to be 6dB, the noise peaks on the 7 MHz band were reduced to approximately 6.5 S-units above the background noise, so strong signals would still be received even if they coincided with one of the harmonics of the MPPT noise. The MPPT harmonics can move around their frequencies as solar conditions change, e.g., as clouds go by.

The improved rejection of higher frequency undesired noise by the filter may be explained by higher reactance of its internal common mode choke, interacting with a potentially lower-valued end-fed impedance of the panel wiring, at higher frequencies. At lower frequencies, the noise filter inductor may have only modest reactance, while the input impedance of the end-fed wiring may be quite high, and therefore little reduction is obtained by the inductor. The ground connection provided to the bypass capacitors on each line in the filter may have undesired RF length due to wiring length of the AC ground in the house. An improvement might be to add a nearby ground rod and ground the filter to it.

Although frequencies above 14 MHz were not tested during this experiment, the generally improving performance with higher frequencies suggests the filter will be a substantial help for daytime communications on favored long distance bands. Happily, the prime usage time of the 3.5 and 7 MHz bands is nighttime, when the poor performance of the filter doesn't matter -- because the MPPT controller goes to sleep with no solar input. Thus the system can substantially improve the usefulness of an amateur radio station with a nearby solar panel system.

Published noise rejection of the industrial filter in a 50-ohm test environment:



NF4AC Preliminary Glimpse of Winter Field Day Participants—Full Report Next Month

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

Getting closer to the end, we were all just having a grand time.

Our fearless SATELLITE CREW in action!

For the first time, he knocked it off and got some SLEEP overnight!

2/3 of our NETWORKING CREW. That nicely fininshed box beside them has a network switch that connects all the laptops in the facility with the MESH system that zooms out of a secure building to our remote station. about 300 yards away.

MERT

Marion County Sheriff's Office
Division of Emergency Management

Marion County Emergency Radio Team MERT) Report to:
Preston Bowlin, Director – Division of Emergency Management
Statement of Operations 2023-2024

This report to the Division of Emergency Management Director Preston Bowlin is intended to summarize our results in meeting the goals and objectives as stated in the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Division of Emergency Management Marion Emergency Radio Team (MERT) Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) Revision: July 2022[1].

Executive Summary

Goals:

Marion County Sheriff's Office Goals[2] of the MERT program are:

1. To create a solid network of communications operators within Marion County for use during any incident or event.
2. To support Emergency Management with the skills and equipment of the communications operators.
3. To enhance support communications throughout Marion County.

Performance Summary:

√ Membership increased 36% in 2023 and 23% in 2024 (37 volunteers total today).

√ Volunteer Participation Levels (hours) increased 28% in 2023 but decreased 32% in 2024.

◊ The decrease resulted from reduced hurricane activation timeframes, fewer shelter openings, reduced equipment/system repairs required, fewer shelter inspections allowed and reduced participation at community events.

√ Attendance at Community Events promoting MERT activities decreased by 60%.

√ Training Classes, Exercises and Special Events increased 22% over 2023.

◊ The increase resulted from use of the new MERT Skill Book and New Member Orientation Guide being used as the primary training guide.

◊ MERT conducted two (2) Exercises at the north extremity of Marion County.

√ Three (2) members passed higher level FCC License test increasing MERT capabilities.

√ The School Shelter Inspections conducted by MERT personnel continued in 2024 but was limited by MCPS personnel and support resources (janitorial and IT staff).

√ Three (3) hurricane activations were supported (equal to 2023) and only six (6) school shelters were staffed (6 less than 2023).

√ The Division of Emergency Management purchased new 2-Meter repeaters and new controller-computers which replaced 15-year-old units. Installation was delayed until early 2025.

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Conclusion:

MERT submits it has continued to meet and exceeded the organizational goals noted above. With your leadership and your staff's encouragement, MERT performance was enhanced by the ongoing support provided to prepare for and deliver critical emergency communications (EMCOMM) support to the Division of Emergency Management, whenever called upon.

The following summary of activities, meetings, training events, significant projects and activations is provided in documenting MERT's specific occurrences executed during the biennial report period. A more detailed report by month (2024 MERT Highlights) is enclosed.

Membership and Volunteer Hours:

In 2023, membership increased by 8 (36%) over the prior year while volunteer participation increased by 1,278 hours (28%). In 2024, membership increased by 7 (23%) but still lags pre- pandemic levels in 2019 by 9. Total volunteer activity levels in 2024 decreased from 2023 levels by 1,871 hours (-32%). This is below 2019 hours volunteered by 1,654 (-36%).

2023 Volunteer hours per person was 193 (16/mo.) but fell in 2024 to 106 hours (9/mo.).

- While the decrease results from the factors mentioned above, another element is thought to result from under-reporting by volunteers.
- A renewed focus in 2025 will be made to bring additional attention on this important task of membership.

MERT Membership	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Members	46	26	20	22	30	37
Membership Change from Prior Year	-	-20 (-43%)	-6 (-23%)	+2 (9%)	+8 (36%)	+7 (23%)
Volunteer Hours	4,578	2,459	2,488	4,517	5,795	3,924
Volunteer Hours Change from Prior Year	-	-2,119 (-54%)	29 (1%)	2,209 (82%)	1,278 (28%)	-1,871 (32%)
Volunteer Hours/Year	-	96	124	205	193	106

Attendance at Community Events:

To increase awareness and invite new members to join, MERT leadership and its members participate in community events. However, during 2024 participation decreased 60% resulting from an extended leave of absence by the Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator along with fewer invitations received.

Training Exercises and Special Events:

Participating in formal radio nets and designed Exercises is vitally important for maintaining critical Emergency Communications (EMCOMM) knowledge and skills. Each month, MERT members participate in training Net's and Exercises towards those objectives in maintaining local EMCOMM organizational communications, regional inter-agency practice and national communications capabilities. In 2024, MERT had from 30 – 40 training events, exercises and meetings each month with approx. 150 – 200 individual member participations. [Note: Participations fell from 200 – 250 in 2023.]

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Local MERT Meetings and Radio Nets include:

MERT Weekly/Monthly EOC Meetings
WINLINK Challenge (Weekly)
Call Voice Radio Net (Weekly)
MERT D-Star Radio Net (Weekly) MERT
Marion County CERT Roll Call Net MERT Roll (Weekly)

Local Auxiliary Radio Nets include:

Marion County ARES (Weekly)
HEC – MC Hospital Net (Weekly)

Regional/Statewide Radio Nets & Exercises:

SARnet (FDEM statewide for all EOC's) (Weekly)
ARRL North FL ARES Net (Weekly) FDEM Region 3/4/5 EOC Exercise (Monthly)

National Radio Nets & Exercises:

MERT 20 – 8-hour Radio Exercise (Annually)
SHARES Radio Net (FEMA) (Monthly) (Local, National and International communications)

School Shelter Inspections:

In 2023, six (6) school shelters were inspected, tested and all passed. Three (3) shelters scheduled were not completed. In 2024, thirteen sites were inspected and tested with eight passing (8). Four (4) schools scheduled were not completed. One (1) site (Forest High School) failed as school employees moved the MERT antenna connection into an unsecured and open hallway without MERT communications or proval. In addition, during Hurricane Milton, West Port High School's radio connection in a small room off the gymnasium was flooded. T an electrocution hazard and is not approved for further operations by MERT. MERT is pleased overall that school inspections are now a r curring and important "pre-hurricane" event.

Hurricane Activations and School Shelter Staffing:

MERT was activated for two hurricanes in 2022 (Hurricane Ian and Nicole). In 2023 , MERT was activated for three (3) hurricanes (Debbie, Helene and Milton). Twenty-two members participated in these events staffing the EOC and school shelters. Members participated in SARNET and SHARES EMCOMM's while activated.

Significant Events and activities
2023

MERT receives the Meritorious Unit Award: MERT receives the 2022 Meritorious Unit Award from Sheriff's Woods for the major its contributions, planning, preparations and life-saving actions during Hurricane Ian in support to the MCSO Division of Emergency Management.

EOC Tower Re-cable Project: In late-2022, MERT identified the 15-year-old cables on the EOC tower were damaged resulting from sun and UV exposure. Replacement equipment was approved and during late-March 2023, the entire tower was re-cabled. Volunteers contributed 29 man-days (224 Hours) to complete this very significant and complex project using upgraded equipment and procedures.

EOC Radio Room Re-cable Project: After the EOC tower was completed, volunteers re-wired the radio room and added UPS units at each radio station in upgrading and hardening the communications capabilities to further improve MERT's reliability during emergency activations.

Training Skill Book & New Member Orientation Guide: Since Sept. 2022, members undertook a major project to complete a total rewrite of these documents into a combined 20-page resource. The new format provides each member a list of specific activities through four steps of increasing knowledge and skills resulting in becoming fully trained in supporting MERT and the Division of Emergency Management.

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2024

MERT institutes new Training Focus: Following the adoption of the Training Skill Book & New Member Orientation Guide, leadership and members instituted monthly training events and activities consistent with the topics and activities detailed in the four steps increasing the members knowledge and skills specifically related to MERT's EMCOMM focus and objectives. The preliminary results of the 2025 Membership Survey indicate volunteers support the targeted training.

NVIS Antenna Training

Members expanded their training on understanding the principals and use of the unique NVIS antenna for moderate-distance (up to 400-miles) EMCOMM operations. This is especially important in maintaining communications with the FDEM state EOC in Tallahassee as a backup to the existing SARNET 70 cm network now in place. This focus will be continued in 2025 researching solutions to MERT's 24x7 radio communications capabilities in HF bands.

New Communications Hut at Sherriff's Complex Tower

Members transitioned its radio systems into the new state-of-the-art communications hut which will improve the quality and reliability of its operations, especially during emergency events.

Increased Field Exercises

MERT members conducted two Exercises from the Price's Scrub State Park in northern Marion County in testing its capabilities in a remote "deployed" location. Operations were conducted on multiple radio bands successfully with contacts from local, state and distant locations in five (5) nearby states.

MERT created new NVIS GO KIT

To increase its EMCOMM radio capabilities, members created a specialized antenna GO KIT for the NVIS antenna we were gifted by former MERT Coordinators Roger Staley and Leon Jurcyszyn. This resource allows radio contacts with stations up to 400-miles away.

Summary of Operations

2023 and 2024 continued MERT's continued enhanced activities in elevating the major accomplishments by the increasingly EMCOMM skilled and talented amateur radio volunteers supporting the Division of Emergency Management and the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

Overall, total volunteer hours fell for 2024 but overall membership increased.

On behalf of the entire MERT membership, we thank you and your staff for the significant support provided and proudly submit this 2023 -2024 Statement of Operations biennial report for your information documenting our overall results in meeting MERT's Goals.

Harlan Cook
MERT Coordinator

References:

1. Marion County Sheriff's Office, Division of Emergency Management, Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT) Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) ; Revision: July 2022.
2. MERT Goals; Section I. Introduction, Part C. Goals, page 5.

"From Classroom to Airwaves: The Journey of New Ham Radio Operators"

Randy Tanaka KF6CC

On a chilly Saturday in Santa Rosa County, a new breed of communication savants emerged as they earned their first stripes in the realm of ham radio. As a spectacular achievement, all 13 individuals in the class successfully passed their Technician-class licensing exam on January 18, sparking an exhilarating new chapter in their lives. One deserving individual even advanced further to earn his General-Class Ham Ticket!

You may wonder, who were these dedicated individuals undertaking this unique endeavor? The class consisted of multiple Santa Rosa County Deputy Sheriffs, an emergency dispatcher, and several retired military personnel, all united by their curiosity and passion for ham radio operations.

The group convened over two Saturdays at the Santa Rosa County EOC, immersing themselves in the intricate world of ham radio. This wasn't just a dry technical class - it was a hands-on, engaging experience that culminated in each new Ham receiving a brand-new HT.

But this achievement doesn’t signal the end; rather, it marks the beginning of a fascinating journey. There's an enthusiasm spreading through our First Responder community, as more and more individuals express interest in becoming Amateur Radio operators, while current Hams show a desire to upgrade beyond Technician Class. To cater to this growing interest, additional classes will soon be scheduled.

So, here's to our new radio enthusiasts, the fresh faces of the amateur radio world. As they adjust their dials and tune their antennas, we can't wait to hear their voices over the local repeater. Congratulations to each and every one, and may your journey as Amateur Radio operators be filled with amazing discoveries, fruitful connections, and incredible adventures.

FCC Testing Information

Daytona Beach Amateur Radio Assn (DBARA)
- Monthly, third Monday, 5:30 PM, prior to meeting
- Lehman Building, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Registration Required
- Info: https://dbara.org/testing/

Hog County Amateur Radio Association, Bushnell FL
- First Saturday, 11:00 AM
- Cross Connection Church, 1451 West County Road 476, Bushnell, FL 33513
- Info: sumterVE@gmail.com

Lake ARA, Leesburg FL
- Monthly on the 3rd Saturday, prior to meeting. (Except December)
- 8:00 AM
- LARA Clubhouse (11146 Springdale Ave, Leesburg – off of CR 473)
- For more information and registration, contact: Dave Templeton N4NG, 386-804-2806 n4ng@icloud.com in advance of the meeting.

Lake Monroe ARS FCC Testing, Sanford FL (LMARS)
- Third Saturday of every month
- Seminole County Sheriff's Office, 100 Eslinger Way, 1st Floor, Sanford, FL
- Registration Required
- For more information and registration, contact Bob Cumming, W2BZY, 407-333-0690 or w2bzy@cfl.rr.com

Milton Amateur Radio Club, Milton FL
- Check date at miltonarc.org
- Walk-in
- Bagdad United Methodist Church
- Info: Chuck, N4QEP, merlinman3@yahoo.com

Orlando Amateur Radio Club
- First Wednesday
- 5:30 PM, Walk-ins allowed
- ARRL/VEC
- William Beardall Senior Center 800 S Delaney Ave Orlando FL 32801.
- Info: testing@OARC.org Robert Cumming, 407-333-0690

Santa Rosa County FL ARES® Testing (Walk-in)
- Information and dates can be found at srcares.org

Testing information is subject to change. Check with the testing venue to confirm the testing session and requirements.

Seminole County
- Every month on the third Saturday
- 9:15 AM
- Seminole County Sheriff's Office off SR 17-92, on 100 Eslinger Way in Sanford, FL
- Info: Bob Cumming, W2BZY, w2bzy@cfl.rr.com

Silver Springs Radio Club, Ocala FL (SSRC)
- Go to http://k4gso.us/class/ to signup for classes
- Go to http://k4gso.us/test-signup/ for testing. Testing is held on the 2nd Tuesday of odd months at 7 PM.
- Note http://k4gso.us/ncvec605/ is requested to be filled out before you show for testing. It is best to download the form and open it as a PDF so you can fill in the blanks.

Suwannee ARC, Live Oak, FL
- Last Saturday of the month
- Suwannee Regional Library
- Contact Gerald Guy, geraldlguy@gmail.com

Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society (TARS)
The Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society (TARS) has begun limited License testing. Please refer to the following for the updated testing dates and requirements for individuals wishing to take exams. https://www.k4tlh.org/getting-started/license-testing

West Volusia Amateur Radio Society
- Second Saturday of each odd numbered month
- 6:00 AM
- St. Johns Lodge #37, 2557 N. Spring Garden Ave, Deland FL
- Info: https://westvars.org/testing

Gainesville Amateur Radio Society
- 1st Saturday of even numbered months
- Tech day two weeks after testing
- https://gars.club/Testing.html

Hernando County Amateur Radio Association (HCARA)
2nd Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM
For details and to register—http://www.hamstudy.org and go to **Find A Session**
Exam cost is free. FCC charges do apply

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Designated ARES® **DSAR Reflectors & a DMR Talk group?**
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REF046B – NFL ARES®
REF046C – NWS Mobile, AL SKYWARN
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