

Exercise Plan

Fall 2015 Texas MARS/ARES/ RACES COMEX

Oct. 9, 2015 – 18:00 To 21:00 hours CDT

Oct. 10, 2015 – 08:00 To 15:00 hours CDT

This document contains Planning information for any Emergency Communications Group or individual interested in participating in the Fall Interoperability Exercise.

This document is to be used at user's discretion and is solely for informational purposes.

PRELIMINARY

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Exercise Objective

As with any exercise the intent is to activate, test and revise the readiness and operational capability and procedures of any and all communications groups including RACES, ARES®, response groups, agency installations and individual amateurs along with their ability to communicate under stressful conditions using radio only. It is also a test of the ability of participating unit and individual stations to test interoperability communications with MARS, State/Local RACES and served agency stations.

Schedule

Main activities are on **October 10, 2015, from 08:00 CDT hours to 15:00 hours CDT**. Traffic objectives and test communications may be started at 18:00 hours CDT October 9 to coincide with the start of MARS exercise.

NOTE: All messages, voice and data should begin and end with the phrase,

“* THIS IS AN EXERCISE ***”.**

Scenario (simulated)

A widespread rolling outage of public utilities is expected from October 9th across the state of Texas including portions of neighboring states along the Texas border. This outage will affected telephone service, cellular service and electrical distribution, rendering these services inoperable for extended time periods. All active Emergency Communications groups are being asked to provide communications support to their local supported agencies. Groups are requested to activate their members to bring their stations online and prepare to move emergency traffic by HF radio until the public utility systems have been restored to operational status. Although this type of scenario may not require a large scale field operations it should be considered as an alternate objective.

Participation

All Emergency Communications Groups and individuals are urged to participate in this exercise. All should create unique ICS213 content in response to the scenario as well as initiating their group or personal plan. Considerations should be given to the following in all plans:

- The Internet is unavailable throughout the entire area – possible out of state units may have the internet
- Sporadic and no phone connectivity – Texting may have better success
- All traffic and messaging shall be conducted via radio
- Exercise supported Agency amateur radio capabilities
- Where possible, support EOC's and DDC operations where dual ARES®/State RACES operators are available and with EM/DDC leader's approval
- Encourage inter county communications (contact neighboring ECs and plan – they may have capabilities you lack)

- Plan for HF voice and data communications with NTX HF net, state ARES net and HF Digital stations outside of your city or county
- All stations regardless of location should operate on back-up power for the exercise duration

Additional exercise considerations for a group's scenario:

- Shelters and points of distribution may be activated (water and cooling stations)
- Evacuations may be needed (stranded populous due to lack of electricity)
- Mutual aid may be required
- Possible mobilization of resources (voice, digital or both) supporting other units
- Groups are encouraged to initiate digital messages to and from individual members. Please use the NIMS version of the ICS 213 for radio messaging
- All time notifications are Local DST 24 hour notation

Send a copy of your scenario and plan to your communications group leader.

Where possible, encourage local served agencies to be involved in the exercise and if not participating give notice of the exercise.

Military Auxiliary Radio Service (MARS) Participation

MARS operators are an integral part of the interoperability plan for amateur radio. Contact with local MARS members should be considered to facilitate interoperability among all the amateur services. MARS may be in need of ARES® members to assist with cross frequency traffic between groups.

MARS operators, beginning at 08:00 CDT Oct 10th, and on the hour until 12:00 CDT, will check into the NTX ARES HF net and the state ARES net to; 1) pick up traffic destined for the SOC, 2) arrange schedule and frequency for exchange of digital traffic via radio and 3) return traffic from the SOC.

Special function MARS station Winlink addresses are in the ICS 205A for this event.

The SOC and Camp Mabry (CCG) stations are supported by Army MARS.

SCHEDULE:

SATURDAY 10 OCT 2015

A. SCHEDULED LIAISON OPERATORS

0800 – 0900 CDT - TBA

0900 - 1000 CDT - TBA

1000 - 1100 CDT - AAA6TXX

1100 - 1200 CDT - TBA

Resources

N5TW is the designated Message Pickup Station (MPS) for Texas. There are others out of state so if N5TW is unavailable check the data base in RMS Express or RMS Trimode. Deposit traffic inbound for the State EOC with N5TW. Pick-up traffic may also be made via connections with N5TW's station. N5TW is also a VHF link to the SOC.

An ICS 205 with exercise frequency information will be posted prior to the exercise.

An ICS 205A will also be available prior to the exercise with personnel and agency email and phone contact information.

Active RACES (especially dual-hat organizations) groups should establish a liaison station for non-RACES message contact and exchange. This station call and frequency should be periodically announced on RACES nets and provided to NTX HF Net Control.

The North Texas ARES® HF net will be active on 7277.5 daytime or 3860 nighttime per normal procedures.

The Texas State ARES® HF net will be active on 7285 daytime or 3873 nighttime per normal procedures

Winlink is the defacto standard for digital traffic within Texas ARES® and is the primary software for this exercise. The ICS 213 (NIMS) format should be used although plain text may also be used.

- Use the ICS 213.rtf 213 NIMS version with WordPad to keep file size to a minimum

Action Plan/Objectives

Emergency Communications Groups are encouraged to develop local content to exercise their specific responses to the scenario (additional local objectives may be added) and to train and develop their organizations. For example;

- With the simulated loss of power to many home and agency amateur radio stations, the deployment of field/mobile stations in support should be considered in planning for this exercise
- Emphasize working with Red Cross and local officials for supply and communications. Include getting status information back to the State Operations Center (which may be simulated if not able to contact) and communications group leaders.
- Liaison with the NTX HF net should be established to check in and if necessary arrange for digital contacts for traffic movement. Only the designated liaison station(s) need to remain on the HF net after checking in and out. In addition, checking in with the state net is encouraged
- Local VHF/UHF nets should operate per local procedures
- Emergency Communications Groups should test interoperability with neighboring counties and or cities

- Individual emergency communications stations should participate in their local area exercise. If digital capability is available, send an ICS 213 (in rich text format (rtf)) with the following to your local group leader
 1. Operator(s) call sign
 2. Affiliation
 3. Location
 4. Local net frequency/tone if any
 5. Winlink capabilities - e.g. VHF Packet, RMS Express, HF WINMOR, Pactor, etc.
 6. Station power type (commercial, generator, battery, etc.)
- Emergency communications group leaders are encouraged to use the appropriate ICS forms in setting up and conducting their exercise
- Each emergency communications group is to send an ICS 213 (rich text format) with simulated situational awareness information based on this or your local exercise scenario to the State Operations Center (SOC) at (TEMPSOC@winlink.org) (The SOC may be simulated if it is not activated for the exercise) using any available radio assets. Include a copy to the emergency communications group leader. To be considered complete, you must receive a reply back from the SOC
- Where possible, served agencies should be involved in the exercise and should certainly be made aware of it even if not participating directly. Contact should also be made with local Army MARS members and RACES members to facilitate interoperability among all services
- Contact with local served agencies should be made as soon as possible to see if they will participate. Since some served agencies do not want to conduct an exercise on weekends, consider doing all or part of your local exercise during the week. You may want to do the exercise in two parts: one part during the week if your served agencies will participate, and one part on Saturday for maximum participation by your members who work during the week
- Participating RACES groups should establish a liaison station for non-RACES contact and exchange. This station should be periodically announced on RACES nets. Contact information should also be provided to NTX HF Net Control station for announcement
- The use of Winlink is the defacto standard for digital traffic with Texas ARES®. All groups are encouraged to initiate training sessions to enhance digital traffic skills
- Local communication groups that may use other digital communications programs are encouraged to establish a Winlink liaison station capable of out of city/county communications

After Action Reports

Each leader for participating groups will be expected to submit an after action report. Stations operating as a standalone entity should also submit an AAR. Reports should contain the following information:

- Name of group/city/county participating
- Number of participants
- Served agencies participating
- Were you able to submit an ICS 213 to the DDC or SOC?
- Did you get a reply from the SOC?
- Were you able to establish NTX HF Exercise net liaison? ARES HF net liaison?
- MARS station contact? (Y/N) If so call
- Summary of local operations
- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- Lessons learned
- Suggestions for future exercises

A text version of the AAR is in the Sample Text Reports should be sent to emergency communications group leaders Forms section.

Safety

Safety is a prime objective during this exercise. Deploying members should exercise special care in erecting antennas especially in areas with exposure to the public or near utility lines. Exercise caution with generators including proper grounding, fuel storage and fire safety. Pay special attention to personal safety.

Notes

The phrase, “*** THIS IS AN EXERCISE ***” should be used at the beginning and end of all voice and digital messages.

All digital stations running RMS Express should select N5TW as their Message Pickup Station (MPS) on the Hybrid Network Parameters tab under Files on the main page. This allows messages to stay within the state using the hub at N5TW. Select only one MPS.

Digital stations should download the Channel Lists for the Winlink programs they plan to use before the exercise. You may not always be able to download the lists via radio during an exercise or event due to the traffic loads. You may also find the lists at <<http://www.winlink.org/RMSChannels>>.

Use the service code, “PUBLIC EMCOMM,” in all RMS program set ups.

ICS 213 Forms should be edited and saved in a format to minimize size to improve transmission speed. Creating in and editing with Wordpad and saving in RTF (Rich Text Format) results in a file around 4KB versus 50KB for Word. Simple plain text versions of ICS 213s are especially efficient and acceptable. Keeping these forms small is CRITICAL to the success of this exercise! The use of the **NIMS ICS 213 version** is encouraged. A copy in .rtf format is located in the files section of the ntxares Yahoo Group.

Hint - Right click on a .rtf file
Highlight "Open With"
Select "Choose Default Program"
Select "Wordpad"
Check Box "Always use the selected program to open this kind of file"
Click "OK"

An ICS 205 and 205A will be available prior to the exercise with frequencies and personnel/agency radio email contact information.

Sample Text Forms – (cut and paste) RMS Express template versions of these can be found on the NTXARES Yahoo group as well as the Wordpad rtf version.

ICS 213

GENERAL MESSAGE (ICS 213 NIMS)

SENDING STATION MESSAGE NUMBER:

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INCIDENT NAME (Optional)

TO: (Name & Position)

FROM: (Name & Position)

SUBJECT:

DATE:

TIME:

MESSAGE:

APPROVED BY-

NAME:

SIGNATURE: /S/

POSITION/TITLE:

REPLY:

REPLIED BY -

NAME:

POSITION/TITLE:

SIGNATURE: /S/

DATE/TIME: (F5 if using Notepad)

Situation Report (SITREP)

NTX RDCAT SITREP

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EVENT NAME:

DATE/TIME: (F5 if using Notepad)

OPERATIONAL PERIOD:

REPORT NUMBER:

CURRENT SITUATION:

SUBMITTED BY: (Call)

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NTX SITREP

After Action Report

AFTER ACTION REPORT ([DATE] EXERCISE)

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DATE/TIME: (F5 if using Notepad)

REPORTING ENTITY: (Name of group/city/county)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

SERVED AGENCY(S) PARTICIPATING:

ICS 213 SUBMITTED TO SOC: (Y/N) / TO DDC: (Y/N)

SOC ICS 213 REPLY RECEIVED: SOC (Y/N) – DDC (Y/N)

NTX HF EXERCISE NET LIAISON ESTABLISHED: (Y/N)

CHECKED INTO STATE ARES NET: (Y/N)

MARS STATION CONTACT? (Y/N) IF SO, STATION CALL

SUMMARY OF LOCAL OPERATIONS:

WHAT WENT WELL?

WHAT DID NOT GO WELL?

LESSONS LEARNED:

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE EXERCISES:

SUBMITTED BY: (Call & Position)

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AAR-2015