MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team

Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

June 2022

MERT's primary role is to support all open Evacuation Shelters throughout Marion County during declared Emergency events. We also support EOC and emergency personnel along with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) with voice, image and data communications resources. "Call MERT…. When all else fails!"

Mark your calendars!

MERT Monthly Meeting

The June Meeting will be June 18th @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

See you there!

Monthly Meeting Update

MERT's May Monthly meeting was cancelled due to a conflict with the CERT Rodeo at the EOC scheduled for the same time. We will resume our monthly meetings in June.

MERT Wednesday Check-In's

As more Members are participating in the Wednesday Morning "Check-In's" (0900 to 1200 Hrs.), here's a summary on the topics and activities during May.

✓ May 4th 2022 Check-In

Group discussion centered on details and techniques of using Winlink. With the Marion County Public Schools now supporting the Winlink service at the Shelters, our focus has increased the importance of thoroughly understanding every aspect of Winlink.

Photo: Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO) shows Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) and Bill Sobel (K1WLS) his computer and lap desk used for contact logging and rig control when operating mobile. It included demonstrating the ability to configure the N3FJP Amateur Contact Log software to his specific needs. Editor's Note: An excellent resource for "Amateur Contact Log" and "Field Day Contest Log" software. See http://www.n3fjp.com/

"The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering:
Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good." ~Ivan Scheier

Members also helped in moving all of MERT's SHREK cases into the old ballistics shed (now referred to as the CERT/MERT warehouse). We also went to the upper loft of the warehouse (next to the MCSO Prison) to retrieve MERT inventory and move it into the new location. This is a major benefit to MERT as all our hardware, spare inventory, SHREK kits and batteries will now be in a location providing 24-hour unlimited access!

We want to thank Preston Bowlin, Director of Emergency Management for his support and leadership in making this available to MERT.

✓ May 11th 2022 Check-In

Members viewed a very informative video on propagation, then discussed the 12, 17 & 30-meter bands available to most amateur radio members.

Editor's Note: These bands are commonly referred to as the WARC bands (World Administrative Radio Conference) and are three portions of the shortwave radio spectrum used by HAM's. They consist of 30 meters (10.100–10.150 MHz), 17 meters (18.068–18.168 MHz) and 12 meters (24.890–24.990 MHz). They were named after the World Administrative Radio Conference, which in 1979 created a worldwide allocation of these bands for amateur use.

Due to their relatively small bandwidth of 100 kHz or less, there is a gentlemen's agreement that the WARC bands may not be used for general contesting. (Info source Wikipedia)

U.S. Band Plans

12 Meter

License class	24.890–24.930	24.930-24.990
Extra, Advanced, General	CW, narrow-band digital	CW, phone

17 Meter

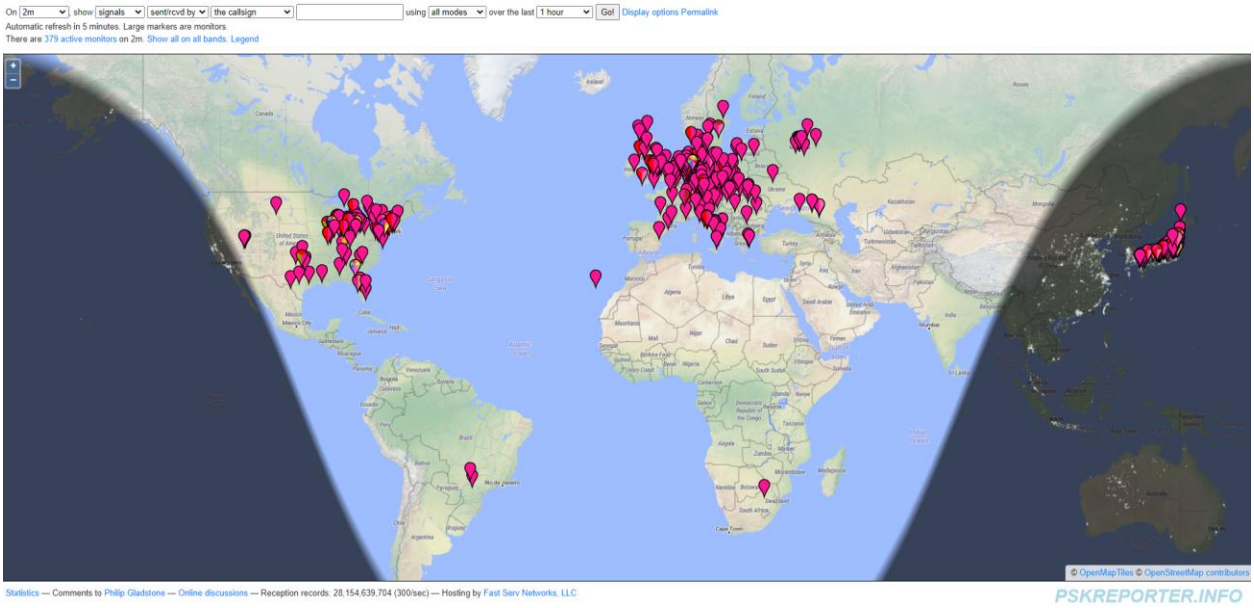
License class	18.068-18.110	18.110-18.168
Extra, Advanced, General	CW, narrow-band digital	CW, phone

30 Meter

License class	10.100-10.150
Ext., Adv., Gen. (200 watts)	CW, narrow-band digital

Also discussed were the propagation utility sites PSKreporter.info and Reversebeacon.net. Both are extremely valuable resources in helping HAM's find open HF bands. Editor's Note: More information follows.

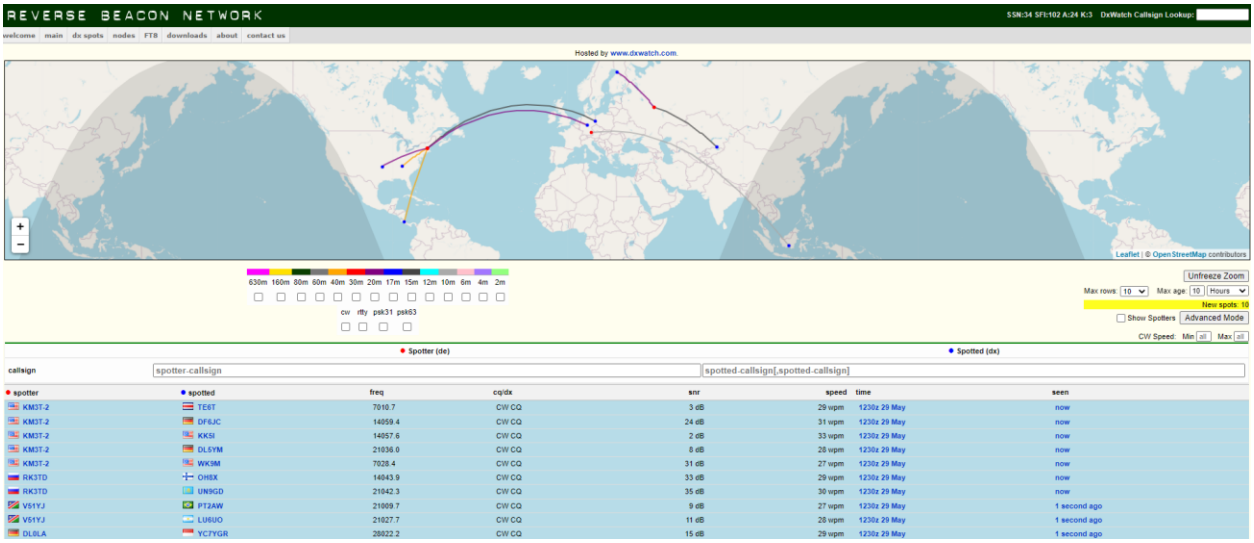
PSKreporter.info



Digimode Automatic Propagation Reporter

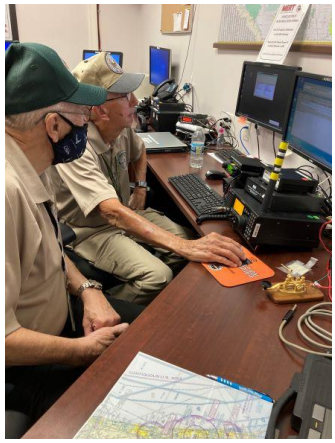
This web resource automatically gathers reception records of digimode activity and then make those records available in near real-time to interested HAM's. The way that it works is that amateurs can run a client on their PC which monitors the received traffic for callsigns (the pattern 'de callsign callsign') and, when seen, reports it. This is of interest to the amateur who transmitted as they can learn where their signal was received. From a practical view, HAM's would call CQ and could then (within a few minutes) see where the signal was received in determining propagation conditions or in adjusting antenna and/or radio parameters.

Reversebeacon.net



The Reverse Beacon Network is a network of HAM stations listening to many bands and reporting what stations they hear, when and how well. Users can see band openings in near-real time on an animated map to learn current propagation characteristics. By calling a quick CQ, amateurs see which reverse beacons heard the call, and how strong it was received. Another use is seeing what stations, from a given country or zone, have been heard, at what times and on what frequencies.

For contesters, HAM's can compare their own signal with those of others stations in near real time or historically. The program has a Signal Comparison Tool allowing users to select what stations to compare based on signals heard by a given reverse beacon on a certain band at a certain time.



(L-R) Mike Condon (W9MNC) and Paul Blystone (WB4QQN) MERT Training Manager, send a packet Winlink ICS-213 test message from the EOC.

Continued from May 11th Check-In…

A discussion on the practicality of SHARES 60-meter multi-state communications with the surrounding states (GA, AL, MS, etc.) occurred. MERT has applied for SHARES approval. We also plan on going mobile to find 'dead spots' for repeaters into several county locations and map them.

✓ May 18th 2022

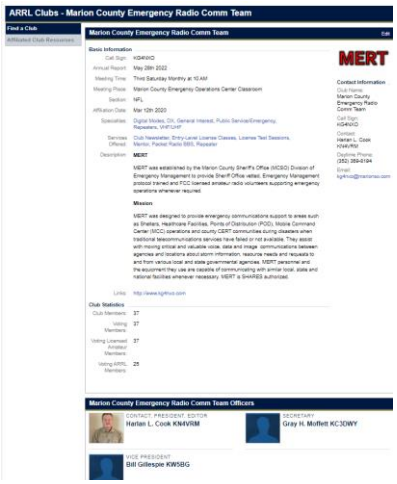
Regretfully, propagation prevented check-in with the Florida ARES net. There was testing and overview of the Icom IC-5100 radio. Members were informed by Bill Gillespie of an opportunity to purchase Ed Fong's DB1 (primarily for fixed operation) and DB2 (a rollup version of DB1) two or three band VHF antennas at a discount price via the SSRC web site.

✓ May 25th 2022

Preston Bowlin, Director of Emergency Management visited sharing the equipment order from March is funded and will be ordered. This is excellent news as a large cost item is the replacement of the 7-year-old portable batteries MERT needs to operate at remote locations. Members also discussed variations of Go Kits for the Mobile Command Center (MCC) looking at features, design options, size and cost. Members agreed the discussions have been a good learning experience in selecting the best unit to recommend for purchase.

We thank Gray Moffett (KC3DWY) and MERT Secretary, for this update!

ARRL Update Completed



MERT's information has been updated on the ARRL Website.

- ✓ A copy of our 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes was forwarded which is required to continue our "Active" status as an "Affiliated Club".
- ✓ The information was expanded to include MERT's Purpose and Mission.

If Members find other resources with outdated MERT information, please contact Harlan Cook with the source so it can be revised. Visit: http://www.arrl.org/find-a-club

Silent Key

MERT Member Dave Kaszubski, WB3FYV, passed away May 12th. Dave moved to Ocala from Texas in early 2021 where Harlan Cook met him and encouraged he look at MERT to further enjoy his HAM hobby. Dave made several meetings before his treatments began which prevented him from attending. We will miss his wonderful smile, decades of HAM experience and strong interest supporting MERT's Mission.

Mobile Command Center (MCC) Update

MERT members attending the Wednesday, May 25th Check-In participated in an excellent discussion on existing "Go Kit" manufacturers.

We want to recognize Member Bruce Twiss, KI4NFA, for his continued work on updating the design outline and resources available.

New Shelter Update - South Ocala Elementary

Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator and Leon Jurcyszyn (K8ZAG) MERT Technical Advisor, met with Brady Nettina, MCPS Emergency Coordinator on May 19th to review the MERT communications resource design for South Ocala Elementary School.

As part of an initiative to increase the number of Emergency Shelters available to residents throughout Marion County, the Marion County School District and the MCSO Division of Emergency Management have instituted a joint effort addressing the challenge.

MERT designed the new radio communications system for the South Ocala Elementary School Cafeteria. Construction to "hurricane harden" the cafeteria begins May 23rd and is scheduled for completion early in the fall. Installation of MERT resources will follow.

(L-R) Brady Nettina, MCPS Emergency Mgmt. Coordinator, and Heidi Van Vilet, MCPS South Ocala Cafeteria Mgr.

(L-R) Photos of the Cafeteria Mgr. Office (MERT antenna outlet planned); hallway towards the exterior wall; and a photo of the outside wall where the bracket and antenna/mast will be installed. Leon conducted test transmissions which are good to excellent.

A Special Thanks to Bill Gillespie

Harlan Cook, MERT Coordinator wanted to acknowledge Bill Gillespie, Assistant MERT Coordinator for leading MERT while he was out of town attending to family matters.

Invitation to Attend

MERT meetings are open to all interested Amateur radio enthusiast, CERT, ARES, Skywarn members and the General Public who are interested in learning more about participating in this important volunteer Amateur radio organization.

Interested in learning more about MERT…… Visit https://kg4nxo.com/