

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

November 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 next Meeting will be on November 19th @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

See you there!

Hurricane Ian Notes



Harlan Cook, KN4VRM,
MERT Coordinator

WOW... What a month!!!!

First, I extend my sincerest praise and thanks to the many MERT Members along with ARES, HEC and CERT Hams who assisted in the preparations and deployment activities before and during this emergency. For the MERT Members, you fulfilled our Mission and won great praise from Director Preston Bowlin and Sheriff Billy Woods for your skilled and professional actions.

Special recognition for supporting MERT's Activation goes to:

Paul Blystone – WB4QQN	Westport High School
Bill Cummings – KC2ZRZ	Westport High School
Kim Shulby – KM4JMZ	Dunnellon High School
Gary Neron – KS4TSX	Ft. McCoy School
Brian Purdy – W3AVR	Vanguard High School
Pat Davis – KQ4BRW	MCSO EOC
Bill Sobel – K1WLS	MCSO EOC
Hayden Kaufman – N2HAY	ARES – Dunnellon EOC

These individuals met the highest standards of commitment to MERT... and doing good by helping others when they needed assistance.

"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

MERT “STARS”!



Brian Purdy & Leon Jurczynyn



Pat Davis



Bill Cummings & Paul Blystone



Kim Shulby & Gary Neron



Bill Sobel



Hayden Kaufman

Special thanks to the following individuals assisting in pre-deployment activities: Bill Gillespie, KW5BG, Assistant MERT Coordinator; Leon Jurczynyn, K8ZAG, Technical Advisor & MERT Training Manager; Clint Stockton, AG0K, New Member Manager; and, Gray Moffet, KC3DWY, MERT Secretary.

While all of us living in Marion County were spared the horrible destruction and personal tragedies experienced in the southern portions of our state, it was a very clear reminder of MERT’s responsibilities now and in the future. Specifically, our ongoing requirement to learn as much as we can, train often and participate in Nets and Exercises that increase our skills and build the teams confidence in our procedures.

“When all else fails... Call MERT!”

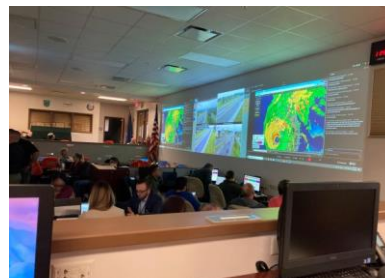
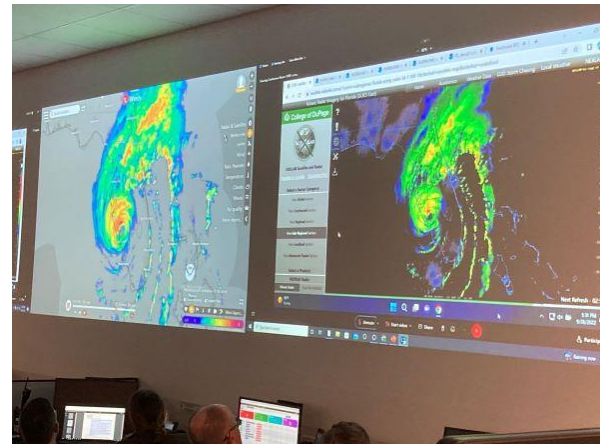
Our report totaled 38 pages which included the FEMA required ICS Forms, supporting documents along with MERT’s experiences and key recommendations for improvements expected during future activations. Some included simple oversights (shutting down Reflectors) ... but others were important actions, but missed. As many know, I have undertaken a personal project drafting a “MERT Coordinator Action List” detailing the pre-activation, activation and post-activation steps needed in the future. The first draft has been distributed and everyone’s review and feedback offering suggestions and personal recommendations is welcomed. It will improve MERT preparations and actions for future emergencies. This is important to me and your review is needed!

Another very significant recommendation was to create a “Red Book” for the MERT leadership and EOC personnel to have as a reference created from our combined experiences of Hurricane Ian’s emergency. I embrace this idea and thank Leon Jurcyszyn for offering it as a resource for all MERT Members. I know it will be improved after every experience in supporting MERT’s Mission long into the future.

As this was my first experience with a major emergency and activation by the MCSO, I extend my thanks to all Members and others offering their support. It was a significant learning experience for me and I am grateful for the input all provided.

Harlan Cook, MERT Coordinator

October, 2022



Scenes from the EOC during the Hurricane Ian emergency. It was a significant experience and all who participated gained valuable knowledge in doing our small parts to help prepare for a local event.

“When all else fails... Call MERT!”

Special Report: I am extremely proud sharing this “MERT Incident Report” I sent to Preston Bowlin. He read it to everyone in the EOC, including Sheriff Billy Woods, very early on September 29th as Hurricane Ian hit southwest Florida.

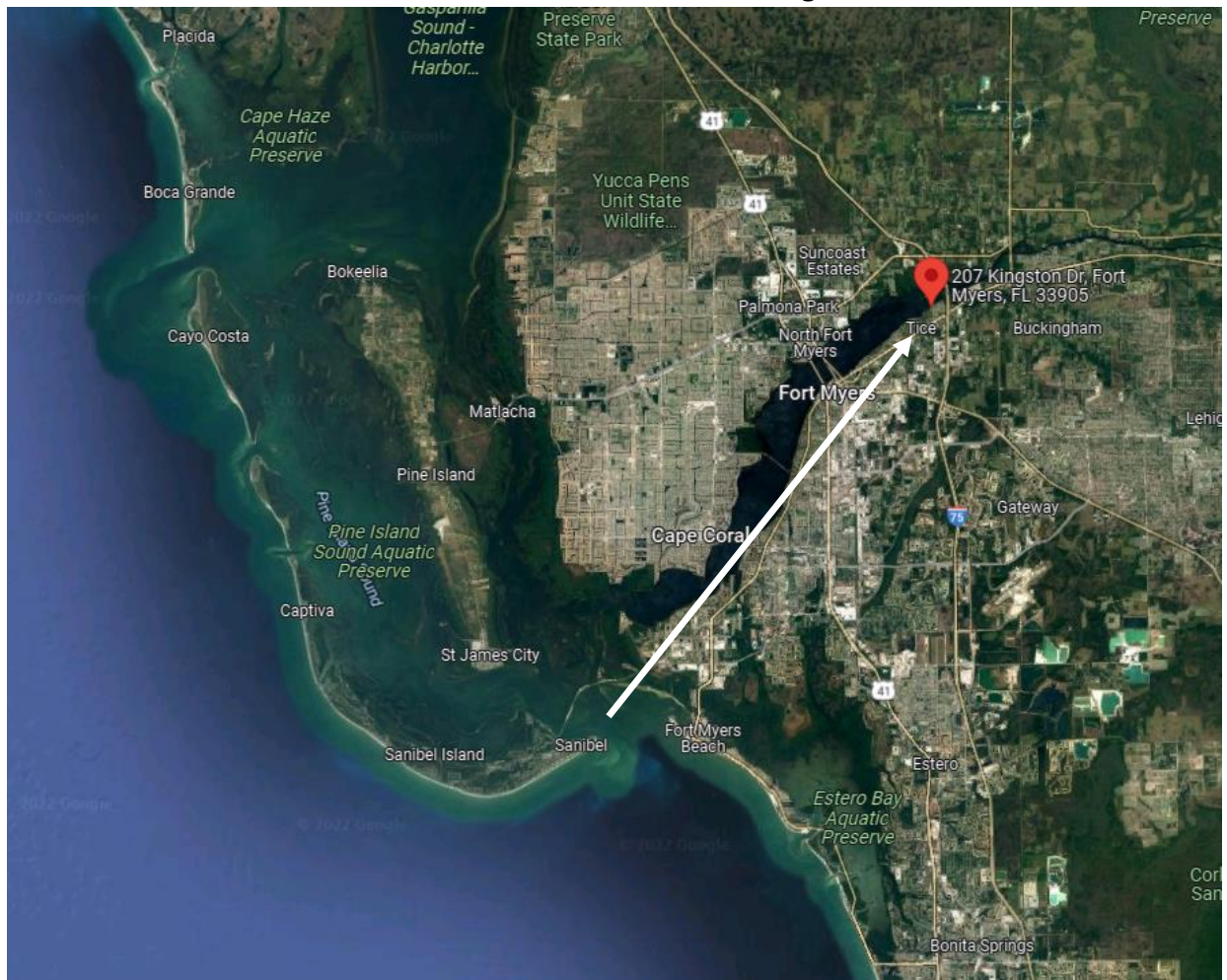
MERT Incident Report

0621 hours 09/29/2022

At 2309 hours L on 9-28-22, MERT Operator N2HAY (Hayden) supporting the Dunnellon EOC Operations Center monitored an emergency request for assistance over the amateur radio bands from KE4CEI. The radio call was from a relative of a 65 y/o female trapped on the roof of her home at 207 Kingston Drive, Ft. Meyers who was unable to contact Lee County 911. He stated all emergency contact telephone resources, including 911, was offline and unreachable to get help for his grandmother.

Location of Person in Distress

Address of location is 22.1 miles NE of Sanibel Island along the Caloosahatchee River.



“When all else fails... Call MERT!”

MERT Incident Report cont.

N2HAY documented the emergency call and then relayed the report to MERT EOC Operator KQ4BRW (Pat) at 2320 hours. Message was documented on ICS-213 General Message form and provided to Rob Morris (Marion County Sheriff Office EM Coordinator) at 2330 hours.

MCSO EM Coordinator Rob telephoned MERT Member N2HAY to confirm information received. After completing the voice call, N2HAY contacted KE4CEI via amateur radio service to relay to the trapped person that help was being organized.

A few minutes later, MCSO Coordinator Rob telephoned N2HAY that contact with Lee County was not successful so a request was made to the South Tampa EM for a SAR team to respond. Because of the dangerous conditions and long distance, ETA was forecasted to be at least one to two hours.

A few minutes later, MCSO Emergency Management Director Preston Bowlin informed MERT EOC Operator KQ4BRW (Pat) that Marion County had sent information via Teletype to Lee County who received the message and was able to respond much faster due to their location. That information was then transmitted from KQ4BRW (Pat) at the MERT EOC room to N2HAY (Hayden) to update the relative to share with the trapped person that help was on the way in just a few minutes.

MERT was informed later that morning the rescue of the 65 y/o female was successful and she was recovering from the ordeal.

End of Summary

Submitted By:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "HRCook". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Harlan Cook
MERT Coordinator
09/29/2022

Please join me in recognizing Hayden and Pat for their teamwork in helping rescue a resident in Ft. Meyers needing immediate SAR support!

MERT Wednesday Check-In's

"Check-In's" (0900 to 1200 Hrs.) Summary for October...

October 5th Meeting – (14 members) Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator,



Hurricane Ian's path varied and was not forecasted well leading to the poor preparations by citizens in south Florida.

led post Hurricane Ian discussion. Two shelters were not served -- Belleview Middle School (which needs antenna repairs because SWRs are too high) and Hammett Bowen Jr. Elementary. Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) of ARES, who was at a church in Dunnellon, Pat Davis who was in the EOC, and Carl Berry of ARES who was at Villages Elementary in Lake County, shared their experiences and suggestions. All valued the personal reflections and experiences!

- ✓ Harlan asked for feedback on the shelter directions written in April as to how it applies to the real-life shelter experiences. It was felt the document hit the mark.
- ✓ Clint Stockton (AGOK) is making a list of ICS files for all members to have on hand and wants feedback.
- ✓ Bruce Twiss wanted suggestions for handheld radio for CERT to use in his neighborhood.
- ✓ Gray Moffett said the Skywarn repeater was quiet at 146.610. He recommended Echolink needs to be shut down during activities.
- ✓ Preston Bowlin, Director of EOC, stopped by and Thanked MERT members for their efforts and solutions to situations that arose during the storm event.
- ✓ Discussion was held on possibly modifying the ARES Task Book to reflect MERT's needs and cross training amongst our groups. Bill Gillespie said MERT should use ARES Task Book with addendums for MERT. It is tier built, and that members need to complete Level 1 to be an ARES member. Hayden can sign off on our Level 1 Task Book qualification.
- ✓ Leon pointed out where the binder is stored that has directions on how to bring the antenna tower down.
- ✓ **We welcome Jonathan Reyes (WP3JJ)**, our newest member, having an Amateur Extra License and much experience in emergency communications from Puerto Rico. He has volunteered to write technical notes for MERT and translate some documents to Spanish. ***Welcome to MERT Jonathan!***



Jonathan Reyes, WP3JJ
is new MERT Member!

"When all else fails... Call MERT!"

- ✓ MERT leaders talked about the need for D-RATS, D-Star, and DMR. It was decided to drop the use of D-RATS practice on the weekly MERT NET.
- ✓ A decision was made to have 2 IC-7100 radios in the Mobile Command Center which is under construction. It was also decided to supply the MCC with USB outlet strips and supplemental 12v outlets for plug and play ease of additional equipment.



October 12th Meeting – (12 members)

- ✓ Harlan Cook shared he has decided to work towards AUXCOMM certification following up on his class last year as he wants to learn more about FEMA Emergency Communications procedures and coordination with Emergency Management organizations.
- ✓ There was discussion on a modified ARES Task Book being the primer for the MERT training guide. Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) highlighted items in the ARES Task Book which would be beneficial for MERT members to be proficient in, and pointed out the three levels. Whether all MERT members should also be ARES members was put to a vote, and it was passed unanimously.
- ✓ Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG), Harlan, and Mike Condon shared that Shrek books and EOC books need to be updated and extra forms be included.
- ✓ MERT lost many members to Hospital Emergency Team (HET). Do we need a HIPPA section in our task book was asked. Bruce Twiss (KI4NFA), HEC Liaison, pointed out how careful radio operators have to be to not mention victims' names on the air to avoid HIPPA violations.
- ✓ Officials want all to use a binder and fill it with a copy of the task book, license, checklist, and their radio information.
- ✓ Shrek kits may be taken home for a week's duration for learning and practice. A new radio class for the radio 880 should happen before next hurricane season.
- ✓ All agreed that when MERT members are notified of events, texts should be used as well as emails and phone calls. Harlan acknowledged the suggestion and stated he would modify the current plan in the MERT Coordinator Action List to include text notifications.
- ✓ Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) talked to the owner of the Anthony repeater – KA4WBE 146.970. He said the repeater can be used for emergency nets. Hayden also said that if MERT members are deployed outside of Marion County, he will

give them ARES Task Book so they will be recognized by officials. Harlan and Hayden are going to formalize written procedures.

- ✓ Harlan shared Director of Emergency Management Preston Bowlin is looking into using the AlertMarion system for notifications to MERT Members as a test for possible future emergency activations. This is a major resource for MERT and its use will be valuable,
- ✓ Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO) would like everyone to email him their hours by the 20th of each month.



October 15th Monthly Meeting Agenda..... (15 members)

Recommendations and Discussion from the Monthly Meeting

- ✓ Practice is needed in the Shelters before the next hurricane season. To that suggestion, it was shared that we will be having more “hands on” training with the ICOM
- ✓ IC-880 radio sending and receiving voice and Winlink messages.
- ✓ It was recommended that the MERT Coordinator Action List” Harlan is working on should include a “Roll Call” every 4 hours and logged on 214 forms with all activated and deployed MERT personnel. Harlan acknowledged the suggestion for inclusion in the MERT Coordinators Action List.
- ✓ Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG) was voted in as the new Training Manager for MERT. **Thank you, Leon,** for your passion and commitment to helping all MERT Members be skilled and prepared for any emergency! We value your experience and time to help all Members learn new skills and expand our knowledge.
- ✓ Jonathan Reyes is going to help recruit Spanish speaking MERT members.
- ✓ Hayden recommended that a Leatherman and pens be taken to deployments. A simple but valuable suggestion. **Thank you, Hayden!**
- ✓ Hayden also recommends that everyone join SERT Trac website to keep track of certifications and sign up for classes.

October 19th Meeting –

- ✓ Harlan assigned “homework” to attendees to brainstorm what we need to put in the EOC Red Binder for future refence by MERT personnel during emergencies.
- ✓ For the benefit of those not at last week’s meeting, Jonathan Reyes (WP3JJ) was introduced to the group.

“When all else fails... Call MERT!”

- ✓ Leon conducted a tour for Pat, Gary, and Jon to the Sheriff's Office facility repeater 'hut' for them to become familiar with what it is and where it is located.

The tour introduced the new Members to learn more about the equipment and hardware necessary to support MERT operations in Marion County.



MERT Repeaters at Sheriff Office communications hut



- ✓ MCSO maintenance personnel arrived to determine that the inactive clearance bulbs atop the tower did need to be exchanged. They were to return by noon to replace them.
- ✓ We all had the opportunity to take part in learning how to lower the tower in cases like this or when it becomes too windy for it to remain in the upright position.
- ✓ Yes, many wasps were harmed during this repair!
- ✓ This was a great experience for all the MERT personnel.

On Top of the World (OTOW)

Submitted by Bruce Twiss - KI4NFA 10/15/2022

MERT Activity Summary for October 2022

Bruce posted ad in classified section of the monthly OTOW News for: "Ham Radio Operators Wanted." Response from Extra Licensed Ham who I shared info. on MERT.

OTOW CERT and Hurricane Ian

- OTOW management featured CERT in OTOW news this month.
- Group notified of stand by status on Tuesday evening September 27th in response to Hurricane Ian and were activated on Wednesday morning September 28th. Team set up Command Center in designated building located on high ground and were visited by OTOW manager who conferred with CERT Leader. This building does not have emergency power or any antennas.

"When all else fails... Call MERT!"

- MERT Member Bruce Twiss (KI4NFA) set up a manufactured J-pole antenna on a sturdy metal handrail/fence just outside Command Center and prepared a dual band radio for use for operation if needed. CERT Leader deactivated all.
- CERT Leader reactivated CERT group on Thursday morning, September 29th with all neighborhoods surveyed finding no damages, blocked roads, power outages or residents seeking assistance. Survey teams used FRS/GMRS walkie-talkies to communicate with Command Center without success.
- Ham communications support was not needed. Stand down order given at mid-day.
- At regular monthly meeting, leader reviewed response to Hurricane Ian and noted opportunities for improvement.
- Marion County CERT Instructor Alan Abbott KB1QCE demonstrated proper use of walkie-talkies.
- MERT member Bruce Twiss, KI4NFA shared with all attendees the “MERT Incident Report” involving the roof top rescue of a woman in Ft. Myers. Residents were very grateful to learn of MERTs actions and her rescue.

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

[Interested in learning more about MERT?](#)

[Visit https://kg4nxa.com/](https://kg4nxa.com/)