

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

February/March 2023

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!"

Please check the calendar for changes to the meetings scheduled the rest of this year. <https://kg4nxo.com/mert-calendar/>

Mark your calendars!

MERT Monthly Meeting

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

See you there!

We have MUCH to look forward to in 2023!



**Harlan Cook, KN4VRM,
MERT Coordinator**

Looking forward, the MERT Team has many activities planned already. Here's a brief list for the next 5 months:

- ✓ In March, we will be replacing all the cabling on the EOC tower. This will be a big job and all Members and Friends of MERT are asked to lend a hand. Your assistance is needed as it will take a week to complete.
- ✓ In April, MERT will be celebrating 20-years of service to the MCSO Division of Emergency Management by conducting a "Special Event" Exercise over a 12-hour schedule on April 29th. MERT Members will be making contacts all over Florida, the United States and across the world. We will be sharing who MERT is and what we do while we put our experience and skills of amateur radio into *ACTION*. It will be a fun event and we invite all Friends of MERT to participate from their own radio shacks to say "Hello!"

"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

- ✓ In May, MERT will be participating in the CERT Rodeo where we practice our ICS-213 reporting skills along with showing local CERT Community Teams how amateur radio can be an important part of ***their community's*** capabilities.
- ✓ Also in May, we will be auditing and testing MERT's resources at the school Shelters which weren't tested in 2022. We will also be completing our annual inventory and inspection of all the SHREK Kits. As Hurricane Season starts next month, all MERT Training activities go into high-gear.
- ✓ In June, Hurricane Season starts. We can only hope it ends without any hits on Florida.

I invite all Members and Friends of MERT including CERT, ARES, HEC including all HAM's to visit us on Wednesday mornings at the EOC (starting at 9:00 am) or attend the Monthly meeting on the 3rd Saturday of the month (starting at 10:00 am). ***ALL ARE WELCOMED!***

Respectfully,



Annual MCSO Facility Security Review

As a MERT Member, the MCSO has important facility rules to follow when at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). We review these guidelines annually to keep everyone up to date on them. If you didn't participate in the 2023 Review on February 22nd, please ask Harlan Cook for a refresher review the next time you are at the EOC.

MERT's participation is required and necessary in maintaining the Florida Dept. of Emergency Management Certifications for EOC's.

MERT Wednesday Check-In's

"Check-In's" (0900 to 1200 Hrs.) Here's a summary of the Check In meeting topics:

January 25th Meeting – (10 members)

- ✓ Jerry Mucci (KK4GMU) discussed the interference/noise problem at his house, and gave out handout of his findings.
- ✓ Bruce Twiss (KI4NFA) shared there are 18 ways to send Winlink messages.

- ✓ Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) talked about tower repairs at EOC and planning in progress. Scheduled for late February.
- ✓ Paul Blystone (WB4QQN) stepped down from MERT Net Manager and Winlink Advisor for health reasons. Mike Condon (W9MNC) will be the acting Winlink Net Control for now.
- ✓ Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG) talked about upcoming trip to Ocala Airport to check out their comms and see if Winlink antenna still okay. Set for Feb. 3rd at 10:00am.
- ✓ Bruce shared that the hospital repeater is back online and is available for MERT use.
- ✓ Kirk from HEC was visitor and was getting his 5100 programmed.
- ✓ After the meeting, Pat Davis (KQ4BRW) and Harlan drove to the CLL repeater at the landfill and changed out the UPS.

February 1st Meeting – (8 members)

- ✓ Harlan stated that Preston Bowlin has requested that the radios and equipment in old MCC trailer be donated with the trailer to Suwanee County so they can start a radio group like MERT. The new MCC should be delivered late March or early April.
- ✓ Bruce shared a document he made of the new equipment to be installed in MCC.



MERT thanks the Marion County Maintenance Dept. for clearing multiple tree limbs off the HF antenna at the EOC. It works now!

- ✓ Harlan shares the tree branches **have been trimmed away from HF antenna at EOC and..... it works again!**
- ✓ Mike will be acting Winlink instructor and Net Control Manager until Paul Blystone is back at MERT.
- ✓ Harlan presented information about HAARP, which is an antenna tuned array in Alaska that can transmit 4 megawatts of white noise to “punch holes” through the ionosphere in the HF bands. He wonders if it caused the noise blasts on our weekly nets?
- ✓ Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO) talked about the MERT20 Special Event on April 29th, and asked MERT members to volunteer for shifts by going to the website. He will set up training for “spotting” to find other people on the air. See the end of this report or visit: MERT20.org for details.

MERT Inspects Aiport Equipment

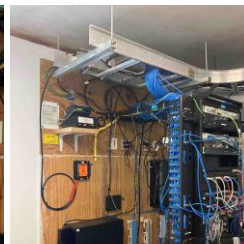
With limitations forced by the COVID virus being removed, access to restricted facilities now allows MERT personnel to visit the Ocala International Airport tower where radio equipment supporting our Winlink Gateway, KG4NXO-10 (145.630 MHz) is located.

To maximixe MERT's capabilities in sending digital Winlink messages over amateur radio frequencies world-wide, our KG4NXO-10 Gateway offers a backup access point in Marion County to connect us to the international Winlink network... as well to the Internet.

We want to acknowledge Leon Jurcyszyn (K8ZAG) for his time and leadership in organizing the inspection and testing event and Chris Kemp and Rob Morris for supporting our access.



Antenna & cables test good!



MERT equip. in the 2nd Fl. Data room.



Gary Neron helps.



Access to roof.



Leon checking Gateway.



MERT escorts - Chris Kemp and Rob Morris.

February 8th Meeting (15 members)

- ✓ Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) shared the MERT members and families can use AT&T Responder Unlimited Plan for \$39.99/mo. - \$44.99 with unlimited tethering.
- ✓ Leon shared the results of visiting the repeater at Ocala Airport. He said the band pass filter was working on the tower – KG4NXO-07 digipeater – at 1.55 SWR, but now they need to go back and reboot it. They had put a new battery in the CMOS of the KPC-3 UPS. They need to take the RigExpert.
- ✓ Harlan shares work on the EOC antenna will be the 1st or 2nd week of March, and that Leon and Harlan are going to Clearwater to see progress on the MCC.
- ✓ Bill G. stated that some people might not be putting “-10” behind the digipeater call sign (W3HII-10) and did a short lesson on using Winlink.

MERT invited to Inspect new Mobile Command Center

On February 9th, Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) and Leon Juncyszyn (K8ZAG) joined Preston Bowlin, Director of the Div. of Emergency Management, Chris Kemp and Rob Morris (EM Coordinators) in a progress inspection of the new Mobile Command Center. The unit is being built by Frontline Communications in Clearwater, FL.

MERT's assignment was to inspect and verify the design, materials and procedures were correct for support all MERT activities. It is an impressive support vehicle for Emergency Mgmt.



External views of new MCO Mobile Command Center show extensive planning and coordination was involved.

Internal views showing the MERT desk (left) and the Incident Commanders stations (right) inside the new Mobile Command Center.

Delivery is planned for late-March or early-April 2023.



On February 8th, MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook joined a presentation at the Stone Creek community sharing updates on several Marion County activities. Harlan shared who and what MERT does to support the MCSO and the residents of Marion County. He also invited any HAM's to attend a MERT meeting at the EOC.



(L-R) Ryan Robbins (MCSO SW District Commander); Pamela Driggers (MCSO Fire Rescue Battalion Chief); June Benoit (Stone Creek CERT Community Leader); and, Tyrone Edwards (MCSO Fire Rescue Lieutenant/Community Paramedicine)

February 15th Meeting – (14 people)

- ✓ Harlan and Leon talked about visiting the MCC in progress at Frontline Communications in Clearwater. They shared some photos and talked about a 42' antenna tower and the 30-kW diesel generator. They explained how a Tarheel II Mobile Antenna works for 6 – 80 meter by adjusting its height for each band. The new MCC will deploy with a portable restroom unit and a water buffalo trailer. MERT testing is planned around March 22nd.
- ✓ Hayden stated that the next section Emergency Drill has been scheduled for May.

February 18th MERT/ARES/CERT/HEC Monthly Meeting (16 members)

- ✓ We shared a silent prayer for Paul Blystone (WB4QQN) to overcome his illness and rejoin MERT soon.
- ✓ Harlan shared more on MERT20 Special Event and encouraged members to sign up at: MERT20.org
- ✓ Harlan and Leon presented 50 photos and videos of the construction progress of the new MCC.



Paul Blystone (WB4QQN)



Rob Morris, MCSO Div. of EM Coordinator shares details on new MCC.

- ✓ Special guest Rob Morris (Div. of EM Coordinator) joined the meeting to add additional insights on the vehicle along with some details on the planned features and operating elements.

Part of those details included the unit having a 30-kW generator to power multiple addition support units including meeting and planning tents, rest tents and even a portable toilets trailer.

- ✓ Harlan showed video of telescoping, mobile, tower antenna like the one Suwannee County is buying. MERT will be able to borrow it in the future when needed for local emergencies.

- ✓ Hayden Kaufman, ARES Emergency Coordinator, shared about the ARESMAT - Mutual Assistance Team - and the proposed new ARES section, Mid State District, which includes Citrus, Alachua, Levy, Sumter, Volusia, and Marion. He stated that the ARES North Florida section is huge with 67 counties and Scott Roberts is in charge.



- ✓ Hayden did a hardware presentation on the new DigiRig USB interface (\$82). DigiRig Mobile is a digital modes interface for amateur radio.



CERT Liaison,
Stephen Wall

- ✓ Steven Wall (MERT & CERT) gave a CERT training update saying the April 22nd will be Stop the Bleed, April 26th is HazMat, and new CERT class starts in June.
- ✓ Dave Welker (HEC) sent a summary of recent activities HEC has completed.

MERT20 - Special Event Exercise

Ham Radio Operators providing more than two decades of service to the Marion County (FL) Emergency Management Division

Marion County's Emergency Management Division of the Sheriff's Office is the lead agency for coordination of emergency and disaster response activities.

A unique aspect of that Division is the network of volunteer amateur (ham) radio operators comprising the Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT) for more than two decades. MERT members are fully vetted via background checks and fingerprinting by the Sheriff's Department. This is not an external support group. The MERT team is embedded into the Emergency Operations Center and is an integral part of the disaster response team in Marion County, FL.

MERT members communicate from emergency shelters to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during hurricanes and other disasters and some are qualified to deploy with Emergency Management personnel to disaster sites around the state when needed to provide auxiliary communications during these situations.

On Saturday, April 29, 2023, MERT will put their operating skills to a 12-hour on-air test. This exercise, called MERT20, will find members operating from the MERT Radio Room within the EOC, their personal mobile stations in the parking lot and off the grid using battery powered portable equipment for on-air contacts.

MERT20 will test our abilities to use all modes of communications available to make contacts with other hams locally, statewide, across the nation and globally throughout the 12-hour event. This special operating event will be promoted to other operators

around the world through national ham radio publications including QST and CQ as well as ham radio focused websites and other sources.

Details about the **MERT20** special event exercise can be found the <http://mert20.org> website.

Sign-ups (**MERT** members only) to operate during this exercise are open. Contact Kraig Pritts with questions.

Clint Stockton (AG0K) found an interesting article:

Morse Code Making a Come-Back

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-11640643/Morse-Code-making-comeback-Children-young-FIVE-learning-it.html>

From Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO):

This week I bought a 1939 Radio Handbook and found this:

LEARN CODE THE EASY WAY

We claim, and without fear of successful contradiction, that our automatic code transmitter, the Instructograph and our Book of Instruction, afford the quickest, easiest and most practical method of teaching the code that has yet been devised.

The Instructograph is a scientifically constructed machine that sends telegraphic characters perfectly at any desired speed. By so doing it literally takes the place of an operator-instructor, and enables anyone to learn either the Morse or Continental codes without any further assistance.

THE "STANDARD" INSTRUCTOGRAPH

The "Standard" as illustrated is strongly constructed, enclosed in an attractive case and is built for years of usefulness. Ten tapes and the book of instructions are supplied with this machine. Can be furnished either with an electric 110 volt 60 cycle AC motor or a spring wound motor. Priced \$25.50 for the electric motor and \$18.50 for the spring wound motor. These prices are delivered to any point in the United States or possessions. \$1.00 additional to points in foreign countries. May be purchased on convenient monthly payments if desired.

THE "JUNIOR"

The "Junior" operates just as efficiently as the larger machine and also comes in an attractive case. The difference being mainly in size and construction. Five tapes and the book of instructions are supplied with this machine. Priced \$12.00 delivered to any point in the United States or possessions, and \$13.00 to points in foreign countries. Sold on easy monthly payments if desired.

RENTAL PROPOSITION

The "Standard" machine only is used in Rental service and rentals apply only to the United States proper. Instructograph, 10 tapes and book of instructions: For the 110 volt 60 cycle AC motor; First month \$3.50, each additional month \$2.75. For the Spring wound motor; First month: \$3.00 each additional month \$2.25.

For Audio transformer and tube socket installed add 25c per month. For full oscillator equipment (less tube and battery) add 50c per month.

We pay return transportation charges on all rentals. A deposit of \$10.00, in addition to the rental, is required or satisfactory references asked.

All rental payments may be applied on the purchase price should you decide to buy the equipment.

Many additional "Continental" tapes covering practically every phase of code training—elementary, words, plain language, mixed code, messages, aviation and test tapes may be purchased at \$1.00 each. Synopsis on request.

Full oscillator equipment with audio transformer and tube socket designed to fit inside of machine. Priced \$5.50 (less battery). When bought with an Instructograph this is wired and installed in the machine.

THE INSTRUCTOGRAPH
accomplishes these purposes:

FIRST—It teaches you to receive telegraph symbols, words and messages.

SECOND—It teaches you to send perfectly.

THIRD—It increases your speed of sending and receiving after you have learned the code.

With the Instructograph it is not necessary to impose on your friends. It is always ready and waiting for you. You are also free from Q.R.M. experienced in listening through your receiver. The speed range is 5 to 40 words per minute and the tapes range from the alphabet to typical messages on all subjects. This machine is just as valuable to the licensed amateur for increasing his speed as to the beginner who wishes to obtain his amateur license.

We do not anticipate any changes in prices, but due to unsettled world-wide conditions, suggest you write for confirmation of the above prices at the time you order.

Postal card will bring full particulars immediately

THE INSTRUCTOGRAPH CO.
912 LAKESIDE PLACE (Dept. R40) CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MERT Member Silent Key - Bernie Walt KJ4AMG

In January we lost Bernard "Bernie" Walt. (1924-2023)

He was a highly respected and longtime MERT Member and WWII veteran.

His radio call sign was KJ4AMG, and he was actively participating in MERT nets until last fall. He is very missed by all of his family, friends and everyone at MERT.



For MERT Members....if you are also a CERT Member, your reports on helping your local group are invited.

Interested in learning more about MERT..... Visit
<https://kg4nxxo.com/>