

# MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office  
Div. of Emergency Management

## COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

May 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!**

### **NO MERT Monthly Meeting in May**

The next Meeting will be on June 17th @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

### **Preparing for the 2023 Hurricane Season!**



**Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)**  
**MERT Coordinator**

Over the course of the last few months, MERT personnel have been ramping up preparations for the 2023 Hurricane season. These activities included the following:

- EOC Tower re-cabling project
- EOC Radio Room re-cable project
- SHREK Kit Annual Inventory
- Complete revision and update to the Shelter Reference Manual (used by MERT Members supporting their Shelter assignments)
- Focusing on planning and participating in communication NET's and Exercises. Some of these events include:
  - ✓ Weekly MERT NET which includes conducting a CERT NET supporting CERT communities
  - ✓ Weekly WINLINK digital communications tests by MERT Members
  - ✓ Participating in the weekly Marion County ARES NET

"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

- ✓ Participating in the weekly Hospital Emergency Communications Team (HEC) Net
- ✓ Joining the weekly FDEM (SARNET) tests run from the Tallahassee state EOC
- ✓ Joining the Monthly Region 3/5 FDEM Exercise

As we approach the June 1<sup>st</sup> official start of Hurricane season, I am pleased on the teamwork shown to tackle several significant projects required for our readiness. We still have a few projects to complete... but our list gets smaller by the week!

My sincerest thanks to the entire MERT Membership!

*HR Cook*

## **MERT 20 Special Event Exercise a HUGE Success!**

The first ever Special Event Exercise conducted by MERT Members was an incredible success with 110 Amateur Radio contacts made across 24 states and 7 foreign countries.

The training exercise celebrated more than two decades of service to the Emergency Management Division of the Marion County Sheriff's Office on April 29<sup>th</sup> and was held in the Marion County (Florida) Emergency Operation Center and adjacent grounds.

### **Foreign country contacts included:**

Austria, Bermuda, Canada, Ireland, Jordan, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

### **U.S. contacts included:**

Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

### **Background**

The most common and routine radio communications experienced by many MERT members are the weekly net check-ins. While these are valuable, they generally do not provide the expanded opportunity to speak with other operators about specific situations. MERT 20 Exercise participants learned the differences and challenges of HF operations such as those commonly used during activations for communications to the Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee and local repeater-based operations.



### **MERT 20 Special Event Exercise Plan**

April 29, 2023

The Exercise Plan (ExPlan) gives elected and appointed officials, observers, media personnel, and players from participating organizations information they need to observe or participate in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, controllers, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the ExPlan.

MERT acknowledges the assistance of Rob Morris, Emergency Management Coordinator, Marion County Sheriff's Office for his support and guidance in preparing this Exercise Plan and his assistance in the planning and preparations to conduct the Exercise.

Rev. 4 April 2013  
HSEEP-0006



**Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO) leads a MERT 20 training event earlier in the month.**



**7 am setup.**



**The Exercise included mobile HF band capabilities.**



**The MERT 20 Exercise included use of NVIS antenna built by Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG).**

Several participants also experienced CW (morse code) based and mobile based communications which are available via certain MERT members. Most importantly participants were able to communicate with local operators via our MERT repeater systems, provide information about MERT and the Emergency Management System while gaining a broader experience beyond the local net check-ins.

MERT20 operators with the lowest license privileges were able to experience advanced communication privileges because of the presence of higher licensed control operators as prescribed by FCC regulations. Several of the higher Advanced and Extra class licensees served as “coaches” to guide the lower-level Technician licensees through “new to them” types of operations.

MERT experienced three unplanned events. First, intense Solar flares created major challenges for long distance HF (high frequency) operations during the morning, but those frequencies began to “open” later in the day resulting in communications via HF to various parts of the United States and Canada. Unaffected by the solar activity, local repeater, global D-Star and Winlink digital communication methods all remained active and busy throughout the operation. The second issue was the NVIS antenna had extremely high SWR and could not be used. The last issue was our Icom IC-718 experienced extremely low output power which prevented normal operation. It will need to be sent to ICOM for repairs.

MERT’s next steps will include the completion of the Exercise report to Preston along with sending a “Contact Certificate” (suitable for posting) to all Ham’s who participated.

Kraig’s “Report of Activities and Results” will be included with the Communications Update distribution.

A special note of THANKS to Kraig Pritts (KA2LHO) who was the Exercise Controller and principal leader driving the planning, organization and actual event. Major contributions



and special recognition also goes to MERT Assistant Coordinator Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) and former MERT Coordinator and current Technical Advisor Leon Jurczynsyn (K8ZAG). The success of this Exercise is a direct reflection on these 3 MERT Members who made significant contributions to all phases of the Exercise. Thank you, gentlemen!



**Bill Sobel working 2 M D-Star.**



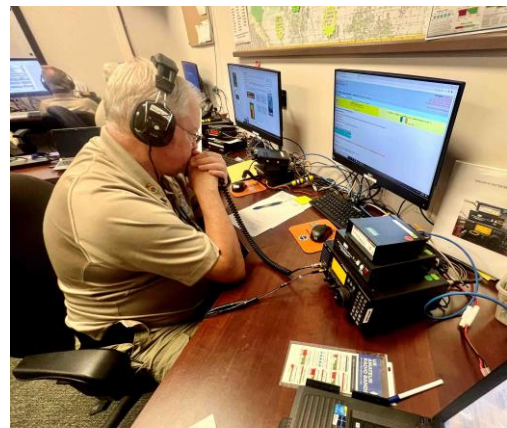
**Gray Moffett working 20 Meter.**



**Sally Gugino works 70 cm.**



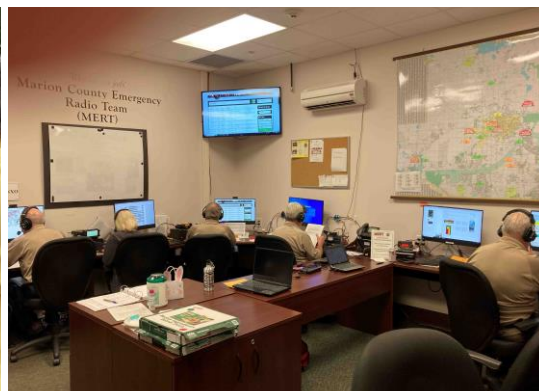
**NVIS antenna installation completed and ready.**



**Bill Gillespie waiting for solar flares to pass.**



**Leon sets up his Go Kit radio for HF operations outside the EOC working NVIS antenna.**



**All radio stations in the EOC radio room including two stations outside are staffed and operational across HF, 2 M, 70 cm and Winlink!**



**A long day!**

## **MERT Participates in the ARES “Service Denied” Exercise**

On April 22nd, MERT also participated in a joint exercise with the Marion County ARES and local HEC teams conducting a multiphase (radio and WINLINK digital) communications test between our organizations. The ARES Exercise was named “Service Denied” which included cascading emergency conditions including power outages (we operated radios off of battery power), Internet failures (we sent Winlink messages via radio) and civil disorder events affecting various private/commercial communication facilities (MERT used a temporary antenna when one of our towers was damaged) and hospital events (they requested MCSO Officers to control civil disorder).

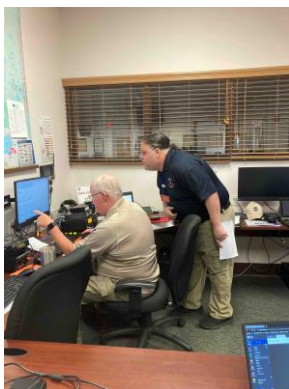
The exercise lasted 2.5 hours and included 9 MERT Members along with 24 ARES and HEC participants around Marion County.

### **Summary:**

Overall, MERT Members performed very well and met their duties and responsibilities as assigned. The event raised awareness of potential situations and needed solutions in worst case scenarios. The Exercise reinforced interoperating skills between our groups.

MERT also submitted recommendations for an improved plan which includes clarifying roles and responsibilities and suggestions to include the FDEM SARNET in a more meaningful way in the future.

Harlan thanks all the Members who participated in the Exercise in supporting all three Marion County EMCOMM organizations – MERT, ARES and HEC.



**MERT Asst, Coordinator  
Bill Gillespie and Marion  
Co. ARES Coordinator  
Hayden Kaufman  
participating in the  
Exercise at the EOC.**



**ARES Member  
Hayden Kauffman  
documenting  
instructions from  
the Exercise Net  
Control.**



**MERT Coordinator  
Harlan Cook  
participating in the  
ARES “Service Denied”  
Exercise. Marion  
County organizations  
included MERT, ARES  
and HEC.**



**Exercise scenario's  
included loss of  
power requiring  
battery backup  
operations. Shown is  
a UPS on battery  
operation.**



## **Tower Project Completed!**

Wonderful news! The EOC Tower Re-cable project is complete. Yea!!!!!!!

On Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, Marion County employee Brian Stevens completed the last cable repair on our HF antenna standing by itself on the East side of the EOC Tower. Observers included MERT Member Stephen Wall and County Supervisor John.

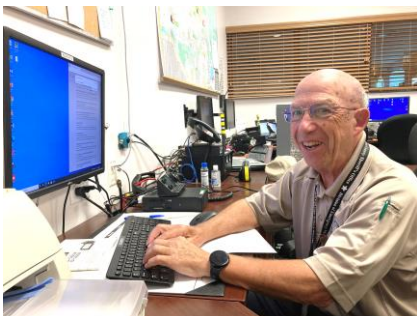


## **MERT Member Conducts FCC License Class**

Bill Sobel (K1WLS) conducted an FCC Technician Level class at the Stone Creek by Del Webb community during February and March for 12 residents interested in learning about amateur radio.

Bill shares he thoroughly enjoyed the experience and said it was fun seeing the attendee's knowledge grow week by week. Since the end of the classes, 2 residents have already tested and passed getting their FCC licenses!

He is planning on conducting some "test prep" classes for the students in preparing for the SSRC test date in May. Thank you, Bill, for stepping up and helping grow amateur radio!



**MERT Member Bill Sobel (K1WLS)...**



**with visiting daughter.**



**A group photo of all the students who participated in the class. Thank you, Bill for your leadership!**

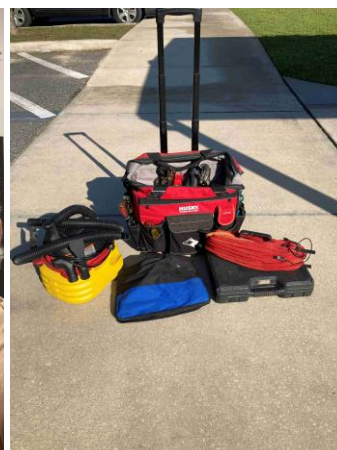
## MERT Receives a Great Gift

In early April, MERT received a very special gift we have needed for years. In the past, MERT Members brought their own tools whenever special projects arose. Now, we have a full set of tools available which were contributed from Stephen Cook, brother of MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook.

Steve is moving to Dallas and no longer needs the tools. We sincerely thank Steve for his generous gift!



(L-R) Stephen Cook and brother Harlan touring the EOC and MERT radio room.



The tools include a complete set of multi-head screwdrivers, socket sets, wrenches, hammers and a vacuum cleaner.

## MERT Wednesday Check-In's

"Check-In's" (0900 to 1200 Hrs.) were not documented this month due to the heavy schedule of events.


## April Monthly Meeting

Our April meeting was well attended and included numerous updates. Please contact Harlan Cook if you want a copy to review.





### **MERT**

**MERT ARES/HEC CERT MONTHLY MEETING**  
**AGENDA**  
**April 15, 2023**  
10:00 am

- **Welcome!** Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator
- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Attendee Introductions** (Name, Call Sign and Organization)
- **Silent Key Acknowledgements**
  - A moment of silence for all our friends who are infirmed or passed.
- **MERT Coordinator Update** Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator
  - **MERT EOC Tower Recable Project is COMPLETED!**
    - Wow! What a huge project to tackle but... WE DID IT!!!!!!
  - **Shelter Reference Manual**
    - Need Winlink reference resource
  - **MERT20 Special Event Station KG4NXO**  
April 29, 2023 (1300 UTC) - (0100 UTC) April 30, 2023
    - **MERT20 will be a 12-hour special event station** for MERT members to operate and make contacts with ham operators including local, statewide, national and international stations.
    - **ALL HAMS are invited to participate from their base station locations!**
  - **Sheriff's Volunteer Dinner**
  - **New MCC Delivered**
  - **Amateur Radio Included in FEMA Guide for National Emergency Preparedness**



- **ARES Coordinator Update** Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) Marion County ARES Coordinator
  - Handouts included.
- **Training Manager Update** – Leon Jurczynyn (K8ZAG) Past MERT Coordinator & Training Manager
  - [Winlink Q & A](#)
- **CERT Liaison Update** – Stephen Wall (KE6YXF)
  - **MERT – CERT Activities Update**
    - CERT Meetings/Events
    - CERT Classes – Current & Scheduled for the Month
    - MERT presentations at CERT Classes
- **HEC Exercise Update** – MERT Member Bruce Twiss (KI4NFA)
  - Dave Welker, HEC Coordinator provides a handout Summary of the HEC Exercise
- **Attendee's Suggestions, Questions & Answers**
  - **[ALL Recommendations for the Good of our Organization Invited](#)**
  - **[HAM's going to the MOON!](#)**



**NASA Names Three Hams for Artemis II Moon Mission Crew**  
**They will be the first crew to land on the Moon.**



The crew of NASA's Artemis II mission (left to right): NASA astronauts Christina Hammock Koch, Reid Wiseman KF5LKT, (seated), Victor Glover, KI5BKC, and CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen, KF5LKU. Credits: NASA.

Will there be a day when HAM's can call the Moon for a contact?????

**Interested in learning more about MERT?**

**Visit: <https://kg4nxo.com/>**