

# MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office  
Div. of Emergency Management

## COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

June 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  
June 17th @ 10:00 am at the  
MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th  
Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

See you there!

MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) left for vacation on 5/17, and Bill Gillespie, MERT Assistant Coordinator (KW5BG) is now in charge. Bill will be gone from 11 Jun until 16 Jul. Leon (K8ZAG) will then be in charge.

### MERT Wednesday Check-In's and Other Activities

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

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting** – (8 members)

- ✓ Harlan (KN4VRM) was asked to re-distribute the simplex frequency list that MERT assigned to local CERT communities. Go to our website, KG4NXO.com, then "CERT Group" then "CERT Repeater KJ4CLL". The chart is on page 2.
- ✓ Harlan and Bill (KW5BG) revealed that the new MCC has to go back for corrections to the radio



"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

connections and antennas and 2 MERT members will accompany it.

- ✓ SHREK Kits need to be checked to see if they are ready to be deployed to shelters. The SHREK Kit equipment available in each container is for use by MERT members during activations and deployments. Several MERT members completed voice testing using two repeaters, checking the inventory in the SHREK kits, and checking the condition of radios in 7 kits by setting them up on battery out in the pavilion. There are 7 more to go.
- ✓ Another work team stayed in the radio room checking the new UPS to computer hookups.

#### **May 4<sup>th</sup> Work Day** – (6 members)

- ✓ The rest of the SHREK Kits were reviewed, tested, and inventoried. MobileLinks for WinLink were still not working.
- ✓ Gary (KS4TSX) is keeping track of the inventory and putting stickers on the cases indicating their status.
- ✓ Sharon (KM4SMM) and Dee added SHREK kit inventories to their manuals.



Gray Moffett, Sharon Malik, Gary Neron, Dee Seagraves, and Bill Davis

#### **May 10th Meeting** – (13 members including 5 women)

- ✓ 2 HF radios from the EOC are still out for repairs.
- ✓ The UPS units in the radio room can power radios for 41 minutes. One team will test the new and old UPS units today. Other team will finish testing radios.
- ✓ Harlan shared that he bought timer and container to finish the lights on the tower.
- ✓ Some problems with the MCC: Diamond 50 antenna has high SWR. 209 connectors need protection from moisture, HF control cable to screw driver antenna has numerous problems like missing connections. There is no way to operate screwdriver antenna from outside. MERT is recommending that MCC go back to Frontline with 2 MERT members to check the repairs.
- ✓ Bruce (KI4NFA) said he will let MERT know when we can do another practice drill with the hospital team.

### May 13th CERT Rodeo – (4 members)



Julie del Valle, Clint Stockton, Dee Seagraves, Sharon Malik, and Bill Gillespie

✓ MERT personnel joined each of the CERT Teams as the Radio Operator to communicate information to the EOC. The intent was to show/teach the CERT Teams what a licensed radio operator

can do in supporting their individual communities.

- ✓ Bill G said MERT continue to coordinate with CERT for the next Rodeo.



CERT members & Preston Bowlin, Director of Emerg. Management

### May 17th Meeting – (12 members)



Gray Moffett, Pat Davis, and Leon Jurczynszyn

✓ Leon (K8ZAG) led members to clean up radio room and move some items to storage.

✓ Leon taught several members and made them practice putting connectors on power cables.

✓ Bill G and Leon helped members with radio problems and Winlink setups.



Gray Moffett, Leon Jurczynszyn, Randy, Bill Gillespie, Sharon Malik, Dee Seagraves, Gary Neron, Bruce Twiss and Bill Davis

### May 20th AUXCOMM Informational Meeting



✓ Hayden Kauffman, Marion County ARES Coordinator led this meeting.

✓ This was a very informative session regarding AUXCOMM, the procedures involved in participating, and how AUXCOMM would affect volunteerism.

✓ He taught Session 1 and took names from people who are interested in taking the training when offered locally.

### May 24th Meeting – (11 members)

- ✓ Bill G wants to put items needed in SHREK kits up on the white board until completed.
- ✓ Gary said Digital Volt Meters need new fuses in 2 kits.
- ✓ Mike (W9MNC) gave information and showed new gadgets from Dayton Hamfest.
- ✓ Gray wants to find and distribute repeater map for county.
- ✓ Gary and Mike are running the Wed. meeting next week when Bill and Leon are in Tampa with the MCC.
- ✓ Leon wants MERT to do a tabletop exercise after July. Bill G explained what that was.
- ✓ Bill G. wants to send a team to each far corner of the county with SHREK kit to see if they can reach EOC.
- ✓ Kraig reminded us that if Tallahassee goes down, that Marion's EOC will become the center of the state's operations.
- ✓ Kraig said that during CERT Rodeo last year, regular radio communications kept going on, but should have stopped, during the emergency situation.
- ✓ Steven (KE6YXF) said training needs to be done with radios – GMRS or walkies – with CERT teams.
- ✓ Sharon is working in her community Marion Oaks to contact local hams to join CERT. She also would like during the next Rodeo to have regular radio check ins.
- ✓ Bill G asked group if they thought Winlink Net was worthwhile because people are not participating. Much discussion with no conclusion.

### PROGRESS SO FAR THIS YEAR

The MERT Team has completed our reviews and preparations for the 2023 Hurricane Season by completing the following activities:

- EOC tower recabling completed
- Radio room recabling completed
- Shelter Reference Manual complete re-write and update (document identifies procedures and forms for Shelter Operators)
- SHREK Kit audit, parts resupply (only one wire repair remains) and radio operational tests
- Two (2) extensive exercises have been conducted to familiarize MERT members with radios, operations and procedures.
  - ARES "Service Denied" Exercise which included Marion County EM teams from MERT, ARES and the Hospital Team (HEC) (2.5 Hours)



- "MERT 20" Special Event Exercise where members made contacts across all frequency bands in 25 states and 7 countries. (8.0 Hours)
- MERT will attend and make a brief presentation at the MCPS "Shelter Manager" meeting on May 31<sup>st</sup>

### Featured MERT Member -- Bill Sobel (K1WLS)



I am retired, and fairly new to Amateur Radio. It was always something I wanted to do but never got around to until I saw an ad in our paper for a Technician class sponsored by our local Emergency Operations Center. At the conclusion of the class, I passed the test, thus receiving my Technician license, I upgraded to General and have been planning to study and take the Extra Exam for the past 2 years. After the new exam study books came out, I did an exam cram for several days prior to taking the Extra exam on October 15th. I passed the exam and now hold my Extra license. My next ham radio goal is to learn code. That should be interesting.

My shack consists of an Icom 7300 HF Radio, and an Icom 7100 all band transceiver. For VHF/UHF D-Star communications, I have a Diamond 50 mounded 7 feet off the ground in my backyard. For HF, I can switch all antennas between my 73 and 7100 transceiver. I also run an Ameritron ALS-606 feeding a LDG Tuner.



I have hung an 86 foot, all band, end fed antenna, with an east/west orientation. In addition, I recently added a Hustler 6-BTV vertical antenna with a 40 radial field. That project was quite an undertaking.

I am active in the Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT) sponsored by the Emergency Management Division of the Sheriff's Department. MERT provides backup and emcom during emergencies. Over my years with MERT, I'm happy to say that I have recruited 2 members that you all know, Paul Blystone and Harlan Cook.

I live in Stone Creek, an over 50 community, with my wife Sharon. Our daughter Geriann lives in South Bend, Indiana. Geri and her husband Mark visit often. I am the founding father of my community's CERT Team. While still a CERT member, I am no longer the Team Leader. However I still support the team, and most recently by conducting a Technician class for 12 of our residents.

## Testing Skills and Stamina with a Full Day of SSB and CW Operations

By Kraig Pritts KA2LHO



As we all know, the best way to keep your radio skills sharp is to use them. Although I have UHF, VHF and HF DStar equipment at home and UHF, VHF, HF equipment in each vehicle, my radio operations are primarily focused on HF. I like a challenge and being able to communicate directly across town, across the state or across the globe with “100 Watts and a Wire” (which is a neat Podcast if you want to take a listen sometime) is still, to me, pretty cool.

I was licensed in the early 80’s and my first QSL cards are dated 1981. It was about that time that I learned about County Hunting (MARAC.org). Trying to get contact with another operator in all 3,077 counties is a challenging enough task BUT to also get WRITTEN confirmation makes the USA-CA award from CQ Magazine, arguably, the most difficult award in ham radio to achieve (LOTW is not accepted and only certain EQSL confirmations are accepted). I am currently at the 2,500 county level with 2,584 counties confirmed.

*To the right is my mobile setup with a Yaesu 857D that covers HF, VHF, UHF operations (mic shown), N3ZN iambic paddle for CW, Microsoft Surface Go PC running N3FJP’s Amateur Contact Log and my custom lap desk/portfolio with a built-in battery pack for phone, tablet or Surface Go if needed.*



Recently my wife and I took a vacation, that included HF operations from parks and counties, down to Key West, Florida. That type of vacation really means that she drives the entire trip and I operate HF radio during the trip. Coming home we shared the driving with only limited radio operations.

After arriving home from these trips, I review my log and tabulate some information from the file. Data for this trip is found below:

### Bands Used:

- 17 Meters (CW and SSB)
- 20 Meters (CW and SSB)
- 30 Meters (CW only is permitted there)

### 13 Florida Counties from which I operated (all while moving, no stationary operations):

- Marion
- Sumter
- Lake
- Orange
- Osceola
- Okeechobee (always fun on CW)
- Indian River
- St. Lucie
- Martin
- Palm Beach
- Broward
- Miami-Dade
- Monroe

**We also visited and operated from three Florida State Parks.** All park operations were stationary and all three are in Monroe County, Florida.

- Curry Hammock State Park
- Bahia Honda State Park
- For Zachary Taylor Historic State Park

*To the right you see our travel vehicle with the Yaesu ATAS-120a Screwdriver Antenna for HF, VHF, UHF use.*

**The log reflects the following contact information:**

- 110 total contacts across all frequencies used)
- 42 unique call signs among those contacts

**Contacts from 4 Foreign Countries:**

- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Poland (two contacts in different parks from this operator)



**Contacts in 23 different US States**

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| • Alabama        | • Nebraska      |
| • California     | • New Hampshire |
| • Florida        | • New Jersey    |
| • Georgia        | • New York      |
| • Iowa           | • Ohio          |
| • Idaho          | • Oklahoma      |
| • Illinois       | • Tennessee     |
| • Kansas         | • Texas         |
| • Massachusetts  | • Virginia      |
| • Michigan       | • Wisconsin     |
| • Missouri       | • Washington    |
| • North Carolina |                 |

As we know from the MERT20 Exercise, HF is markedly different from most other types of communications we use. BUT we do use it. There are HF check-ins weekly, and I was assigned to the HF station during our 12-hour shift for Hurricane/Tropical Storm Nicole. For me, these long, multi-hour operations (this was a 9-hour drive) on the road (not always smooth roads at that), provide the opportunity to put my skills and stamina to a real-world test.

*Interested in learning more about MERT? Visit <https://KG4NXO.com>*