

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

Shelter Activation and Procedures Reference

September, 2023

All MERT Emergency Activations are provided by notifications from the following Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Division of Emergency Management personnel.

- Preston Bowlin, Director, MCSO Division of Emergency Management
- Erin Miller, Deputy Director, MCSO Division of Emergency Management

Note: Activations authorized by governmental declaration may occur at any time and any day during the year which may include support for Shelter operations, Points of Distribution (POD) support, Mobile Command Center (MCC) operations (local or remote) and any other purpose where MERT support and resources are deemed necessary and required.

➤ **Upon authorized instruction, MERT Member activations will be made by:**

- Harlan Cook, KN4VRM, MERT Coordinator, 210.331.3240
- Bill Gillespie, KW5BG, MERT Assistant Coordinator, 727.771.5600
- Leon Jurczynsyn, K8ZAG, MERT Immediate Past Coordinator, 352.272.6199

➤ **MERT Member notifications to be provided by at least three (3) forms of communications:**

1. Amateur Radio broadcast Notice on KJ4CLL (145.330 MHz)

a. Notification will follow this format:

- i. "CQCQCQ – This is an Emergency Announcement of the Marion County Emergency Radio Team for all MERT Members.

MERT HAS BEEN ACTIVATED – I repeat – MERT HAS BEEN ACTIVATED by the Marion County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management.

Specific information on the event and procedures will be distributed via text, email or telephone call. Please check those coms for more information.

CQCQCQ.... this ends the Emergency Announcement of the Marion County Emergency Radio Team for all MERT Members."

2. Telephone Call Notice to each Members preferred number listing
3. Email to the Members email address on record
4. Text to the Members text capable Telephone Number

➤ **Activation Notifications Timeframes.**

1. Anticipated or forecasted Hurricane
 - a. Members may expect having between one (1) to three (3) days of notice

- b. Emergency assignments for Shelters, opening times and staffing shifts will be communicated when approved
 - c. EOC assignment starting times and staffing/shifts provided when approved
 - d. Assignments for POD, MCC and other activities will be made when received by the Division of Emergency Management or the Incident Commander (IC)
- 2. Anticipated or forecasted Major Storms
 - a. Notifications same as Hurricanes – see above
 - 3. After Tornados
 - a. Members should be prepared for activation if Tornado Watches or Tornado Warnings are declared by the National Weather Service for Marion County
 - b. Members will be notified if Activated by the authorized MCSO personnel noted above

➤ **Activation Assignments**

- 1. Shelter Assignments
 - a. Shelter Assignments will be made in advance during the Activation Meeting prior to the Shelters being opened for residents
 - b. Refer to the Annual Shelter Assignment listing
 - c. Shelter Assignments may be modified resulting from availability lists – thank you for supporting other Shelters nearby if needed
- 2. Shelter Contacts List
 - a. A Shelter Manager Contact List will be distributed by the Marion County Public School District at the start of each Hurricane Season and included in the MERT Shelter pamphlet
 - b. Upon arrival, please check in and declare yourself as the MERT Operator for that Shelter with the Shelter Manager. Please provide the Shelter Manager with all your contact information.
 - c. **It is important to provide a copy of the “Shelter Manager Update” to the Shelter Manager and point out on page two showing the Guest WiFi password is to be provided to you.**
 - d. Please seek out the School Resource Officer as well and provide them with all your Contact information (See document “Shelter Recommendations and Suggestions”)
- 3. Severe Storms, Tornados, POD, MCC and Other Activation Assignments
 - a. These unplanned events will require flexibility and understanding by MERT Members
 - b. Assignments may be made by type of activation, location, length of assignment and amateur radio experience
 - c. Notifications will follow the prior documented communications procedures

➤ **UNABLE TO ACCEPT ASSIGNMENT WHEN ACTIVATED**

1. Contact MERT Leadership as soon as possible (MERT Coordinator or MERT Assistant Coordinator)
2. Contact other MERT Members who may be able to fill in and provide backup assistance

SHELTER RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR MERT PERSONNEL

✓ **SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT TO DO WHEN ARRIVING AT YOUR ASSIGNED SHELTER**

1. Park your vehicle in a location where you can leave the area quickly if necessary
2. Try backing-in to the parking spot for safer departing
3. Avoid parking in heavily congested areas to simplify loading and unloading materials
4. Try to park in a location near the closest door to your operating station
5. Check-in at shelters office, provide credentials and share your duties with the Shelter Manager.
6. Confirm that person has blank ICS-213 MESSAGE forms available. If not, provide them.
7. Ask the Shelter Manager to provide a sample signature that you will use to verify all shelter messages are valid and official correspondence to pass to the MERT EOC
8. Request someone to show or escort you to the radio room
9. Find out where the bathroom is located for your use
10. It will likely require multiple trips to move your SHREK kit and personal belongings to your assigned location. Ask for someone to watch your belongings if in an open area
11. Patience is key as there maybe hundreds of people trying to check into the shelter.
12. KNOW your knowledge of MERT procedures is a critical resource for everyone at the shelter

✓ **ACTIVATING YOUR RADIO IN THE COMMUNICATION ROOM**

1. Find the radio room
2. Find and start you ICS-214 Activity Log by noting the time, location, event, Shelter Manager name and all other pertinent information. Keep this log current noting key events/activities.
3. Locate the antenna cable outlet in the room
4. Setup the radio as close to the outlet as practical
5. Determine where the nearest emergency power outlet is located for possible future use
6. Verify your extension cable can reach the emergency power outlet

- a. If your extension cable is not long enough, notify MERT IC then ask the janitor or Shelter Manager for assistance in securing additional power cable(s)
- b. If you cannot locate or secure the additional electrical cable needed, notify MERT IC and be prepared on relocating closer to the generator outlet should electrical power fail
- c. Avoid setting up in the hall or other rooms near the generator outlet unless absolutely necessary. You need a quiet place to perform your radio work. Try to stay in the assigned radio room

✓ **RADIO ROOM SETUP**

1. You may be sharing space with others so keep the radio system well organized
2. Keep the coax and power cables neat and tied up if possible. Remember – no tripping hazards
3. Once all radio equipment is connected to the antenna coax and power cable, turn on the radio after you perform a final check for connection quality

✓ **ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE EOC**

1. After you have activated your radio, contact the MERT EOC on 146.790 MHz (unless your 205A states differently)
2. Log this first call, and all other messages sent and received on your ICS-214 Activity Log
3. A MERT radio operator at the EOC will tell you to either standby for further communication or move to a different frequency
4. Be patient, if asked to stand by, as the MERT EOC team may also be setting up radios, participating in Incident Command meeting or other functions required by the Incident Commander. Avoid repeating check-ins to reduce radio traffic. Stand By.
5. If you cannot communicate with the MERT EOC:
 - a. Check your radio connections/setup
 - b. Verify your ac, DC, power supply and radio are all on and operating
 - c. Inspect to confirm the transmitter frequency is correct
 - d. Check your antenna connections on the radio and wall outlet.
 - e. Did you bring a handheld radio with you? If so, confirm your base is functioning
 - f. Use your cellphone (if cell tower sites are working) to call the MERT EOC room at 352.369.8194 or 352.369.8195 to report your problem and seek technical assistance on why your radio is not working. Replacements are available.

✓ **PROCEDURES ON PASSING OFFICAL MESSAGES**

1. Important – Only messages from the Shelter Manager can be passed to the MERT EOC
2. Verify you have blank ICS-213 forms in your SHREK kit.
3. Confirm all ICS-213 Message forms have a valid Shelter Manager's signature
4. If someone other than the Shelter Manager gives you a message to send, make sure the Shelter Manager has signed the message.
 - a. If the ICS-213 is not signed by the Shelter Manager, ask the person with the message to have the Shelter Manager sign the message
 - b. Do not send any message that does not have the Shelter Manager's signature, except as requested by the EOC
5. Log all radio traffic along with all Shelter Manager conversations on your ICS-214 Activity Log

✓ **WHAT TO AVOID AND NOT DO**

1. Please avoid leaving your station except for:
 - a. Bathroom breaks
 - b. Food breaks
 - c. Rest periods, when replaced by assistant radio operator
 - d. Do not enter the place where the evacuees are located if at all possible
 - e. Refrain from talking to any person where there is a possibility of it being misunderstood as harassment or inappropriate conversation
2. Always notify MERT IC then log your time away from your duty station onto the ICS-214 Activity Log.

✓ **REMINDERS ON WHAT TO TAKE TO THE SHELTER**

1. Snacks and drinks for 2 or 3 days, most likely you will not need this, but be safe
2. Bedding, i.e., sleeping bag or blankets, small blowup mattress or folding bed
3. Medicine for at least 3 days
4. Change of clothes for 3 days, including personal hygiene items
5. Laptop computer with cable to connect radio to computer
 - a. Charger for computer
 - b. Extra battery if you have it
6. FEMA Forms (should be in your SHREK Kit 3-ring binder (also get from the MERT EOC)
 - a. ICS-213 MESSAGE form
 - b. ICS-205A Frequency Plan
 - c. ICS-214 Activity Log
7. Review the MERT “Personal Go Bag Recommendations” document for more detailed lists

✓ **FINAL THOUGHTS ON YOUR ASSIGNMENT:**

1. BE SAFE! Take care of yourself.
2. Rely on your MERT knowledge and training. Questions? Contact MERT EOC for help.
3. Keep a sense of humor – it helps reduce tension and high emotions
4. BE PROUD! You are representing the Marion County Sheriff Department Division of Emergency Management and the Marion County Emergency Radio Team.

Thank You for your service!