MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team

Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE
September 2023

Editor
Pat Davis
KQ4BRW

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 September 16th @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

See you there!

"We got Lucky… Again!"

Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
MERT Coordinator

These words were shared by Preston Bowlin, MCSO Director of Emergency Management when he was wrapping up his closing remarks about the Hurricane Idalia activation at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on August 30th.

I know everyone living in Marion County feels the same! During the 6-8 hours before making landfall, the forecast path slowly shifted West. Thank goodness, that forecast held true which significantly reduced the potential damages in Marion County. I can't imagine what a 125-mph wind can feel like but after seeing the scenes from Madison County, I know the havoc it can cause.

Most importantly, I acknowledge these MERT Members who supported our Mission by volunteering for Activation:

Pat Davis – Westport High School   **Gray Moffett** – Forest High School
Bill Sobel – EOC Radio Room

Acknowledgement for last minute MCC Testing: **Bill Gillespie** and **Leon Jurcyszyn who** worked for many hours testing the repaired HF antenna confirming it was repaired.

"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 addition, I acknowledge the participation and contributions Marion County ARES Coordinator Hayden Kaufman made during the activation. Following new procedures made after last years Hurricane Nicole, the ARES Incident Commander (IC) will now join the MERT Radio Team in the radio room to enhance organizational communications.

I am proud and thankful for everyone's support of MERT!

MERT needs the support of all past and present Members to fulfill our Mission of supporting every Shelter when opened. Only two Shelters out of six were staffed during the Hurricane Idalia Activation. Please renew your support and participation.

MERT NEEDS YOU!

Please renew your participation in MERT activities.

HURRICANE IDALIA VOLUNTEERS

Pat Davis – KQ4BRW
Westport HS

Gray Moffett – KC3DWY
Forest HS

Bill Sobel – K1WLS
EOC Radio Room

Bill Gillespie – KW5BG
MCC Test & Prep

Leon Jurcyszyn – K8ZAG
MCC Test & Prep

Hayden Kaufman – N2HAY
Marion Co. ARES

Our project list continues to shrink with everyone's help. Thank you!

- ✓ Start building an MCC Operations Manual to guide all Members in setting up, operating and supporting MERT activities while operating the MCC during deployments.
- ✓ Complete the school Shelter Audits.
- ✓ See the antenna repairs at Belleview Middle School are completed ASAP.
- ✓ Organize a joint Marion County Exercise for EMCOMM teams (MERT, ARES and HEC).
- ✓ Replacing and moving the OCF HF Antenna tower (telescoping type) to the outer corner of the generator fence to place the antenna long wire element further from the large tree.

MERT Activation mentioned in "The ARRL Letter" and ARRL Podcast

The August 31, 2023 edition of "The ARRL Letter" included MERT's Activation for Hurricane Idalia. The original report by Marion County ARES Coordinator Hayden Kaufman was edited for the national article and audio report.
Visit: http://www.arrl.org/arrlletter?issue=2023-08-31

ARRL also distributed an audio report of MERT's Activation on Sept. 1st at:
https://blubrry.com/arrlaudionews/117460864/arrl-audio-news-september-1-2023/

In Ocala, the Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT) was activated to support shelter operations on Tuesday, August 29. Marion County ARES was placed on standby to support the MERT team and other served agencies. The county was spared the brunt of the impact. Marion County ARES Emergency Coordinator Hayden Kaufman, N2HAY, said the activation identified some opportunities for improvement in the area's disaster response. "We were very fortunate to have had little to do. However, the activation provided us some insight on factors that would impede communications in an emergency," he said.

Ham volunteers worked with the County Sheriff's office to ensure the amateur radio equipment onboard the Marion County Mobile Command Center was fully operational before it was deployed to Madison County, the area most heavily impacted by the storm.

Kaufman thanked the many local volunteers for their service during the hurricane. "I am personally proud to be a member of our increasingly tight-knit EmComm community," he said.

"Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it!"

Mahatma Gandhi

MERT Completes Updated ICS-205A and Radio Reprogram

During August, MERT personnel completed a project recommended by Shelter Operators to simplify the SHREK Kit radio channels list to only those primarily used during an Activation.
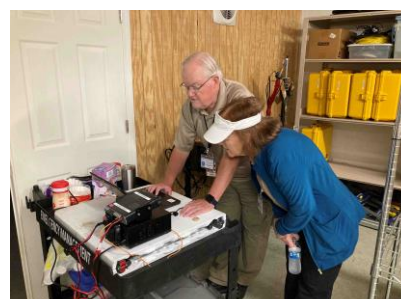

Step One was the review and determination of what specific radio channels would be used on primary, secondary and tertiary repeaters in an emergency.

Leon Jurcyszyn (K8ZAG) MERT Technical Advisor, led the effort and did an excellent job presenting ideas and encouraging feedback by Members.

When finished, the ICS-205A was reduced to 19 channels from the prior 40! All Members agreed the refocus was appropriate and needed.

Step Two was updating the RT Systems computer program with the new channel lists. Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) completed this task.

Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) shows Pat Davis (KQ4BRW) the RT Systems features when the SHREK Kit radios were reprogrammed.

Step Three was re-programming all the SHREK Kit radios. Bill led the team in completing this task on Wednesday, August 23rd. The team helping included Pat Davis, Bill Davis, Gray Moffett and Hayden Kaufman. Many thanks to All!

(L-R) Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY), Bill Davis (KQ4ILZ) and Gray Moffett (KC3DWY) moved and provided the radios for reprogramming.

"The greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are... and what we could become!"

Ben Herbster (American Clergyman)

MERT/CERT/ARES Monthly Meeting

The August Monthly Meeting was very interesting with these presentations.
MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook shared:

A) Updated Marion County Weekly Net Reference was distributed
B) Updated ICS-205A for SHREK Kit radios shared
C) How Ferrite Beads reduce RFI and Common Mode Interference
   His presentation included videos and web resources sharing what these are and
   how they work along with how to select the right one for your

ARES Coordinator Hayden Kaufman shared:

A) ARES news and activities
B) Introduction to AUXCOMM class update schedule for Saturday, October 10th.
   Sign up at:
   Visit: https://aresmcfl.org/signup-for-the-intro-to-auxcomm-class-10-21-23/

HEC Coordinator Dave Welker shared:

A) HEC After Action Report on Exercise conducted 08-11-2023
B) HEC Plan to shift focus to Voice (Radio Telephony) skills
C) Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) Radio Equipment Protection Container

Radio Go Kit Show and Tell by Randy Williams (WD8MGZ)

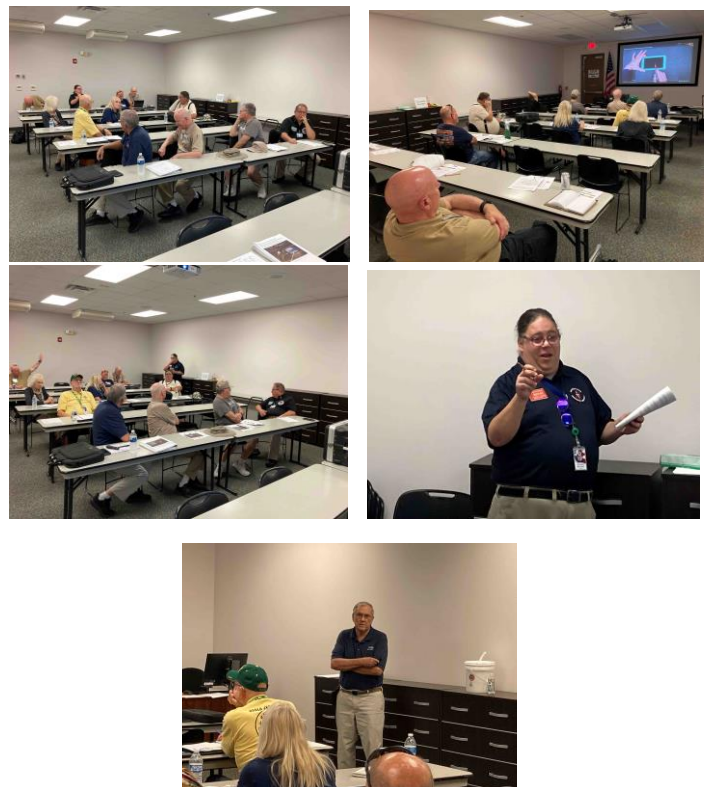A) Randy shared his unique Radio Go Kit he designed and built. Awesome!

Life is 10% what happens to me… and 90% of how I react to it!

Charles Swindoll

Randy, Thank You for sharing your wonderful Radio Kit with us all! What a very impressive design!!
He will be using his Kit on a two-week fishing trip to West Virginia and then on his way back to Ocala.

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

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