

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Div. of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

October 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://kg4nxx.com/mert-calendar/>

Mark your calendars!

MERT Monthly Meeting

The next Meeting will be on October 21st @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

The meeting will introduce the AUXCOMM protocols.

Good Weather Continues!

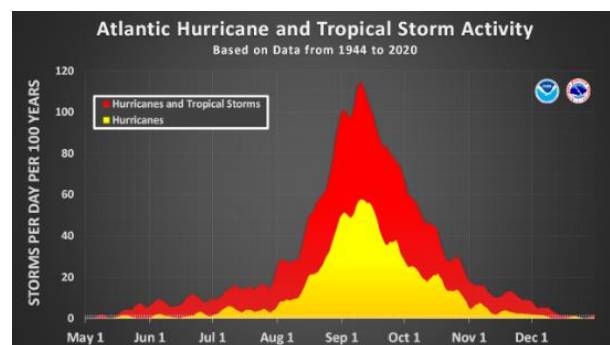


Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
MERT Coordinator

I know everyone values our pleasant weather here in Marion County over the last month. It has cooled and some needed rains have returned. It has been very nice.

Most importantly for us, the Tropical Storms and Hurricanes that have developed followed paths far to the East and then moved North. I've read it has been a non-typical year... and I'm reminded that it's good to be lucky sometimes too!

While the Hurricane season is past the historical peak on Sept. 20th, we all know deadly hurricanes have occurred late into the year. As I've shared before, I receive daily weather updates and will forward them to MERT Members when appropriate. Please remain alert and prepared to act!



"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

I also want to thank the Members for the Hot Wash feedback after Hurricane Idalia and then the follow through on the revised ICS-205 and Shelter Manager Update documents. Both have been updated and inserted into the Shelter Operators Manual along with being posted on our MERT website KG4NXO.com (see “MERT SHELTER Reference”).

In addition, all the SHelter Radio Emergency Kit (SHREK) radios were re-programmed consistent with the revised ICS-205 in helping simplify radio operation for the Shelter Operators.

I’m so very proud of the teamwork and energy shown by all to keep our procedures and reference materials up to date and relevant. Thanks to the many Members who helped!

A final note sharing several new Members have joined over the last two months. Please take time to introduce yourself and help them feel welcomed. As we all know, MERT is a very unique organization requiring most Ham’s to learn several new procedures, protocols, radio systems, etc., etc., etc. I know each of them will sincerely value your personal time in saying... ***Hello and Welcome!***

HR Cook



Leon Jurcyszyn – K8ZAG
MERT Technical Trainer

Mobile Command Center Manual

We want to thank Leon Jurcyszyn (K8ZAG), MERT Technical Advisor for his work and expertise to create a first version MERT Mobile Command Center (MCC) manual.

It includes the specific instructions on setting up and adjusting the TuneMatic model TM1, Automatic Motorized Antenna Controller manufactured here in Ocala by the JT Communications company.

This controller interfaces with the Little Tarheel II antenna on the MCC and supports operations from 3.5 to 54 MHz (80 to 6 Meter HF bands).

This allows MERT Members full national and international radio capabilities in addition to local operations over the 2 Meter and 70 cm bands (VHF & UHF) whenever deployed. MCC training classes are being planned. ***Thank you***, Leon for your talents in creating this important resource!



For more information on TuneMatic:
<https://tunematic.jtcomms.com/wp/>

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

Ben Herbster (American Clergyman)

MERT Task List Update

- ✓ Work continues in finishing the New Member Orientation list helping all Members identify the classes, activities and projects leading to being knowledgeable and fully qualified on MERT procedures, hardware, systems and ICS protocols supporting any MERT activation.
- ✓ Creating the companion MERT Taskbook allowing Member to document and track their own progress in learning the skills needed for MERT Members.
- ✓ Complete the school Shelter Audits. (Awaiting MCPS support.)
- ✓ See the antenna repairs at Belleview Middle School are completed ASAP. (Awaiting the MCPS support.)
- ✓ Learning the plans on MCPS supporting the existing PC in Shelters...or in having MCSO provide laptops for MERT Members operations when activated. (Awaiting MCPS decisions.)
- ✓ 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. (Proposal submitted for review.)

MERT/CERT/ARES/HEC Monthly Meeting

The September Monthly Meeting was very well attended with active participation by all. Here's a quick summary on the discussion topics and presentations.

MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook shared:

A) NEW "FOREST TOWER" Site Update

Harlan presented a preliminary report on the recently identified MERT equipped tower in the Ocala National Forest. The report identified location, tower height and ownership, along with antenna height. From that detail, a preliminary path quality analysis was developed from the MERT Transfer station repeater site with distance and line of site analysis on the ability to serve NE Marion County. The review included a look at possible 2 Meter comm's into the Flagler and Volusia County EOC's which has been identified as a priority by Director Preston Bowlin, Division of Emergency Management.

More work is necessary including a site visit, building inspection and testing of the existing coaxial cable and antenna equipment in determining our future capabilities. Updates will be presented when facts and information are learned.

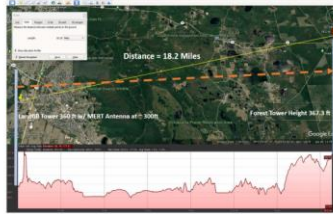
MERT/CERT/ARES/HEC Monthly Meeting (cont.)

Where is it?

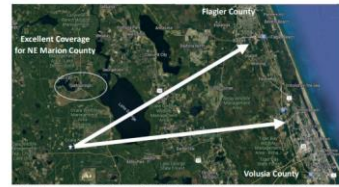
Forest Tower – 900 NE 231st Ave, Silver Springs, FL 34488
 Tower Gate Locked - Lock has MCBC on it Big, requires a key



Frequency	Mode	Power	Bandwidth	Modulation	Code Rate	Code Rate	Code Rate
146.520	FM	100 W	12.5 kHz	FM	12.5 kHz	12.5 kHz	12.5 kHz
146.520	FM	100 W	12.5 kHz	FM	12.5 kHz	12.5 kHz	12.5 kHz



2 Meter Operation should be GOOD to VERY GOOD!

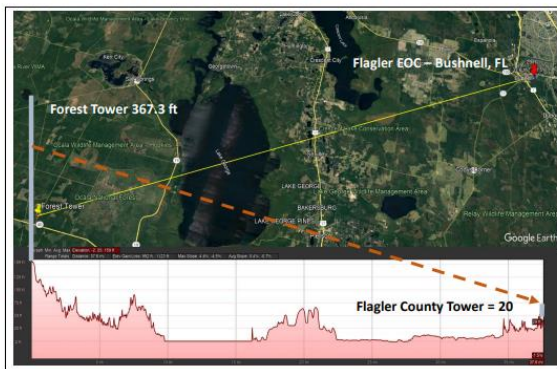


The location will resolve the MERT radio blackout in the NE Marion County areas, including Salt Springs. The site also allows MERT with 2 Meter communications with the Flagler and Volusia County EOC's.

Flagler County EOC in Bushnell, FL



Path and Elevation Analysis – Forest Tower to Flagler EOC



Next Steps:

- ✓ Secure Key for building access from Marion County Comm team
- ✓ Make key for MERT 24x7 access
- Revisit Forest Tower Site and test coaxial cable and antenna for 2 Meter and 70 cm operations
- Secure location, height and type of Flagler County EOC antenna
- Repeat analysis for distance, tower/antenna heights and elevations
- If GOOD results, secure MCSO funding for repeater and duplexers
- Install, activate and test new equipment with Flagler County EOC
- Complete analysis for Volusia County EOC

The Forest Tower Update was presented by Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator on the details known and potential capabilities of this new facility supporting the MERT EMCOMM network.

ARES Coordinator Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) shared:

- A) Phone App's for HAM's.
 - a. With and Without Internet Access
- B) Introduction to AUXCOMM class update schedule for Saturday, October 21st. Sign up at:

Visit: <https://aresmcfl.org/signup-for-the-intro-to-auxcomm-class-10-21-23/>



MERT/CERT/ARES/HEC Monthly Meeting (cont.)

HEC Coordinator Dave Welker (W2SRP) shared:


- A) HEC conducting All Hospital Exercise on Friday, October 13th. Time: 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.
- B) All HAM operators are encouraged to test their ability to contact the hospitals. A simple call to the NET Control Operator on 145.270 MHz will be welcomed.



MERT

MERT ARES HEC CERT MONTHLY MEETING
AGENDA
September 16, 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
 - **New CERT Liaison**
 - Randy Williams (WD8MGZ) accepts appointment!
 - **MCC Update**
 - Great news! The Tarheel II antenna was returned, installed and tested. The MCC is now fully functional!
 - Bill and Leon will provide more details on the tests.
 - My sincere thanks to Bill Gillespie, MERT Assistant Coordinator and Leon Jurczyn, MERT Technical Advisor for the many hours to complete this work.
 - **NEW "FOREST TOWER" Site Update**
 - MERT learns it has a new communications tower resource – the "Forest Tower". I will present an update on what it looks like and how it might solve the big challenge of getting 2 Meter access to the Atlantic Coast County EOC's (Flagler & Volusia).



Harlan Cook, KN4VRM,
MERT Coordinator

CERT Liaison Update

MERT Coordinator Harlan Cook announced Randy Williams has accepted appointment as CERT Liaison. This position is responsible in supporting and coordinating communications with Marion County CERT Coordinator Henri Velthuisen. Thank You Randy for helping MERT keep in close communications with CERT!



Randy Williams
WD8MGZ
New CERT Liaison



Flagler County and
Florida EOC Regions 3, 4, and 5
Monthly Communication Drills
2023 Exercise Plan

Monthly FDEM Region 3, 4 & 5 Exercise

FDEM NET - We had a fun and informational FDEM Region 3, 4 & 5 Monthly Exercise on Wednesday, Sept. 27th. It was a great experience where MERT personnel used multiple modes of communications with the other FL Counties.

As we all know, Net participation helps remind us on the procedures and tests the equipment we use. Surprisingly, the SAT phone testing was very challenging with poor overall results. We will focus on this test next month to identify potential problems needing attention. Many thanks to Gary Neron (KS4TSX) and Gray Moffett (KC3DWY) for conducting this portion of the Monthly Exercise for MERT.

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

Charles Swindoll

During the Exercise, MERT has been encouraged to add ALE capabilities to our EOC EMCOMM capabilities.

So, you ask... "What is ALE?" (I did too!)

"Automatic Link Establishment, commonly known as ALE, is the worldwide de facto standard for digitally initiating and sustaining HF radio communications. ALE is a feature in an HF communications radio transceiver system that enables the radio station to make contact, or initiate a circuit, between itself and another HF radio station or network of stations.

The purpose is to provide a reliable rapid method of calling and connecting during constantly changing HF ionospheric propagation, reception interference, and shared spectrum use of busy or congested HF channels.

This capability is important to EMCOMM stations as it may complete radio transmissions during poor weather or atmospheric conditions.

*Resource: Wikipedia at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automatic_link_establishment

MERT Members in Action!

Last month, several MERT Members participated in a multi-community CERT meeting. We salute them and their actions! (MERT Member names bolded.)

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"MARION OAKS CERT BY **SHARON MALIK**, CO-LEADER



On August 16, **Dee Seagraves**, one of our CERT members and I visited the Palm Cay CERT team at the invitation of their CERT leader Jay Ventuno. We were joined by several other CERT team members representing their Communities.

Stephen Wall from the Oak Run Cert team gave a presentation on the GMRS radio, which is a method of reaching other GMRS radio operators in their respective communities. GMRS radios are not long-distance radios, usually designed for short distances as compared to ham radio that can reach internationally given the type of equipment you are using. The teams were given the opportunity to practice relaying a message to a "central location" and receiving a return response from the "central location." **Bruce Twiss** from the OTOW team assisted.

It was a great evening of sharing a common interest with members from our Host Team of Palm Cay, along with Oak Run, OTOW, Pine Run and Marion Landing."

WINLINK Challenge – Thursday October, 19th, 2023 10:19 am till 6:00 PM

SHAKEOUT 2023

Submitted to WINLINK by K6OLI on Tue, 2023-09-05 22:59

What is ShakeOut?

The Great ShakeOut is the world's largest earthquake drill. It is held annually on the third Thursday of October, and millions of people participate all over the world. In 2022 over 45.6 million people registered their participation.

The goal of the ShakeOut is to teach people how to protect themselves during an earthquake.

How can Amateur Radio Operators participate in ShakeOut?

The US Geological Survey (USGS) and **Winlink** are collaborating to provide "Did you feel it?" (DYFI) earthquake intensity reports via Winlink. SHARES and Amateur Radio Operators are therefore invited to send an EXERCISE Winlink "Did you feel it?" (DYFI) message to the USGS during Shakeout!

In real events Winlink DYFI ground truths contribute to USGS earthquake intensity assessments and event response products, like PAGER. The PAGER system provides fatality and economic loss impact estimates following significant earthquakes worldwide and is used by governments, agencies, NGOs, private companies and citizens.

Please note that ONLY Winlink offers the DYFI exercise option! An exercise option is NOT available on the USGS DYFI website - so it is a unique Winlink feature! And yes, Winlink DYFI exercise reports are sent to the USGS!

MERT has registered for the event.

MORE INFORMATION and details on how to participate will be distributed by email on October 16th.

A review of the ShakeOut participation process will also be highlighted during the Wednesday, October 18th "CHECK IN" meeting at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) starting at 9:00 am.



MERT's Tower at the EOC was inspected early Wednesday Sept. 27th for proper light operation. It passed!



WELCOME TO YOUR SOUTHEAST SHAKEOUT PROFILE PAGE!

MERT is Registered as an Organizational Participant

Registration Information

Organization: Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT) MCSO, FL
Contact Name: Harlan Cook
City: Ocala
Category: Volunteer Radio Groups
E-mail: harlancook6@gmail.com
Currently registered for the October 19, 2023, ShakeOut.

[Update Your Registration for the 2023 ShakeOut](#)

Earthquake: Did You Feel it?

Did You Feel It? (DYFI) collects information from people who felt an earthquake and helps create maps that show what people experienced and the extent of damage.

The USGS email address is filled when clicking SUBMIT below.
Send the DYFI report to USGS via Winlink Telnet

Use this Winlink form to submit **EXERCISE** and **REAL EARTHQUAKE** reports.
Learn more about earthquake hazards at the [USGS](#)

Find the USGS Form under "Message" then... "Select Templates" in Winlink

>>>> This Earthquake report is a(n) EXERCISE REAL EARTHQUAKE
Optional Exercise ID:

Did you feel it? (REQUIRED)
 Yes No

Time of earthquake: (REQUIRED) Local Date and Time Format: 1/3/2000 16:27
Date: Time: Click Date or Time Field to edit
(Opening this form inserts your current Date & Time, you may manually edit)

Your location - street address, city, and state when the earthquake occurred

For accurate mapping of your location enter GPS coordinates in the following fields:
LAT LON
If you have a Winlink Express connected GPS device, the location will be automatically populated.

The remainder of this form is optional. If you indicated YES, then the answers below will help to create intensity info for the USGS.

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