

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Division of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

April 2024

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!"***

MERT Monthly Meeting

The next meeting is on
April 20th @ 10:00 am.

All Amateur Radio
operators are
Welcomed!

Much to be thankful for....



Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
MERT Coordinator

"The beautiful spring came; and when nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also."

— Harriet Ann Jacobs

As we know, volunteers are essential to the everyday success of many organizations from schools and churches to helping at hospitals and yes, local governmental support groups, like MERT. Volunteerism offers every individual, regardless of age, the opportunity to indulge their interests and passions while giving back to their communities. The act also builds character too.

My great-grandmother Mariam was the first to introduce me to the importance of volunteering when we would help her church prepare meals for the elderly every Sunday morning and then personally deliver them. She was always strong and unwavering in her beliefs about helping others without hesitation.

MERT's success, like all volunteer organizations, reflects upon the actions and character of each members individual contributions. Over the last month, many members have made significant contributions to continue MERT's efforts training and preparing for our mission while Bill and I have been unavailable.

"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

We are indebted to all members support and participation but especially recognize Pat Davis, Administration and New Member Manager for leading and organizing events and activities. We thank you for your passion, commitment and leadership shown to continue MERT's success!

Best regards to all!

HRCK



MERT needs YOU!

Meeting Documentation Manager Position Open

We sincerely thank Gray Moffett (KC3DWY) for filling this position over the last 2 years. Gray's support included conducting our "MERT Annual Meeting Report" and the report of MERT Highlights of 2022 and 2023.



**Gray Moffett
KC3DWY**

What does the Meeting Documentation Manager do? This person completes an annual report of the MERT activity highlights and conducts the Annual Meeting. If you can help for 5 hours **per year**, please let the MERT Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator know you can help!

Thank You Gray for your great support over the last two years!

¿Nos puedes ayudar?

Can you help translate our updated MERT Information Brochure into a Spanish language format? If so, contact Harlan or Bill.

MERT Welcomes New Member

Please join me in welcoming Ryan Salom, N8GLX to MERT. Ryan has a General license, lives in SW Marion County and is a pilot for a private aviation company.

Thanks for saying Hi! and introducing yourself when you meet him.

Welcome to MERT Ryan!

| “When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.”

| - Paulo Coelho

each CERT team as “radio operators/communicators”. Here’s a summary of the days activities provided by Pat Davis (KQ4BRW) Administration and New Member Manager.

“CERT/MERT Exercise 3/9/24 -- These are my thoughts and general info for MERT leaders who were unable to attend.

MERT members who had signed up arrived on time in the radio room beautifully. A couple MERTians who hadn't signed up... Sally, Rene, and Bruce... also appeared, thank goodness. 3 small radios were checked out and all 4 roving MERTians got a clipboard, 309 form, directions, and 213 form. Bruce stepped in for Sharon when she stayed in the radio room with me to be a scribe. The 4 CERT teams were supported by Dee, Bruce, Clint, and Gray. Hayden stayed in the radio room and gave advice on how to handle the traffic that came in, and helped find MERTians who had trouble with radios and checking in. It was pretty amazing how people would step in and fix problems that arose without hesitation.

The rovers had to check in whenever their team moved, and we got several messages passed about the triage victims and the hazmat accident. Sharon wrote those 213 messages and the replies - 14 of them. Sally filled out the 214 that I hadn't gotten to, and helped check the radios back in and put them away. Gray did a fantastic job passing messages, using the proper etiquette and verbiage so others could hear him do it correctly. Bruce also had good etiquette, but unfortunately passed away, along with his entire team, at the hazmat exercise. Sharon and I stopped Hayden from doing a silent key ceremony on the radio. I was kept very busy answering the radio, and couldn't have done this exercise without help in the radio room.

Thoughts:

Bruce reported static on his radio at times. Hayden said it might be because the frequency choice 146.400 was close to being a Winlink frequency. Bruce was calm and good natured throughout and a good example for us.

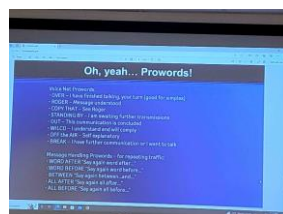
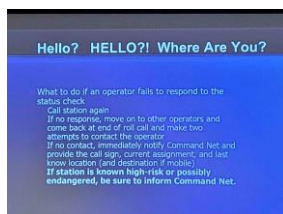
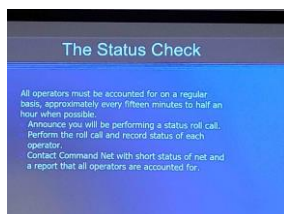
Clint had trouble hearing his radio and I had trouble hearing him. Hayden had to do Clint's check ins so Clint could hear, because we all know how loud Hayden can get. We need to double-check the radio that was checked out to Clint.

Everything was pretty calm and easy until each team got to the hazmat area, and then a member would send a couple 213s, and talk way too fast. We (I) need training on how

Afterwards, Henry and Preston did a hotwash with everyone in the pit. Everyone got a badge for their shirts that was a dark little US flag. They bragged up the radio teams, made us stand up and made CERT hams stand up. Talked about their importance and how more training needed with hams and CERT combined. Preston talked about linking all the counties together with radio, and beefing up the repeaters, towers, etc. Preston called all MERT hams to the radio room before leaving and said that he wanted to use the tower from North Marion school that wasn't being used and put it at Belleview ER. Also said he, Sheriff, and Chief were thinking about radio of some kind for deputy communications. He was very complimentary about MERT and ARES performance and saw the need for maybe using MERT members to hold trainings for his deputies because MERT has their act together with training.

Pat Davis (KQ4BRW)''

Monthly Meeting – March 16th



Speakers included Pat Davis (MERT), Gray Moffett (MERT/ARES), Dave Welker (HEC) and Hayden Kaufman (ARES). Thank you all for your presentations!

MERT Exercise – Price’s Scrub State Park

MERT MEMBERS

“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” – John Bunyan

set up and complete emergency communications from distant north Marion County line at the Price’s Scrubs State Park (17930 NW Hwy 320, Micanopy, FL). The field event was led Bill & Pat Davis and the EOC team was led by Kraig Pritts. Here’s the updates by both leaders on the event.



From Pat on the event:

Exercise went very well. Transmitted successfully and clearly on 3 VHF repeaters (K4GSO, KJ4CLL, WA3YOX) to EOC and MERT members home radios. Sent packet Winlink messages via Pactor HF, VARA HF, and packet VHF. Used 6 radios and 7 antenna setups. Our new Yagi Billy strapped to a tree, Ryan had some kind of aviation compass app that finds bearings using magnetic north, and helped aim our antenna, and we used it for our VHF voice transmissions. Hayden tested it and said our new Yagi was good.

Ryan flies a Gulfstream for a private co. and makes contacts on HF all over the world from 30000 feet. (Not fair!) Has a little backpack with all his radio gear. I have his filled out app. He has already completed all 4 ICS classes. Very gung-ho.

In attendance at the park were Ryan Salom N8GLX, Phil, Hayden, Bill D, Pat. We made 4 contacts at home using VHF repeaters -- Carl, Dave G, Leon, Nick, Gary Nicholas. We had 3 net controls -- Phil, Ryan, and Hayden -- to give everyone practice. All 3 were excellent.

- Ryan showed how to use Pactor for HF Winlink and the different screens while Leon was on the speaker phone.
 - Phil showed how to use VARA HF and the different screens.
 - Phil and Hayden showed how to set up a couple field antennas for HF and VHF.
- We mostly ran out of time before Phil could show us much about POTA.

From Kraig at the EOC:

We had Bruce, Mike Condon, Dee, Gary Neron and me. We had a good discussion about why we spot and what information is there. They got to see spots for operators globally and see exactly where and what they put in and Dee entered some information. Good questions about how HF is different, then we practiced hearing calls in a pileup of many people calling. Then we all reflected together about today's exercise, what it told us and

other areas where we should perhaps do similar tests. Your exercise prompted great discussions that resulted in more questions. That is what they are supposed to do.

Pats' summary says it all... "I learned a LOT and had fun doing it. Much camaraderie. Lovely people to work with, 73. Pat Davis (KQ4BRW)

MERT salutes Pat, Bill and Kraig for leading everyone on these training events. Thank you for the excellent teamwork!

Editor's Note: Another field test event is being planned for the far western Marion County line. More details soon.



Left - Hayden Kaufman filling out his ICS-213 log.



Right – New Member Ryan Salom tuning his radio.



Left – Hayden watching Phil Lewis send a digital Winlink message over his radio.



Right – Bill Davis and Phil Lewis (background).

From Dave Gustafson (WB9EEH) at his QTH (base station residence):

The repeaters test from Price's was 100% successful and it did not require any relays from my qth! I got way more data than I anticipated from the test. Yes, it was excellently executed, and the results were also excellent.

What I found was first the excellent performance of the 2m ground plane into the repeaters, but more importantly an almost perfect range check from W4EVV (Phil Lewis radio) to my location. His signal was just above the noise level (linear reception region)

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." – Mahatma Gandhi

on 146.01 but not copiable on 144.730 and 144.670. From the attached DX engineering bulletin, they quote the swr @ 1.5:1 from 144-148 but the plot and graph shows skewing toward lower swr @ 147.000. No mention of 144Mhz. By empirical calculation (obviously he didn't have a power output wattmeter on the transmitter, I believe there was approximately a 10% output power loss at the low end of the band, accounting for the decreased signal at my location. Ain't technology and radio wonderful!

Dave, thank you for your feedback on the radio test and the signal quality report at your base station. Keep them coming!

MERT Training Exercise – March 27th



**Pat Davis (KQ4BRW)
Administration & New
Member Manager.**

Wow! What fun. Pat Davis (KQ4BRW) shared the following activity summary for the March 27th Check In meeting.

1. Two new participants: Ryan is a full member now, and Duke (sent by Sharon) put in his application today.
2. We talked about last week's Price's Scrub exercise and this coming week's exercise there. I gave out the ICS 205A and the Incident Radio Communications Plan so all would be ready for next week's exercise whether they are at home base stations or at Price's Scrub.
3. Bill Sobel showed how to convert a Baofeng or any VHF radio to being GMRS, and explained how it is illegal to transmit GMRS on a VHF radio. I gave a handout of the GMRS frequencies. See attached.
4. I showed Broward County's Fire Chief's procedures for wind speeds and callouts for our awareness only as communicators. Hayden said in Marion it is 45mph before they start prioritizing calls, and in Alachua it is the same. See attached.
5. Several people went with Bill D and Gray to the warehouse to see the storage there. Brought back SHREKS 1-4.
6. We split into 5 teams of 3-4 each.
7. Each shelter team got blank forms, clipboard, SHREK, Shelter Binder, GMRS radio
 - a. Tasks were to inventory SHREK,
 - b. And familiarize themselves with shelter binder
8. EOC team got their own blank forms and radios
9. At 10:15 EOC (Mike) called for a check in of the shelters on channel one
10. At 10:29 scenarios began (see attached)
 - a. Carl manned the radio taking incoming calls from shelters

- b. Hayden gave the responses to the shelters with a different radio
- 11. There were a few bumps but mostly it went smoothly.
 - a. EOC – Hayden, Carl, Mike (paperwork was in disarray and only partially filled in, but lots of it. J)
 - b. Group 1, FHS – Gary, Dee, Phil, Kraig (turned in beautiful paperwork)
 - c. Group 2, WPHS – Bruce, Ray, Ryan (Legible writing, missing 309)
 - d. Group 3, VHS – Bill S, Bill D, Duke (Lovely, almost legible paperwork)
 - e. Group 4, LMS – Gray, Rene, Sally (Great paperwork, missing inventory)
- 12. We gathered back to the classroom at 10:57 and 11 people stayed until 11:45 doing a verbal hotwash. The high points are below:
 - a. Gary - Debate over being able to say suspected drug overdose on the air, Gray - okay but don't use names, keep anonymous – backed up by Bruce
 - b. Dee – had to wait 3 or 4 times for answers – Hayden said if no response to urgent message within 5 minutes follow up with the EOC
 - c. Carl- operators talking too fast, use blocks of 5 words, no saying “dead” on the air – say “unresponsive”
 - d. Hayden – be clear what is requested new generator or new tank of diesel
 - e. Bruce – don't put different types of supplies/things needed on same 213 because different departments fill those and they go to different people
 - f. Hayden – if you have 4 requests, put on four 213s and tell operator you have 4 requests and he will handle them all at the same time, perhaps on a different frequency
 - g. Bruce—be careful to get the correct time on the 213!
 - h. Bruce – If you think a message is wrong that you are given, verify that is what the person intended to send, and then get a signature.
 - i. Carl – refrain using actual school names – people overhearing could freak
 - j. Hayden – If using tactical call signs, put your own call sign at the end of your message to abide by FCC rules.
 - k. Hayden- use prioritizing of your messages – Dave Welker had also talked about this

We still need lots more practice. A couple people suggested we do this again but outdoors with the SHREKS like the original plan. I LOVE the way people share their knowledge in this bunch and are so ready to teach others. Pat Davis

Thank you, Pat, for the excellent plan, leadership & event summary of this training event!

“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.” – Sally Koch

March 27th Event photographs



Phil Lewis, Dee Seagraves &
Gary Neron



Ryan Salom, Ray Woody &
Bruce Twiss



Rene Perron, Sally Gugino &
Gray Moffett



Bill Sobel, Bill Davis &
Guest Duke Deshommes



Carl Berry



Mike Condon, Hayden Kaufman
and MERT's new repeaters

Sheriff's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



(Left) - Welcome to the 2024
Sheriff's Office Volunteer
Appreciation Dinner!

(Right) – Director Preston Bowlin
welcoming Volunteers to the
Appreciation Dinner.

(Below) MERT members and
Guests at the dinner.



MERTrak Volunteer Time Reporting System

Please remember to log your hours weekly at **mertrak.com**.

Your weekly volunteer hours can include all amateur radio on-air time, setup and testing time, repairs, reading the MERT newsletter and other ham radio materials, meeting and field exercise time along with your time getting to and back home from all MERT activities. It also includes preparing for your first license and an upgraded FCC license.

Get your Training Skill Book

MERT's new resource helps members gain the knowledge and skills needed to complete critical tasks when activated... and at their own pace! Our original supply of 24 binders has now been restocked so see Pat Davis, Harlan Cook or Bill Gillespie for your copy.



SPECIAL EVENT REMINDER – MERT 20 Exercise

Saturday, April 27th – 8:00 am to 8:00 PM

Have you signed up for MERT20 yet? If not, visit MERT20.org or KG4NXO.com and click the MERT20 tab and pick your shift.

Following up on last year's very successful event when members made contact with other amateur radio operators in 7 countries and 24 U.S. states, MERT will do it again April 27th. This exercise event celebrates 20 years of MERT service to the Division of Emergency Management.

MERT20 is a unique Special Event Exercise encouraging every MERT member to learn and participate in activities they may or may not do on a regular basis. The opportunity to spend significant time practicing on-air communications time over multiple bands is not a usual event by amateur radio operators... but it is during MERT20!

Have you talked with other hams in 7 countries and 24 states in one day? Want too? Sign up at: MERT20.org!

Learn more about MERT at..... KG4NXO.com

The screenshot shows the website for the MERT20 Special Event Station-2024 KG4NXO. The header includes the MERT logo, the text "Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT)", and the dates "April 27, 2024 (1200 UTC) - (0000 UTC) April 28, 2024". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home, About MERT, Frequencies, Schedule, Certificate, and MERT Member Sign-Up. The main content area contains a welcome message, information about the MERT20 Special Event, and a link to sign up. The footer includes a thank you message and a link to learn more about MERT.