

MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Division of Emergency Management

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

October 2025

MERT's primary role is to support all open Evacuation Shelters throughout Marion County (FL) during declared Emergency events. We also support the Emergency Operations Center Incident Commander, staff and other EMCOMM groups (CERT, HEC, ARES) with voice, image & data communications locally, statewide and across the United States.

"Call MERT... When all else fails!"

Next Bimonthly Meeting

November 15th, 10:00
am at the EOC

All Amateur Radio Operators
are Welcomed!

Meetings conducted in Jan,
March, May, July, Sept. and Nov.

Working Together: MERT's Commitment to Be Ready



Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
MERT Coordinator

Behind every clear transmission, emergency alert, and coordinated response is a team of volunteers who are ready to make it possible. At MERT, our current volunteers are leading an ambitious effort to update, renew, replace, and improve the communications infrastructure that serves the Division of Emergency Management. It's a quiet revolution with a powerful impact which is only possible with the strong leadership and support of Preston Bowlin, Director along with Erin Miller, Deputy Director; Logan Stamp, Emergency Management Coordinator; Nathan Hime, Emergency Management Planner; and, Darian Tucker, Administrative Assistant.

Across the county, from Ocala to the center of the national forest, volunteers have been hard at work replacing aging repeaters, rebuilding our systems on the towers, expanding battery backup resources and insuring shelters are in good working order. These aren't just hardware improvements—they're lifelines being strengthened by people who really care about our community safety and resilience when the majority are unable to do anything to help others.

The recent installation of a new repeater in the Ocala National Forest, the equipment moves and enhancement of the Sheriff's Complex tower last fall, and the rebuilt EOC tower and systems represent milestones driven by many hundreds of hours of collaboration, technical

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

skill, and commitment.

Volunteers have replaced and upgraded EOC tower coaxial cable runs two years ago, tested and repaired systems equipment and ensured that every link in the emergency communications (EMCOMM) chain performs when needed. The team has also expanded MERT's capabilities by receiving a SHARES license and improving the capabilities of every Operator when they deploy to the Shelters with enhanced SHREK Go Kit inventories. These upgrades mean improved capabilities, greater reliability, better response times, clearer communications and broader coverage in times of crisis.

But what truly sets MERT apart is the team itself. Diverse in background but united in purpose, our volunteers bring together new members, seasoned radio operators, tech-savvy troubleshooters, and passionate community advocates. They don't just respond when disaster strikes—they train and prepare in advance, anticipate challenges, and innovate solutions. Their camaraderie and shared vision have transformed MERT into a vital arm of Marion County's emergency response network.

Together, we're building a system that won't just endure the next hurricane - it will help in guiding our community safely through it. And with each system adjusted, cable replaced, signal fine-tuned and repeater added, our volunteers are proving what's possible when dedication meets a commitment to help the residents of Marion County. We can all be proud of our work as we support our motto... ***"When all else fails. Call MERT!"***

Thank you, members for your participation and enthusiastic support!

HR Cook

Ps: Thank you for reporting all your volunteer hours in **MERTrak**.

Ocala Forest Tower Repeater Update

As testing continues across north Florida with MERT's new Ocala Forest repeater (147.210 MHz; +600 kHz; 123 PL), additional revisions are being made. The most recent is focused on improving the reliability and operational life of the repeater unit should extensive use be required during a major hurricane event.

Radio transmitter/receivers (repeaters) can be subject to failure if the unit is required to operate continuously while supporting major events. This long operational use is referred to as a heavy "duty-cycle" and can push the transmitter portion of the repeater to overheat to a point causing failure. To reduce this from happening, repeaters can be adjusted to lower transmitter power and a heavy-duty post-amplifier be added to maintain coverage.



**Repeater with
post-amp installed.**



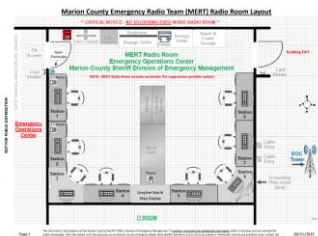
Towards this objective, we are very thankful to Andy Allen (NA4DA) who recommended this revision and loaned his custom-built post-amplifier in support of MERT's mission and responsibilities. We appreciate his generous support and the equipment loan. Thanks Andy!

(L) Andy Allen NA4DA upgrading the new Forest repeater with his loaned post-amplifier.

MERT INCIDENT RADIO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (ICS-205)

With the ongoing testing of the new Forest Tower repeater confirming its operational usefulness to MERT's radio coverage, our communications plan was modified to reflect its addition as a key resource during all future activations. Please secure a copy of the 9/25/2025 version of our ICS-205 showing its addition as Channel 5. Visit: KG4NXO.com and the tab "Quick Links" for your copy.

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EMERGENCY ACTIVATION RADIO PLAN		MERT OPERATIONS		INCIDENT RADIO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (ICS-205)		Active Standard Operating Procedures	
Channel	Frequency	Mode	Power	Bandwidth	Comments	Channel	Frequency
1	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	1	146.520
2	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	2	146.520
3	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	3	146.520
4	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	4	146.520
5	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	5	146.520
6	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	6	146.520
7	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	7	146.520
8	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	8	146.520
9	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	9	146.520
10	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	10	146.520
11	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	11	146.520
12	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	12	146.520
13	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	13	146.520
14	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	14	146.520
15	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	15	146.520
16	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	16	146.520
17	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	17	146.520
18	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	18	146.520
19	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	19	146.520
20	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	20	146.520
21	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	21	146.520
22	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	22	146.520
23	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	23	146.520
24	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	24	146.520
25	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	25	146.520
26	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	26	146.520
27	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	27	146.520
28	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	28	146.520
29	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	29	146.520
30	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	30	146.520
31	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	31	146.520
32	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	32	146.520
33	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	33	146.520
34	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	34	146.520
35	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	35	146.520
36	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	36	146.520
37	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	37	146.520
38	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	38	146.520
39	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	39	146.520
40	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	40	146.520
41	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	41	146.520
42	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	42	146.520
43	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	43	146.520
44	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	44	146.520
45	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	45	146.520
46	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	46	146.520
47	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	47	146.520
48	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	48	146.520
49	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	49	146.520
50	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	50	146.520
51	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	51	146.520
52	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	52	146.520
53	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	53	146.520
54	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	54	146.520
55	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	55	146.520
56	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	56	146.520
57	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	57	146.520
58	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	58	146.520
59	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	59	146.520
60	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	60	146.520
61	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	61	146.520
62	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	62	146.520
63	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	63	146.520
64	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	64	146.520
65	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	65	146.520
66	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	66	146.520
67	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	67	146.520
68	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	68	146.520
69	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	69	146.520
70	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	70	146.520
71	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	71	146.520
72	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	72	146.520
73	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	73	146.520
74	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	74	146.520
75	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	75	146.520
76	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	76	146.520
77	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	77	146.520
78	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	78	146.520
79	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	79	146.520
80	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	80	146.520
81	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	81	146.520
82	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	82	146.520
83	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	83	146.520
84	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	84	146.520
85	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	85	146.520
86	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	86	146.520
87	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	87	146.520
88	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	88	146.520
89	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	89	146.520
90	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	90	146.520
91	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	91	146.520
92	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	92	146.520
93	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	93	146.520
94	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	94	146.520
95	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	95	146.520
96	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	96	146.520
97	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	97	146.520
98	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	98	146.520
99	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	99	146.520
100	146.520	FM	5W	12.5K	Forest Tower Repeater	100	146.520

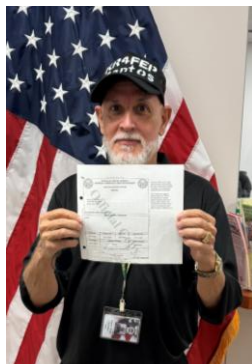


EOC Radio Room Update

Another updated document includes the EOC Radio Room diagram. MERT is adding a radio at Station 2 to support the fulltime monitoring of our new Forest repeater which supports direct EOC to EOC communications. Visit: KG4NXO.com for a copy.

Member Updates!

Kudos to the following members who are stepping up and challenging themselves to new levels while supporting MERT. Please join me in congratulating them all!



New
General License
Santos Pagan
KR4FEP



New
Logistics Manager
Royce Hagerman
KD7SNN



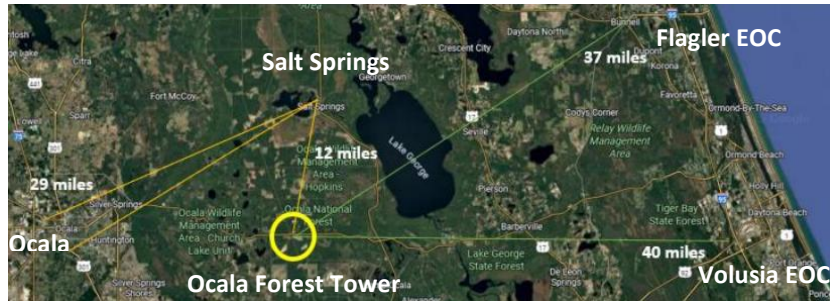
New
Deputy Logistics Manager
Cindy Sheffield
K9LRX



New
CERT Liaison
Kraig Pritts
KA2LHO

"Volunteering is at the very core of being a human. No one has made it through life without someone else's help." – Heather French Henry

Field Exercise @ the MCSO Northwest Office – Salt Springs



(L) The latest Field Excise location was a re-test from the Salt Springs area originally conducted in 2020. The great news is the results went from 0 radio repeaters contacted then to 15 on the recent test!

MERT thanks all members who supported this important exercise!



Royce Hagerman KD7SNN and Ray Woody WB6FKJ loading radios, antennas and portable towers.



Phil Lewis W4EVV checks in with Jaime Gillan, Administrative Assistant with the MCSO Office.



The new MERT pop up tent was very welcomed in keeping the hot sun off all the operators during the tests.



(L) MERT's telescoping tower and Yagi 2 Meter/70 cm antenna were important components for the successful radio communications test results at the Salt Springs Field Exercise.



Members successfully conducted 15 specific frequency tests during the Exercise using the new Forest repeater and others around Marion County.



Santos Pagan KR4FEP notes radio test results as Royce Hagerman KD7SNN conducts them. Mark Weible in back.



Harlan Cook KN4VRM adjust a second Yagi antenna before conducting tests.

Phil Lewis W4EVV and Mark Weible await the results of a Winlink Digital test.

MERT is planning its next Field Exercise and will soon announce its location and primary focus on our voice and digital network systems (repeaters, antennas, radios and portable hardware Go Kits).

"Volunteer. Sometimes the jobs no one wants conceal big opportunities." - H. Jackson Brown Jr.

September Meeting Update

The September meeting had great speakers, excellent information to learn and timely updates on training and exercise results by MERT, Hospital HEC and ARES teams. We also welcomed special guests from the North Florida Amateur Radio Club in Alachua County who provided a Informative overview of their amateur radio activities. (Visit: <https://www.nf4rc.club/>)

- MERT**
MONTHLY MEETING
AGENDA
September 20, 2025
1800 am
- Welcome! Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
 - Pledge of Allegiance
 - Attendee Introductions (Name, Call Sign and Organization)
 - Silent Key Acknowledgements
 - A moment of silence for all our friends who are informed or passed.
 - MERT Coordinator Update Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator
 - Welcome!
 - Introduction of Special Guests
 - Guest Speaker – Alachua County ARES Brett Wallace NH2KW
 - Alachua AUXCOMM Update (Website: www.nf4rc.club/)
 - Past & Future Objectives
 - New EOC
 - Future collaboration w/MERT
 - Future collaboration w/N FL AUXCOMM Work Group
 - MERT Deputy Coordinator Update Bill Gillespie (KV5BG) Deputy Coordinator
 - North FL AUXCOMM Work Group Meeting Review
 - AUXCOMM Mtg in Lake County EOC – Thursday, Oct. 2nd
 - Special Recognitions
 - New Trustee's – KK4DFC & KK4AEG
 - Logistics Manager
 - Deputy Logistics Manager
 - New MERT Member

- HF Propagation Update Space Weather Report Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)
 - HF Interference Update – Solar Flux Report
Radio flux predicts the arrival of high-energy solar particles, which can interfere with ham radio HF communications, satellite operations, and other electromagnetic systems
- ARES Coordinator Update Hayden Kaufman (N2HAY) Marion County ARES Coordinator
 - Net Control Operator Class – Lake County EOC
 - Operation Iron Spill Exercise Review – Sept. 6th
 - ARES website updates
 - Prototype of the new ARESMCP ID credential
 - Upcoming Events and Activities
- HEC Update Dave Weiker HEC Coordinator (W2SRP)
 - 2025 Hospital Emergency Team Update
- Emergency Shelter Update Ray Woody MERT Shelter Manager (W6FKJ)
 - South Marion High School Update
 - North Marion High School Shelter – Use On Hold
- Attendee's Suggestions, Questions & Answers
 - ALL Recommendations for the Good of our Organizations is invited

MERT's September Meeting Agenda



(L) Harlan Cook, Coordinator welcomed 26 attendees to the monthly meeting.
(R) Guest speaker Brett Wallace NH2KW, Alachua County, shares his update on Future Objectives; New EOC status; and future collaboration w/N FL AUXCOMM Work Group.



(Far Left) Brett Wallace provides a thorough update on Alachua County activities.
(L) New MERT member Don Webb W9EBB is presented his Welcome letter sharing his approved application by the MCSO.

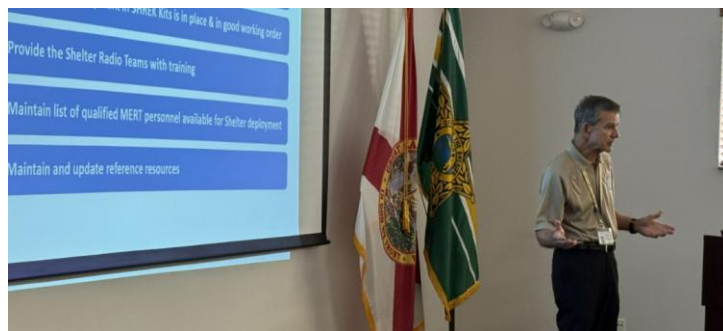
(R) Bill Gillespie, Deputy Coordinator and Harlan Cook, presents KK4AEG Trustee Certificate to Gary Nicholas HQ4HQD.
(Far Right) Phil Lewis W4EVV is presented the KK4DFC Trustee Certificate.



"We can benefit others through our actions by being warm and generous toward them, by being charitable, and by helping those in need." -Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama



(L) Bill Gillespie, Deputy Coordinator and Harlan Cook present Royce Hagerman KD7SNN his MCSO Uniform in completing Levels I & II of the New Member Orientation Taskbook. Additionally, Royce received his Logistics Manager Certificate.



(R) Ray Woody WB6FKJ, Shelter Manager presents an update on his responsibilities and duties supporting MERT's shelter activities. Ray also provided an update on the next shelter to open at the new South Marion High School. He also explained more the Shelter Reference Manual and Shelter Op's binder.



(Far Left) Dave Welker W2SRP HEC Coordinator share the results of the latest HEC Exercise results with attendees.



(L) Gray Moffett KC3DWY Marion County ARES Assistant Emergency Coordinator shares updates on the Iron Spill Exercise and the Net Control Op. class for amateur radio operators.



Kraig Pritts KA2LHO

CERT Liaison Update – Kraig Pritts

MERT member and CERT Liaison Kraig Pritts KA2LHO shares there is a new CERT class on the dates listed below at the EOC.



- October 04, 2025 Saturday
- October 11, 2025 “
- October 28, 2025 “
- October 25, 2025 “
- November 1, 2025 “

Participants can secure and complete an application at the first class.

Classes generally run from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm. Participants are very encouraged to attend all classes to receive a certificate.

Limited class make up opportunities *may* be available... *depending on the class missed*.



Mark Weible N4GPA

MBA Net Update

MERT Member and Marion Baptist Association (MBA) Liaison Mark Weible N4GPA, shares their Net times have changed. The “Disaster Relief Net” now meets at 9:00 p.m. Tuesdays. on the KA4WJA Repeater (Receive: 146.970 MHz, -600 kHz; No Tone).

(Note: Locally, this repeater is often referred to as the “970 repeater” or the “Anthony repeater”. Access throughout Marion County is usually very good, even if participating with a Handi-Talkie (HT).)

This week, their NET will be talking about the National SOS Radio Network and how to develop a community network of FRS and GMRS operators. An informative reference is at: Visit: [https://radiorelay.org/files/sos/National SOS hurricane flood flyer%202021-8-9.pdf](https://radiorelay.org/files/sos/National%20SOS%20hurricane%20flood%20flyer%202021-8-9.pdf)

For more information, contact Mark Weible at mark@ams.mba or visit: www.ams.mba

Robert Ethridge – New Emergency Management Coordinator

We are very pleased sharing Robert Ethridge was selected to fill the open Emergency Management Coordinator position for the Division of Emergency Management. Mr. Ethridge transfers from his current duties as a Deputy Sheriff since receiving his Florida Law Enforcement Certificate. Prior to that responsibility, he served as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Marion County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO).

We are looking forward to welcoming Mr. Ethridge and the opportunity of working with him to continue advancing MERT’s Mission into the future.



**Robert Ethridge, new
Emergency Management
Coordinator, Division of
Emergency Management.**

For more information on the Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT), visit:

KG4NXO.com

All hams are welcomed to attend all MERT meetings every Wednesday from 9:00 am till Noon at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC); 692 NW 30th Ave., Ocala, FL.

“The greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are... and what we could become!” - Ben Herbster (American Clergyman)