

Simulated Emergency Test - SET Drill ...Practice Makes Perfect

By: Jim Sutton N2OPS

The radios in the room were alive with voices communicating vital data in an ice storm where everything else was down. Telephone and electric lines were down. The area was without power or communication.

At the control command post members of Wyoming County ARES were in touch relaying radio traffic between agencies in the area including the Red Cross, fire departments and adjacent counties. Operators worked for 30 continuous hours on October 6 and 7, 2007.

The SET, or simulated emergency test, drill was to familiarize ARES members with communications procedures vital in a disaster. ARES is short for Amateur Radio Emergency Services.

HOW THEY DO IT

ARES members volunteer their time and equipment. Jump kits are packed with essential personal and communications items to grab and run on a moments notice. Since disasters could find ARES volunteers out for many days it is vital that they have personal items and radio power for a number of days.

Photo 1 (top right) shows an ARES radio operator with multiple radios and 12 volt emergency power.

Direct simplex operation is often needed when ham repeaters are down, especially if the repeaters do not have emergency power. This situation requires full power radios instead of the lower power that is usually needed to access repeaters.

WHERE THEY DO IT

Throughout the radio spectrum Amateur Radio frequencies allow ARES to make maximum use of bands and propagation.

HF radio communications require more elaborate antennas than VHF and UHF. The Kenwood transceiver in Photo 2 (right middle) operates with an automatic antenna tuner.

Photo 3 (bottom right) illustrates emergency power connections and antenna switching behind the radios.

Antennas ready to set up in the field are another vital part of the command post. For the SET drill antennas were mounted on tripods and even strung inside of slinky toy springs between basketball hoops.

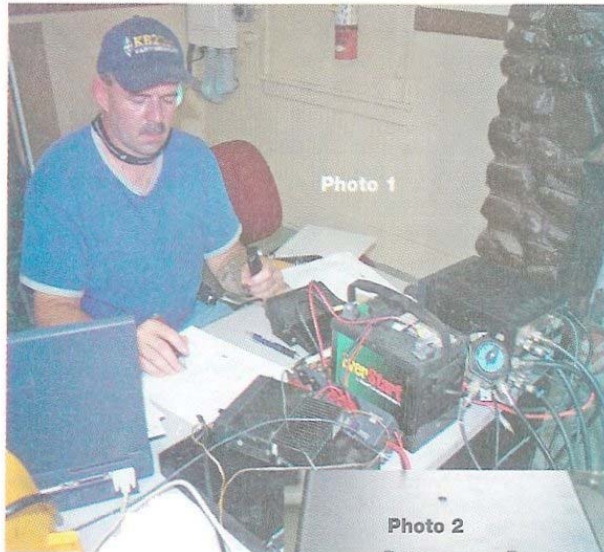


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

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Photo 4 (below) shows a gain VHF/UHF antenna on the right and a directional antenna on the left.

Photo 5 (below) shows the "slinky" antenna for HF communications.

RADIO TRAFFIC

ARES sends messages in the following priority system:

Emergency

Any message with a life or death urgency.

Priority

Messages with a specific time limit, not emergencies, press dispatches, notice of death or injury in disaster area.

Welfare

Inquiry or advisory on health and welfare of individuals or indication all is well in the disaster area.

Routine

Most traffic is routine. In disasters it is of the lowest priority.

HOW TO LISTEN

Shortwave receivers with side band or SSB capability will allow the listener to hear disaster communications in 160 thru 10 meter HF bands.

Lower HF frequencies are usually used during nighttime hours where the higher frequencies are used for daylight operation.

All scanners will receive the 10, 6, 2 and .7 meter VHF and UHF bands. Some will also receive the 1.25, .33 and .23 meter bands.

WYOMING COUNTY ARES FREQUENCIES

- 147.315 + 141.3 PL — Primary/Net
- 145.450 - 141.3 PL — Secondary/Traffic
- 146.535 — Simplex
- 145.590 — Packet/WinLink 2000
- 7.235 ± QRM — 40 Meters
- 3.925 ± QRM — 75 Meters

A search of the internet may find a site for your area with ARES frequencies for your scanner.

Further searching may yield information on upcoming drills that will provide excellent listening opportunities.

HOW TO TAKE PART

ARES, and their sister organization RACES, provide the scanner listener the opportunity to go beyond just listening to being an active part of what is happening on the airwaves.

Contact your local ARES or RACES group to apply. They can help you earn your Amateur Radio license and advise of the best gear to serve in a disaster.

Since the SET drill I have personally joined Wyoming County ARES. I'm looking forward to the training, service opportunities and times of fellowship with other ham radio operators.

Until next time may your signals be strong, your static be few.

LINKS FOR MORE

INFORMATION

Wyoming County ARES website <http://wycoares.hamgate.net/>

Wyoming County ARES SET report <http://wycoares.hamgate.net/set.html>

Public Service Communications Manual <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/pscm/sec1-ch1.html>
<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/setguide.htm> <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/pscm/sec1-ch4.html> Hurricane, blizzard, ice storm, tornado, terrorist attack, wild fire, blackout, flood, telephone outage, train wreck,

Photo 4



Photo 5

