

Simulated Emergency Test (SET) 2023
Boone County ARES (BCARES)
November 4, 2023

We had a great Simulated Emergency Test (SET) exercise this year. It was good to have a number of Red Cross volunteers and other agency personnel interacting with our BCARES members at shelter sites. Both the University Hospital communications trailer and Boone County Regional Hospital command center were exercised. We also placed a station at the local humane society for Pet Sheltering functions. All ICS-213 messages were passed to and from the EOC within the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) building. The EOC is located across the hall from the county dispatch center (Boone County Joint Communications - BCJC) where our amateur radios are installed. We operated Net Control for the exercise from there, after an initial Net Control station was established at Start of Exercise from a home as the operators were in route to ECC. Net control was then passed to the EOC, and check ins continued.

Twenty-five operators were deployed to 6 Red Cross shelters and 3 other sites (MU Health, Boone Health, and Boone humane society) for SET 2023, November 4, 2023. A Rave notification was sent from EOC at 10:00AM to officially begin the exercise.

A survey of operator capabilities at Net check in recorded that we had 18 portable Winlink stations, and 13 APRS equipped vehicles being deployed for the SET. The first ICS 213 was received at EOC at 11:00 AM. So, our response time from the Start-Exercise notification, including travel to the shelters from home, setting up equipment, meeting Red Cross (or agency) personnel, and sending the first ICS 213 from them to EOC was one hour. EOC received 12 more Winlink messages in the first 20 minutes. Winlink messages were sent via KOSI-10 Packet RMS, KOPHP-10 Vara FM RMS, and WX0BC Vara FM P2P station at the EOC.

In total, thirty-six Winlink ICS 213s were transmitted and received in 1 hour 46 minutes. Of these, nine were by Winlink Peer-Peer sessions, two were by voice. One picture was received and two ICS 213s were sent after the net was closed. Two ICS 213s were sent to Red Cross HQ in St Louis, and two replies were received, all on the Winlink system.

At approximately 12:10 our Net repeater went off the air! Our planning documents stated that if the repeater should fail, the net should move to the 146.610 Repeater. It took several minutes to get the Net completely moved to the back-up repeater, somewhat because of the nature of the repeater failure (transmitting but no audio).

Meanwhile, the ICS 213s were still pouring in from the field stations. These 36 ICS-213s were printed in the BCJC and hand delivered to the EOC for review. We had 7 ICS-213 Replies which were sent from the EOC back to the shelter sites. This developed into a process that required the shelter radio operator to hit the Winlink RMS to see if there were any email waiting there for him.

Tactical call signs were used on the voice net, so that anyone of the three BCARES members at one site could call in the net with the Tactical call sign and NC would know which shelter was calling. We didn't use the Tactical call sign function provided by Winlink, and maybe we could have simplified some processing if we had.

Winlink not only is an excellent system for transferring agency forms, such as the ICS-213, but it also provides for the delivering of images from the site. Using a Vara FM connection speeds up the transfer and makes a

reasonable transfer time for a good image. Below is such a picture from our Centralia site. Note the high pole for the FM antenna.



After the exercise concluded, we held a Hotwash via the 610 Repeater to get input from participants in the exercise. Everyone was pleased with their activities and successes in passing so much traffic. The direct involvement of the agency representatives was well received. Many thought the failure of the main repeater was planned, and presented an excellent learning experience. Nine portable Winlink stations handled all the traffic that the agencies had for us. Much was learned and all were excited to do it again!

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