

Goals and Procedures for “The Big One”

Goals for the communications only exercise are two fold in nature. There are the statewide goals and those of a local nature. Statewide, we plan that skill levels will be tested among various communications groups and individual communicators. This will be assessed based on percentage of traffic passed and the ability to maintain dependable communications throughout the exercise as propagation changes. Goals would be to assess the effectiveness of various modes and bands selected for those at the local level and those chosen for long distance communications within the state. The local units should feel the freedom to plan and execute their own communications plan that fits the uniqueness of their own local communications needs. Measurable goals would be the ability to exchange messages during daytime propagation conditions while in a solar cycle minimum. This can be measured based on the success of message exchanges. We want to evaluate the ability to get messages relayed to those that have no Winlink capability. This will be accomplished by having local Winlink stations named as regional relay stations to pickup Winlink traffic and distribute it to local voice stations and to relay from voice stations to distant Winlink station. To specify a message to be relayed, address your Winlink message to a regional Winlink Relay Station with the first line of the message body stating. RELAY TO W4XXX. (Call of receiving station). Where possible all traffic should be sent via Winlink.

Defining the Scope

The scope is communications only. Agencies are not being asked to move their resources around to comply with simulated request to do so. The exercise is intended to test emergency communications equipment and operator skills as simulated conditions change radically during the exercise.

Objectives

All objectives will be communications in nature. This would be to have a statewide HF net to direct voice traffic. We will need to have effective voice nets (VHF/UHF) to handle the short-range voice traffic and to pass traffic from Winlink stations to stations that have voice only capability. Local units will need to organize, with net controls and alternate net controls to maintain VHF and UHF nets. Repeaters should be named in ICS-605 so that all can view how to contact your area. If you have repeaters that are very broad coverage in your area, list

those as Broad Coverage repeaters as such in your ICS-605. If you have broad coverage link systems that may cover huge portions of the state, list those as Broad Coverage Linked Systems on your ICS-605. To use these may lighten the load on HF nets.

Scenario

Hams will be establishing communications on behalf of agencies that have lost electricity, phone and Internet service. Most all affected locations without generator power would also be without heat. This would require the opening of shelters throughout the state with little resources available for mutual support from nearby jurisdictions. To look to out-of-state resources will require going through VDEM at N4VEM to make these request. Statewide requested may be channeled through VDEM or direct. The Virginia Defense Force communications unit will man the VDEM station. Watch for their ICS-205 being posted on this site. All VDEM regions (these are the same regions as used by ARES and AUXCOMM) should have an ICS-605 to list their radio frequencies. Individual counties may want to post ICS-605s to outline their radio operational plans. The SKYWARN desk of the National Weather Service will handle weather information. This is also the station that you need to report your simulated weather reports as conditions worsen throughout the exercise. Remember late January is a time that extreme weather may occur in addition to the disaster.