



***Communication Tower (400 ft.) Down In Seminole, TX
Wind Gusts Were Clocked At 98 MPH
This Tower Carried The Fire and EMS Antennas
Note The Crushed Church***

The following After Action Report was prepared by Jim Morrison (KM5BS), who for a number of years managed a public safety dispatch center in Texas. Jim is the Lea County, NM Skywarn Coordinator.

Wed, 27 June 2007

Hi Folks,

I wanted share with everyone some of the events from last night - from a SkyWarn perspective.

About the time the leading edge of the storm hit Portales, Rob Tice (W5TIC) left Lovington heading north. Since we have poor WTC coverage in that part of the County, he operated on the Caprock repeater with Alf Lindsey (W5ALL) in Roswell providing "eyes" using Gibson Ridge radar software.

Rob and the storm met in Tatum. He used a handheld anemometer to get a 78MPH reading as the storm gust front hit. While Alf kept him covered with radar, I relayed storm reports back to MAF via the WTC. Rob was our only spotter in the field at that point and for nearly all of the Lea-Gaines events.

As the storm front moved south, Rob tracked along with it and continued to provide excellent reports. When he got further south, we switched communications over to the WTC.

Hobbs got lucky and the storm front weakened just before it hit Hobbs, however it strengthened in Gaines County. Sgt. David Scott of the Hobbs PD and I spent some time checking for major damage in Hobbs - and not finding much. Rob moved east

from Lovington and followed the storm into the Seminole area.

Gaines County had activated their EOC and we had radio contact with Jack (KC5LNY) in the center over the WTC. Shortly after the front hit Seminole Jack called on the WTC and requested we contact Hobbs Fire for mutual aid. He said most of their communications had been knocked out or were on battery backup and they only had one phone line active in the EOC.

Sgt. Scott and I worked on the mutual aid issue and Rob continued into Seminole, providing reports on wind and damage. The Skywarn control at MAF also began contacting Terry County to see about mutual aid for Seminole and also contacted some of the Midland area fire departments to line up help if needed.

It was obvious the Gaines EOC was in danger of being overwhelmed with reports of damage, injuries and fires. Jack was unable continue ham communications due to other demands in the center. Rob went to the EOC and volunteered to take over the ham communications side for them - and was immediately accepted. The storm front was approaching the Midland area by then and the net control at SkyWarn requested us to take traffic to the HTI and they would work the rest of the event down there on the WTC. N5MXE came up on the HTI to serve as net control for us.

We had some problems with the HTI. The Hobbs repeater has a faulty amplifier and was not usable in Seminole. Once Rob got the EOC ham radio fired up, he realized the problem and went over to Notrees and established communications. Rob stayed in the Gaines EOC helping with communications for some time - I'm guessing a couple of hours.

About 0100 CDT, Gaines SO released Rob and the event was pretty much over for SkyWarn in Gaines County. Lonie Scott (AH2AZ) had been providing phone and radio backup in Hobbs. He experimented with Gaines EOC and found he could establish direct simplex communications with them - a point for us to remember in the future.

I also talked to Pat England (KB5MBK) about the Hobbs repeater. He said he had not done maintenance on the system in quite some time, but he would get a tech up here to see about fixing the Hobbs amplifier. Other than that issue, the HTI still worked for us in this case. I have no idea what it still covers.

In summary, we worked the Lea - Gaines event on three radio systems - Caprock, WTC and HTI. Communications were excellent and the various net controls did an outstanding job of supporting the field units. My thanks to W5ALL in Roswell, N5MXE in Midland and to the other MAF controller (can't remember his call) and to AH2AZ in Hobbs. I should also note W5ALL has established a radio link from Roswell into the WTC via Maljamar, so he can monitor and interact on mutual storms.

But, the bulk of the thanks of the night go to Rob Tice, W5TIC. He was our man in the storm from start to finish for Lea & Gaines County. Not only did he spot and chase, but also jumped in and helped at the Gaines EOC. A tremendous thanks goes to Rob for an excellent job!!

It is my opinion that the operations during this event are pretty much a great example of hams working together across huge areas, multiple systems and NWS areas of responsibility. Having run a public safety dispatch center for quite a few years I can only wish those operations went as well as this one did.

Jim Morrison (KM5BS)



Photo by Jim Morrison, KM5BS

Another Seminole, TX Tower Downed By The Storm