

Contacting the State EOC

There are a few ways that can work.

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TASK	GETTING AN EMERGENCY MESSAGE TO THE STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, WHEN ASKED TO DO SO BY A QUALIFIED AUTHORITY.
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DISCLAIMER: These are the best solutions and information that I, or anyone in Alachua ARES was able to come up with – *if you've got a better solution, let me know!!* docvacuumtubes@gmail.com

CAUTION: **The State EOC is an important and busy facility.** They have many roles and jobs to fill and are not able to field unsolicited messages/questions from well-meaning amateur radio operators—especially during an emergency!. The North Florida Section will interface with them through established planes to pass any deployment requests and handle almost all necessary communications. Unless you've been asked specifically to get an emergency message directly to the State EOC, please don't use the information here --- which is intended for emergency ways to reach the State EOC – “when all else has failed” for real. Thanks! See: <http://arrl-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The-ARES-E-letter-October-18-2017.pdf> for further information.

THINGS THAT WON'T WORK

Researching this as well as I can, it turns out there are quite a few ways that DON'T seem to work to get emergency messages directed by local authorities to the State EOC. Here are some that I think will not work well:

WINLINK—no obvious path

The State EOC **does not appear to have ham radio frequency WINLINK** gateway services. I was unable to verify that the State EOC could be reached by any WINLINK ADDRESS. It is unknown whether the State EOC has a filed Message Pickup Station to receive WINLINK EMAIL if the internet is down.

PACKET—no working equipment

Although there is a fairly strong SEDAN signal at the State EOC, **this is not one of their operable modes at this time.**

WORKABLE WAYS TO EMERGENTLY REACH THE STATE EOC FOR YOUR AUTHORITIES:

1. NORTHERN FLORIDA EMERGENCY NET: 3950 kHz LSB / Alternate 7242 LSB

This net subsumes two other nets in an emergency. **I spoke directly with the very helpful net manager J.C. MacArdle W4NFG and he indicates that several State EOC personnel frequently check into this net.** Since this is basically the way the GATEWAY system of the (superceded) 2014 NFL Section Emergency Communications Plan worked, **getting on this voice emergency net would be one way to reach the State EOC if you are directed to do so.** (For non-emergency needs, work it through the NFL Section leadership rather than going direct, as they request; do NOT use this as a means to “request deployment” for example.)

Examples of frequent NF net participants:

KE4PWE Phil Royce

KA4EOC State EOC [At time of writing, did not have a WINLINK account.]

KK4OAI Bob Little

2. SARNET (multiple connected UHF repeaters throughout the State)

In an emergency, the SARNET is another recommended way to reach the State EOC if directed to do so:

(from the 2016 Emergency Comm Plan):

UHF Net Operations – Statewide The SARNet system of linked UHF repeaters along the Interstate corridors is a statewide resource. Under an emergency activation, the SARNet system will be considered a primary source of coordination for regional or statewide use – not a local county or district activation (local ARES may use it to communicate with the State EOC if required).

3. SHARES

The State EOC maintains a digital gateway on the SHARES DHS network and can be easily reached by any person with a SHARES license. There are multiple such licenses within our State. Any person with such a license should be knowledgeable on how to reach this facility.

4. STATE WATCH OFFICER

A position staffed all the time to be available for emergencies:

<http://archive.floridadisaster.org/response/operations/swp.htm>

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/globalassets/importedpdfs/swo-reporting-guidelines-2011.pdf>

email swp@em.myflorida.com

If YOUR internet is down, but theirs works --- you may be able to WINLINK email to them.

1-800-320-0519

850-413-9900

Florida Division of Emergency Management State Watch Office
 2555 Shumard Oak Blvd
 Tallahassee, FL 32399

Presumably this state official would be able to respond to your authority's request.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the 2018 Emergency Symposium hosted by Alachua ARES and the Santa Fe Amateur Radio Society, a short full scale exercise was held in which volunteer teams were challenged to complete a number of tasks in (simulated) support of local Emergency Management. The setting of the Exercise was a confusing and poorly-understood emergency in which local broadcast as well as public service communications had been severely damaged. These tasks as listed in the Table below and touch on a wide variety of radio skills and assets.

Katrina, Puerto Rico and other disasters have shown that no one can wisely claim that they will always have communications. And if ham radio is going to claim “when all else fails, there's ham radio!” – then we better have a solution to a simple request from our local EM / EOC: “Send this message by ham radio to the State EOC....all our systems are not working right now.”

No.	Task	Usefulness
1	Establish and maintain a Command Net	Allows tactical communication between teams.
2	Monitor frequencies for reports from fire / police / utilities / hospitals	Scanning or other techniques to “pick up” volunteers and others desiring radio connections to local emergency efforts. <i>Also – always hunt for amateurs who are on some other frequency and haven't found your operation yet.</i>
3	Create broadcasting ability at bottom end of 160 m band, or top end of AM Broadcast band, for the EOC	Allows public safety officials to have a means of reaching the general population in the absence of working broadcasting stations.
4	Digital email to State EOC	Notification and connection to state emergency authorities who need situational awareness and may be able to give you the wider picture also.
5	Create a repeater for Interoperability Channel NC1	An example of assisting to create repeater facilities where requested for interoperability between different emergency services.

6	Survey/test all known amateur communication assets	Develop situational awareness of available assets which can be leveraged to serve the community.
7	Establish contact with any ARES or other amateur emergency net	Establish connections.
8	Creating broadcasting ability over local NWS (“weather radio”) frequencies for the EOC	Allows public safety officials to have a means of reaching the general population in the absence of working broadcasting stations.
9	Utilize Message Pick Up stations to create digital connections in the absence of Internet functionality	Allows digital email connections between WINLINK-enabled communicators even without regional, national, or even international Internet functionality.
10	Maintain Activity Log and Communications Log for all actions	Keep a record of actions for both practical and legal purposes.

STATE EMERGENCY PLANS: LITTLE MENTION OF AMATEUR RADIO

The State of Florida has gone to considerable effort to create professional plans for government services in times of emergency (good job!) but Amateur Radio is not highly featured in them:

- The Florida Dept. of Management Services maintains multiple emergency communications plans, accessed and visible through this web page: https://www.dms.myflorida.com/business_operations/telecommunications/radio_communications_services/radio_communications_plans I could not find any reference to amateur radio there.
- The ESF2 (Communications) Appendix indicates that amateur radio is a part of their plans: https://www.floridadisaster.org/globalassets/importedpdfs/2014-esf-2-appendix_finalized.pdf but doesn't give any details.
- The 2016 Florida Comprehensive Florida Emergency Management Plan (<https://www.floridadisaster.org/globalassets/importedpdfs/2016-state-cemp-complete-final-draft.pdf>) is over 680 pages, and the only real reference to Amateur Radio (ARES or RACES) is that they may be utilized.

AMATEUR RADIO PLANS: CHANGING TECHNIQUES

The 2014 Version of the NFL-SECTION Emergency Communications Plan (visible here: <http://www.arrl.org/files/media/Group/NFL%20Section%20Comm%20Plan%20%20June%201%202014.pdf>) lays out a dedicated group of volunteers known as GATEway voice stations

(although with several other capabilities) that will guarantee connections between the NF ARES Net(s) and the State EOC, on pages 18-20. Here's an excerpt:

The GATEway Voice Network System The GATEway Stations are unique to the Northern Florida Section within the State of Florida. They are a corps of operators who maintain constant VHF/UHF contact with the FLEOC, regardless of where in the State an incident or activation might be. The FLEOC prefers all amateur traffic come through the gateway system, properly formatted and identified but no gateway station should refuse or decline to relay any traffic for the FLEOC as long as the other conditions are met, e.g., message format, name and phone number of originator, etc. ALL TRAFFIC to/from the FLEOC is considered a public record and the messages have to be treated as such in compliance with the Florida Public Records act.

These operators are an elite group. They are well-versed in ARRL NTS message handling and net protocol. In addition, they are WINLINK qualified and have digital certification per the training section of the Northern Florida ARES® Plan. They demonstrate their ability to handle NTS messages by meeting the requirements for and becoming appointed as ARRL Official Relay Stations.

Their function during any activation is to serve as a contact point from the rest of the State to the FLEOC, using whatever mode(s) mandated by the FLEOC for that incident.

This group of operators should be selected and overseen by the Capital District DEC with the approval of the NFL STM. Their training should be in accordance with the Northern Florida ARES® Plan, and their assignment for each incident should be made by the Capital District DEC after consulting with the incident liaison officer to the FLEOC.

The GATEway network is comprised of selected HF voice stations that also have access to local VHF/UHF voice networks. When alerted, typically, each District will have a GATEway Station available on the HF North Florida Emergency Net (NFEN) and on the District VHF voice network.

A GATEway cannot function without VHF links to the County EOC and other local points

The ARRL-NFL Section Communications Plan was updated on May 1, 2016 (<http://arrl-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/NFL-Section-Comm-Plan-FINAL-May-1-2016.pdf>) and the entire section relating to methods to contact the State EOC via the GATEway stations is no longer in the document. The document does a good job of explaining how the State EOC can activate amateur volunteers to perform requested services --- but I can't find anything to explain how an amateur would find THEM.

However, the material earlier in this paper explains multiple possible ways that they could be reached in the unusual event that this should be directed.