October 2006 Simulated Emergency Test (SET)
Report for SE New Mexico

Date: Saturday, 7 October 2006

Time: 0900 to 1200 MDT

Location: New Mexico state-wide, involving a number of counties
(this document for SE NM only)

Participants: New Mexico hams -- varies by county
(CARES, PVARC, Yucca Net, MARS in SE NM)

Purpose: Determine the strengths and weaknesses of ARES, NTS, RACES and other ham groups in providing emergency communications.

Provide a demonstration to served agencies such as the Office of Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, and other emergency management agencies.

Publicize, through the news media, the value to the public that Amateur Radio provides

Help radio amateurs gain experience in communications using standard procedures and a variety of modes under simulated-emergency conditions.

Scenario: This year the New Mexico scenario was based on the simulated need to provide shelter for upwards of eight thousand evacuees from a major California earthquake. Approximately two thousand of these required long-term (six month) housing. Not only was there major damage to the California communications infrastructure, land lines and cell phone cells in New Mexico were greatly overloaded due to the volume of "panic" calls attempted by relatives and friends. The ham radio community was called upon to provide communications to and between shelters established throughout Southeastern New Mexico.

This is a realistic scenario. We actually don't need a California earthquake to necessitate this type of response. Major wild-land fires in the Sacramento Mountains could result in the evacuation of Ruidoso and surrounding communities to Roswell and other SE NM locations.

The Plan: The plan for SE NM was to activate ham communication nets similar to the ones we established in South Central MS to support Red Cross Shelters after Katrina. The traffic handled in SE NM consisted of actual messages selected from the 1,500 or so messages communicated by hams in SC MS – with the location names changed to match SE NM locations and personal names changed "to protect the innocent." We had a VHF net on the Caprock repeater, with HF voice and digital links to other NM counties. MARS provided a circuit to FEMA Region VI in Denton, TX from the State EOC (Los Alamos for this drill). We used Ax25 packet to Northern New Mexico for part of the digital traffic to the state EOC. HF MT-63 was used to handle the inter-county and EOC traffic.

Background: The ARRL Simulated Emergency Test is an annual nationwide exercise in emergency communications, administered by ARRL Field Organization leaders including: Emergency Coordinators, District Emergency Coordinators, Section Emergency Coordinators and Net Managers. Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), National Traffic System (NTS), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), Military Affiliate Radio Service (MARS) and other public-service oriented ham groups are involved. The SET weekend (Oct 7-8 this year) gave communicators the opportunity to focus on the emergency communications capability within their community while interacting with national nets.

The Chaves ARES group had 21 participants.

13   Chaves County
W1LCP, KD5DXV, KD5ZME, K5YQ, KE5FVP,
KA1CXE, N5UBK, KE5IDX, W5PSA, W5ALL,
N5KAH, WD8RMG, and KE5EXJ

6   Eddy County
KE5IAY, KA5VER, KE5HGG, KE5IDY, KB5UFU and WA5GLV

1   Lea County
W5DB

1   Bernalillo County
N0HN

Twenty of the above stations participated on the VHF tactical net, five stations were involved in the transmission and reception of packet messages, one station participated in the state-wide HF SSB net, and two stations participated in MT63 traffic. One station provided liaison with Lincoln County on their VHF net.

We handled 96 messages total in less than three-hours: 4 NTS formal, 84 tactical, and 8 informal. Of the 96 messages transmitted, we received confirmation of delivery on 95. Due to the failure of HF SSB and MT63 propagation toward the end of the SET, one message was not deliverable to the final CD-1 Los Alamos destination, but did go as far as the N0HN packet station in Albuquerque. For an unknown reason, the RIOBBS was unusable.