

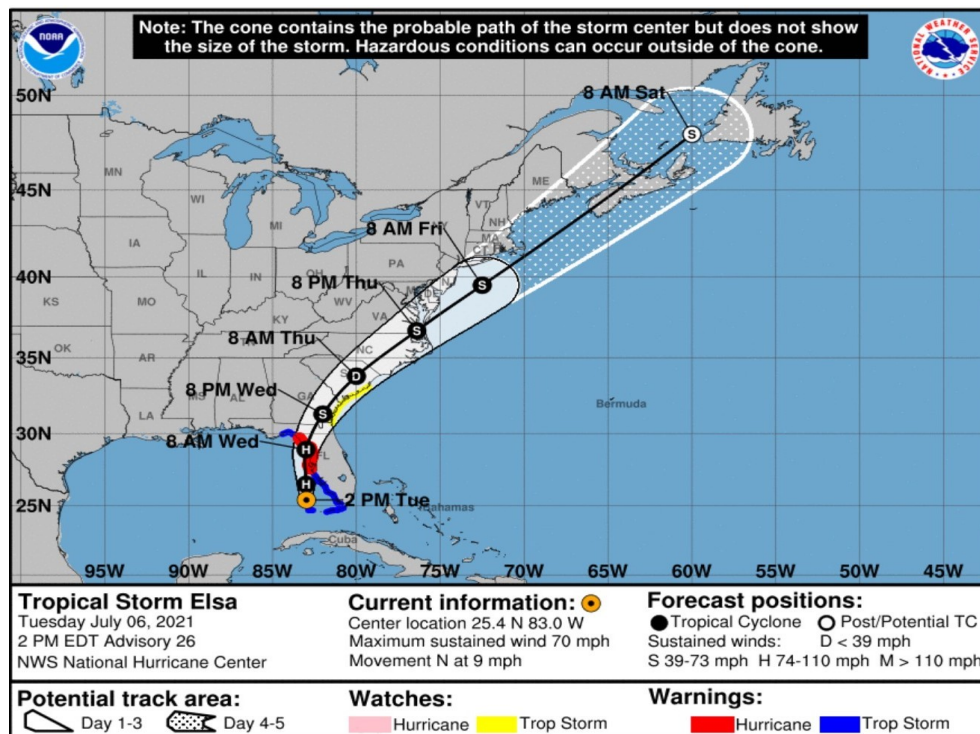
Columbia County ARES/NF4CA

Tropical Storm Elsa

JULY 6/7, 2021

After Action Report/Improvement Plan

WRITTEN JULY 2021



"The Cone"

HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Points of Contact:

Columbia County ARES(R):

Name: Richard Heston.
Emergency Coordinator
FCC License: KE4BQI

Name: Brad Swartz
Asst. Emergency Coordinator
FCC License: N5CBP



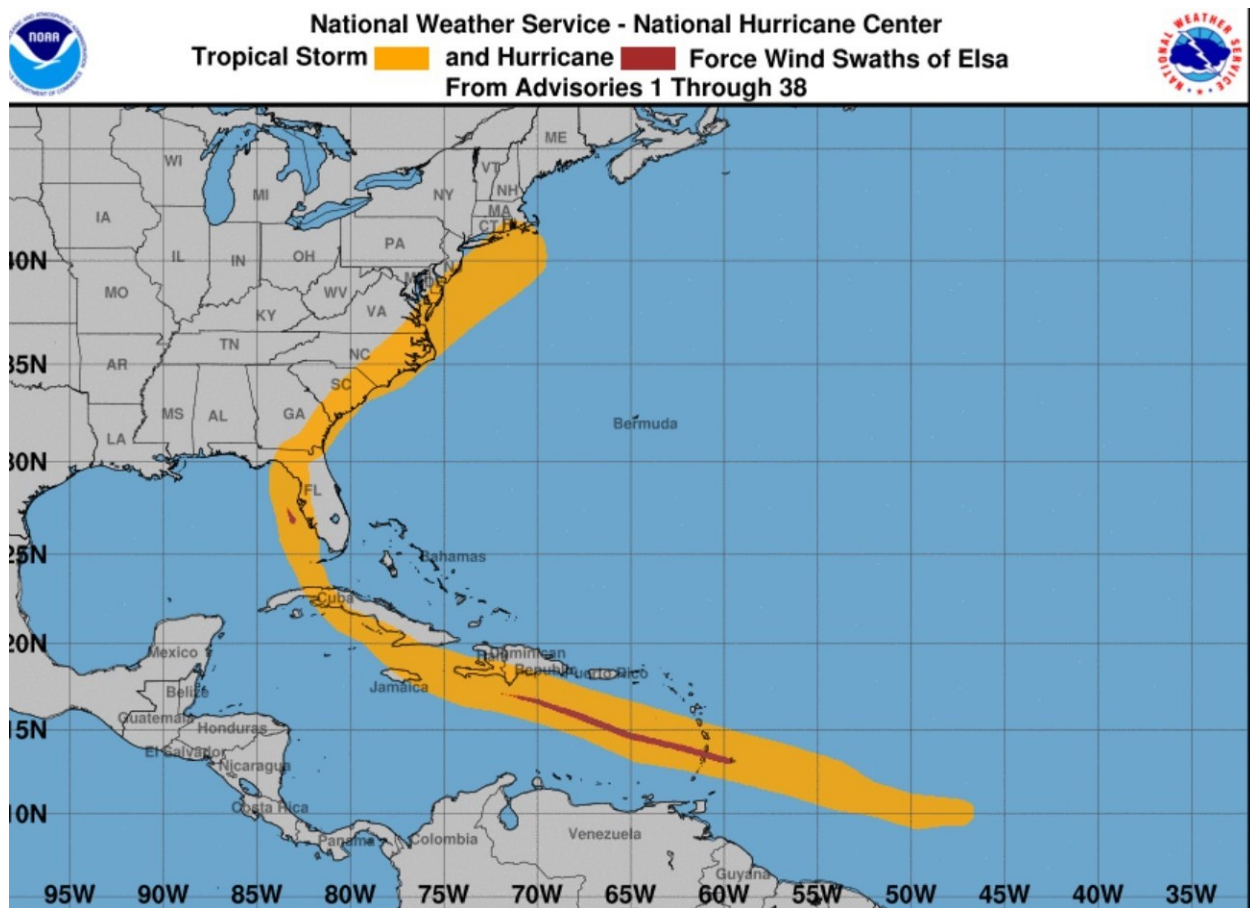
Bill's antenna setup at Ft White

CONTENTS

Administrative Handling Instructions.....	2
Contents.....	4
Executive Summary.....	6
Section 1: Incident Overview.....	9
Section 2: Incident Design Summary.....	11
Section 3: Analysis of Objectives/Results.....	13
Section 4: Conclusion.....	16
Appendix A: Improvement Plan.....	17
Appendix B: Incident Action Plan Documentation.....	19

This page is intentionally blank.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®) typically organizes at the County Level and upward. There are two amateur radio clubs in Columbia County that support the ARES® mission, the Columbia Amateur Radio Society, and Columbia County ARES.

Columbia County “Hams” have a history of working with Columbia County Emergency Management. This incident had three that have worked with them before and two as their first time with this group.

Elsa became a tropical storm as it moved WNW south of Cuba turning more NNW hugging the west coast of Florida. She briefly gained Category 1 Hurricane status over the gulf waters and downgraded again to a tropical storm before making landfall in the Big Bend region of Florida. This track placed Columbia County on the East side of the storm bringing winds at 10-20mph (less than predicted) and dumping 4-6 inches of rain.

Two of the three shelters had a total of 7 residents during the storm until they thought is safe enough to return home.

At around 1600 on Wednesday the decision was made to close the shelters. The Hams returned to the EOC for a quick debrief and went home. The EOC radio room was secure at 1630 Wednesday.

The full TS Elsa incident commenced at 1900 Local on Tuesday July 6th, and the ARES team were cleared completely by 1630 Local on Wednesday July 7th.

Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this incident are as follows:

- Five ARES members volunteered with short notice to support the incident.
- Three shelter operators were dispatched, checked in with shelter staff, setup their stations and checked into command net with a 60 minute window.
- Two of the team had complete go box equipment ready and the third was filled by another team member.
- ?
- ?
- ?
- New operators gained valuable experience and training by participating in this incident.
- The EOC generator came on when the mains failed providing the use of emergency power.
-
-
-
-
- Information flow between our shelters to the EOC and back flowed quickly and smoothly.
- We did a better job at least trying voice and CW alternate mode techniques this year and gained valuable comparisons of efficiency.
- We operated on VHF for local communication and two HF bands including 80 and 40 meters.
- New leadership gained experience.

Primary Areas for Improvement

- There was some confusions on the part of leadership as to what time we needed to head out to the shelters. Need to understand more about the EOC system works.
- Some cross training with ARES leadership and EOC staff.
- Still need a way to get more people to better understand the need to work during emergencies.
- Training with ARES volunteers with ICS forms and Winlink..

This document is prepared in order to help our group improve our emergency communications deployment abilities even more, and to assist those who will be volunteering for the next incident.



Gary Byerly, KO4MSF at Westside Shelter

SECTION 1: INCIDENT OVERVIEW

Incident Details

Incident Name

TS Elsa 2021

Type of Incident

Full Scale Incident

Incident Start Date

July 6, 2021

Incident End Date

July 7, 2021

Duration

22 hours

Location

Columbia County Emergency Operation Center radio room, Westside Community Shelter, Ft White Community Shelter and Winfield Community Shelter.

Sponsor

Columbia County ARES, a component of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL)..

Program

Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Mission

Communications Support

Capabilities

VHF local and HF local, state and national communications, analog voice,

Radio Email to anywhere, via WINLINK

Scenario Type

Natural disaster

Incident Planning Team

Richard Heston, KE4BQI
Colen Boutwell, WA5RKR
Brad Swartz, N5CBP

Participating Organizations

Columbia County, Florida
Emergency Operations Center

Number of Participants

- Players - 5

SECTION 2: INCIDENT DESIGN SUMMARY

Incident Purpose and Design

For scores of years, the American Radio Relay League has sponsored an annual “Field Day” incident/contest on the 4th weekend of June, encouraging individuals and groups to practice emergency type communications in the setting of an amateur radio communications contest. The scoring is a combination of points for desirable planning and operations activities, plus points for every connection made (“contact”) to other participants at distant sites with successful bidirectional transfer of a simple message, giving the type of operation at each end, and the assigned “section” in the ARRL organization.

Locations

The EOC radio room was Net Control, and the three shelters opened were Winfield, Westside and Ft White.

Call sign utilized was

NF4CA

which is the call sign of the Columbia County ARES Club. During the incident, we used tactical calls (Columbia EOC, Winfield Shelter, Westside Shelter, and FT White Shelter) for local communication and NF4CA on HF when communicating with the Nth Florida ARES Emergency Net and the Tallahassee HF Skywarn Net.

Incident Command System / Leadership

We organized our effort using Incident Command System principles, and primarily using ICS forms 204, 205, 213, 213rr, 214, and 309. Volunteers were recruited by Richard Heston and Brad Swartz. The Incident Commander was Shayne Morgan, Director, Columbia County Emergency Management. ARES leaders were Richard Heston, EC and Brad Swartz AEC.

OBJECTIVES¹

No.	Item
1	Serve Columbia County Emergency Management by providing reliable communication between the EOC and the open shelters.
2	Volunteers to gain experience and work together in a live incident.
3	Provide information to the Emergency Management director accurately and in a timely fashion.
4	Increase the familiarity of our volunteers with the ICS system
5	Be as courteous and supportive of other volunteers participating in the incident as possible
6	Establish communications via HF bands with State Emergency Nets
7	
8	
9	

Timeline Summary

1120 July 6, 2021 Received an email from Emergency Management that we would be going to partial activation by midnight.

1330 July 6, 2021: Richard Heston, Columbia EC met with Brad Swartz to discuss securing operators and opening shelters by 2000.

1800 July 6, 2021: Brad Swartz arrived at the EOC and began to prepare to brief the volunteers for the incident.

1900 July 6, 2021: Volunteer briefing began, followed by disbursement to shelters.

2000 July 6, 2021: Shelter stations began checking onto the local command net.

1455 July 7, 2021 Emergency Management Director advised we could begin to shut down as soon as County staff arrived and shelters to secure the shelters.

1630 July 7, 2021 ARES operations shut down and operators departed the EOC

1

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVES / RESULTS

No.	Item	Outcome	Recommendations
1	Serve Columbia County Emergency Management by providing reliable communication between the EOC and the open shelters.	S	
2	Volunteers to gain experience and work together in a live incident.	S Some confusion at the beginning as to when and where each person would be deployed.	Try to get even more operators to become comfortable next year - to the level that they are operational savvy. Need more practice and assets creation for amateur radio shelter communications.
3	Provide information to the Emergency Management director accurately and in a timely fashion.	S	
4	Increase the familiarity of our volunteers with the ICS system	S Some confusion as to how to fill in some of the blanks in the standard forms.	Adapt some of the headings to be more applicable for local use.
5	Be as courteous and supportive of other volunteers participating in the incident as possible	P	
6	Establish communications via HF bands with State Emergency Nets	S/U The current HF antenna could only be tuned on 40 meters and not on 20 meters	Schedule with EOC staff a time to install the new antennas

Ratings Definitions:

Performed without Challenges (P): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

Performed with Some Challenges (S): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.

Performed with Major Challenges (M): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

Unable to be Performed (U): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).



Ft White Station

**After Action Report
Improvement Planning**

**Columbia County ARES
TS ELSA JULY 2021**

VOL HOURS ESTIMATED			
Preparation	Phone calls to secure operators	2 vol-hrs	KE4BQI and N5CBP
	ICS forms	4 vol-hrs	N5CBP
	Assembling extra Gear	2 vol hrs	N5CBP and KE4BQI
	Antenna creation	6 vol hrs	GLG in NC
Briefing at the EOC	5 persons x 1hr	5 vol hrs	Going over ICS forms, getting assignments
TS Elsa Incident	7/6/21 1900 – 7/7/21 1630	97 vol hours	KE4BQI, N5CBP, WA5RKR, KM4ZOP, KO4MSF
Documentation/ Review		5 vol hours	
TOTAL		121 vol-hours	

MODES USED FOR THE INCIDENT		
CW	We did not use this for this incident.	
PHONE	HF was used at the EOC to keep in contact with the Nth Florida emergency net. NWS Tallahassee requested an HF Skywarn net that we checked into.	The Nth florida ARES net used 3950 and 7242 as propagation allowed. The Skywarn net was on 3960
Digital	We did not use this for this incident.	

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Our first Tropical Storm incident with this team was a success. We demonstrated professional effort, and improved operator skill..

Our team gained valuable experience in supporting Emergency Operations during a live incident. We gained new operators and provided more experience in ways to become involved in this wonderful hobby as well as in our volunteer community service.

APPENDIX A

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

No.	Item	Corrective Action	Volunteer rising to champion	Comments / Completion
1	Encourage other Hams to become involved in emergency operations			Aim for 4 hour shifts
2	Columbia ARES team to be more proficient in using ICS and Winlink	Hold training sessions in the use of the different forms and how to send them using voice and Winlink		Have training sessions in a non-emergency format
3	Increase the ability to establish communications both Local and to State wide Nets.	(stated)		Repeaters, simplex, new antennas
4	Become more familiar with EOC staff and the chain of command.			
5	Volunteers to become more familiar with setting up a station at the local shelter locations	Provide layout and practice setting up a station		
6				
7	Hard copy of ICS form instructions, Net procedures, radio use cheat sheet and typical HF ARES net time and frequencies.	Printed and placed at the radio desk in the EOC Radio Room	leadership	
8	Provide hard copy of the planning materials at the site, and water protected.	Suggested	Operations	
9	Formal briefings at beginning of operations and at scheduled times during, and at end of operation.			

**After Action Report
Improvement Planning**

**Columbia County ARES
TS ELSA JULY 2021**

10	Improve the scheduling so we don't end up with only 5 operators scheduled for the entire duration			
11	formal check -in at EOC, get packet for central signin/signout so we would know who is on site at all times.			
12	Provide pre-incident training that works for non-retired persons also.			
13	Have emergency boot USB's for each computer.			
14	RESTORE POINT for each computer installed.			
15	Encourage Hams to take the most current basic FEMA courses releated to ICS, NIMS and EOC support			IS100, IS200, IS700, IS800, IS802
16	Take ARRL EMCOMM 001	http:// www.arrl.org/ online-course- catalog		
17	Create a map with shelters located	Include in packet handed out at incident briefing		
18	Know the layout of the shelter ahead of time and where the radio station will be set up			
19	Locate and publish links that would strengthen emergency communication experience			

APPENDIX B

ICS PLANNING DOCUMENTATION

INCIDENT RADIO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (ICS 205)

1. Incident Name: TS Elsa				2. Date/Time Prepared: Date: 7.6.21 Time: 1400				3. Operational Period: Date From: 7/6/21 Date To: Time From: 2400 Time To:			
4. Basic Radio Channel Use:											
Zone Grp.	Ch #	Function	Channel Name/Trunked Radio System Talkgroup	Assignment	RX Freq N or W	RX Tone/NAC	TX Freq N or W	TX Tone/NAC	Mode (A, D, or M)	Remarks	
		Primary	WA4ZFQ Repeater		146.940	None	146.340	123.0	A	South County	
		Secondary	NF4CQ Repeater		145.490	None	144.890	None	A	North County	
		Tertiary	Columbia ARES		146.420		146.420		A	Columbia ARES Simplex	
			SARNet		444.900		449.900	110.9	A		
		80 Meters	Fla ARES 1		3.950 LSB						
		40 Meters	Fla ARES 2		7.242 LSB						
		Email VHF	N5CBP-10		145.070					Local in Lake City , as long as we have power.	
		Email HF	Winlink HF		TBD USB					Per WINLINK RMS Channels / Propagation.	
5. Special Instructions: Use Channel Name to identify frequencies if moving due to malicious interference. HF frequencies will be monitored based on conditions/propagation.											
6. Prepared by (Communications Unit Leader): Name: <u>Brad Swartz, N5CBP</u> Signature: _____											
ICS 205			IAP Page _____			Date/Time: <u>7/9/21</u> 1400					