

Joint District A – District F ARES Communications Exercise

September 9, 2015 Sedalia, Missouri

On September 9, 2015 District A and District F ARES members conducted a joint inter-district ARES emergency communications exercise. The exercise was officiated from the Missouri state fairgrounds in Sedalia as part of the Missouri Department of Public Safety's Deployable Communications Asset Drill. The Amateur Radio portion of the drill used a tornado as a scenario to drive play. The scenario in Sedalia knocked out all communications in the city. ARES communications trailers were physically brought to the state fairgrounds from Benton County and Johnson County to originate messages to the State Emergency Management Agency's (SEMA) state emergency operations center (SEOC) in Jefferson City. 'Confirmation of receipt' messages were then returned to Sedalia from SEMA. Messages were transported to and from Jefferson City by members of the Missouri Emergency Services Net (MESN) and the Jefferson City Ring (JC Ring) on HF, VHF and Winlink. The JC Ring is a group of amateur radio operators in and around Jefferson City that works with SEMA to relay messages to and from the Radio Room at SEMA. The JC Ring thus serves as a funnel, relay and process control center to organize and somewhat regulate the flow of messages to and from SEMA to ensure more efficient processing.

The federal Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP), Washington DC assisted the Missouri Department of Public Safety in planning and conducting the Deployable Communications Asset Drill at the Missouri State Fair venue in Sedalia. The overall program was conducted over a three-day period from September 8 thru September 10, 2015. ARES personnel participated in classroom instruction, field exercises and troubleshooting designed to test the ability of participants to establish and conduct interoperable communications as a team of inter-agency, inter-disciplinary emergency responders. There were approximately 20 public safety response vehicles and 60 participants in the drill at Sedalia including six (6) ARES operators. Approximately 10 additional amateur radio operators were engaged in the MESN, JC Ring and at SEMA. Johnson County Emergency Management Director Gloria Michalski was on hand at the Amateur Radio staging area to observe the ARES operations.

After action reports indicated that all participants learned a great deal about how the various disciplines conduct emergency operations and the equipment they bring to the theater or operations. Amateur radio operators were encouraged to participate in the public safety drills and activities over the three day period as part of an assigned team. The majority of attendees suggested additional drills be conducted, including regional drills, leading to another statewide drill next year.

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