

Red Cross-ARES exercise #1 Scenario and Guidelines



**American
Red Cross**

Eastern MA section ARES and MA Red Cross Region

Operation **“Black Saturday”**

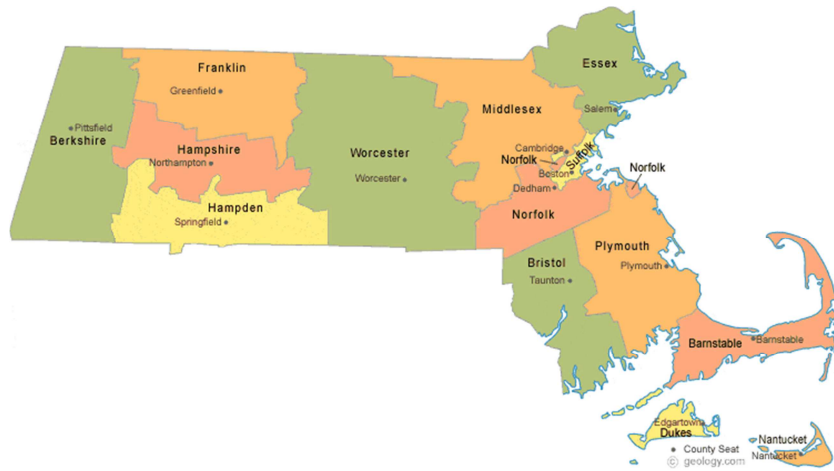
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Operational Zone Map



Date and time of Exercise

Saturday May 30th, 2020

Setup time: 9:00am

Start Time: 10:00am

End Time: 12:00pm

Operational Duration: 2 hours

Purpose

The American Red Cross will be holding a national communications exercise on May 30th. It will be divided into two parts. The first part, known as Part A will involve ARES units as they have a national MOU with ARRL. Part B will involve Red Cross stations sending Winlink messages to a series of control points. Part B will occur after the end of Part A. Part A gives ARES the chance to practice its skills. The Eastern MA section Amateur Radio Emergency Service will participate in Part A and conduct a section wide exercise to test its capability in establishing communications with ARES groups and stations within its section and outside it under simulated emergency conditions. The operational exercise called **“Dark Saturday”** will test the ability of several groups and stations in the region to communicate on VHF/UHF and HF.

Exercise Scenario

A few days before May 30th, DHS and the Whitehouse had a press conference to discuss the possibility of a cyber-attack on critical US infrastructure. The said the threat was very high in the coming days and that all agencies involved in disaster preparedness and response should begin planning for this possibility.

On Saturday May 30th, a cascading power failure began in the morning hours. It would appear that many parts of the country are being affected at the same time. As an additional issue, many areas of MA are under severe thunderstorm watches. Heavy storms have been moving into the MA region from NY.

The American Red Cross is opening shelters in many of the affected areas of the US. The MA Region is looking at shelters of limited capacity due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Each shelter would be for less than 50 people with no more than 10 people in a single room observing social distancing. The Red Cross has confirmed that Governor Baker has approved this plan as of this morning.

ARES in eastern and Western MA, have sent radio operators to many of these shelters to provide a communications link to both emergency management and the Red Cross. SKYWARN reports may also be needed as thunderstorms approach from the west.

ARES groups and simulated activities

This exercise guideline is deliberately broad and generic in nature. ARES groups are free to adapt this scenario and conduct their exercise as needed for their group. With the ongoing COVID-19 situation in MA, it will be unlikely that groups will be able to operate at EOCs and other municipal locations. Any activation of shelters will be simulated and by role play. Feel free to use your home stations or mobiles for this purpose. It is likely that most of the operations involved in this exercise will utilize home stations.

Exercise Objectives

The objectives of this exercise are as follows:

- Simulate the activation of shelters in your area
- Simulate the activation of EOC stations in your area
- Establish and conduct a tactical net on simplex 2m FM or by repeater
- Simulate contact with any Town EOC RACES stations
- Establish contact with other ARES districts where possible
- Establish an HF 75m voice net for all of MA
- Pass several NTS type messages on VHF 2 meters and/or 440mhz UHF
- Pass several SKYWARN and tactical messages on 2 meters and on the HF net
- **Optional:** Send messages by HF Winlink to a designated ARES station reporting how many shelters you have open. More info on this in the next draft.
- **Optional:** Send messages by VHF/UHF RMS Winlink if you have no HF digital (exception to our planning assumptions) or simply want to try Winlink
- **Optional:** Send messages locally by VHF NBEMS
- **Optional:** Send HF messages by NBEMS (experimental)
- Check in on the NEW-ENG3 9123 Echolink node

Operational Ground Rules

ARES

ARES groups can fully adapt and change their individual plans to suit the needs of the local group.

Message Handling

Message handling, on voice, will occur on 2 meters and on HF. Local groups are encouraged to setup an NTS net on 2 meters and get the messages into the system. On HF, messages will be tactical in nature and may include SKYWARN reports for NWS.

Setup and Timeline

Setup time will be 9am. The exercise will begin promptly at 10am. It will last approximately 2 hours and will end at 1200pm. Timelines may be adjusted accordingly in response to turnout and early completions of primary objectives.

Operational Disclaimers

Due to the proliferation of radio scanners and the possibility of misconstrued information by the public, all tactical voice messages *that can be misconstrued* will be preceded by the words **“This is a Drill”**. Any NTS formal messages will have the words **“This is a drill X”** as the first five words in the body text. In this time of national public concern, we must make all efforts to ensure that the general populace is not misled and that amateur radio is not portrayed in a negative manner.

NET and mode of operations

HF voice operation

An HF net will be started on 75m in MA. It will take tactical messages and SKYWARN reports. 40m will be the backup if 75m is not viable for operations. Messages can also include situation reports from your district or ARES group. They can also be lists of participating stations and operators so we have them for the record.

VHF/UHF voice operation

ARES groups are requested to set up voice nets as you normally do for exercises. These nets can be repeater, simplex or any combination of the two. Content of the voice components of the exercise will be set by the local ARES group.

HF Winlink operation (Optional)

ARES groups may optionally try to pass messages to a designated receiving station (WQ1O@winlink.org) by Winlink email on HF. Stations would try to find a winlink HF station that they can reach. This could be a challenge for some considering recent band conditions, but may be worth considering. You can find a map and list of HF winlink RMS stations on the winlink.org website. Messages can include situation reports from your district or ARES group. They can also be lists of participating stations and operators so we have them for the record.

VHF/UHF Winlink operation (Optional)

If you attempt to try the optional HF Winlink operation and you are unsuccessful at making an HF connect with an HF Winlink RMS station, you may attempt to do so by VHF/UHF RMS Winlink. This is also true if you do not have HF digital capability, but want to try Winlink in some form. Although it is contrary to the planning assumptions for this exercise, it is more important to get some winlink familiarity and will be granted an exception. Messages can include situation reports from your district or ARES group. They can also be lists of participating stations and operators so we have them for the record.

VHF NBEMS operation (Optional)

ARES groups may optionally consider attempting to send messages and forms locally by VHF/UHF NBEMS. Frequencies would be determined by the local ARES group. Messages can include situation reports from your district or ARES group. They can also be lists of participating stations and operators so we have them for the record.

HF NBEMS operation (Optional)

We will also try to attempt an HF NBEMS operation on 75m. This will be experimental and can convey some of the same information to be sent as listed earlier. We will be using 3585 kHz for this part of the exercise. The mode will be Thor 22 with a 1500 Hz center. Messages can be text or Flmsg forms. This section will be experimental.

Echolink operation

Echolink will be operational for this exercise. It will be the New-Eng3 node 9123. It will be monitored by several ARES leaders and will serve as an online component.

NTS operation

Local groups are encouraged to pass some NTS traffic into the system. How that is done will be left to the discretion of the local group.

Metrics for participation

All ARES groups participating in the exercise are encouraged to send a list of participants and activities by email after the exercise so a good overview of participants can be established. Send to wq1o.frank@gmail.com

Exercise Frequency Usage

Two meter voice nets: At discretion of local ARES Group

Two meter NTS net: At discretion of local ARES Group

UHF voice and/or NTS net: At the discretion of the local ARES Group

VHF/UHF NBEMS or other digital: At the discretion of the local ARES Group

Primary region wide 75m HF Operations: 3943 kHz LSB (Primary)

Primary region wide 40m HF Operations: 7245 kHz LSB (Secondary)

HF Winlink stations: See online list on the Winlink.org site

HF NBEMS 75m: 3585 kHz Mode: Thor 22 1500 Hz center

Echolink: NEW-ENG3 node 9123