

# The Cape & Islands ARES District Exercise #72 Scenario and Guidelines



## Cape Cod ARES

Operation **"Big Blow"**

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***Revised pages with this draft version:***

1. Scenario minor word changes
2. Page 3 notation referencing page 8
3. Page 8 added note regarding HF availability off Cape
4. Page 12 – adjusted wording of section participation due to time/people constraints
5. Page 13 – adjusted frequency listing to scale down section participation given time/people constraints

# Cape Cod ARES Zone Map



## Date of Exercise

Saturday August 7th, 2021

Setup time: 8:30am

Start Time: 10:00am

End Time: 12:00pm

Operational Duration: 2 hours

## Purpose

The Cape Cod and Islands District Amateur Radio Emergency Service will conduct a summer field operations exercise to test its capability in establishing communications with stations within its district and outside it under emergency conditions. The operational exercise called **“Operation Big Blow”** will test the ability of several field stations to communicate. This will also be a drill to test some of our primary stations and other ARES member home stations. The exercise will attempt to build upon the lessons learned from our past operational exercises. This exercise will also serve as a basis for the rest of the Eastern MA ARES Section to participate and facilitate its own local and district operations. This will be covered later in the document.

# Scenario

On Saturday July 31<sup>st</sup>, Hurricane Harry made landfall along the south coast of MA with winds of 85mph as it came ashore in the early morning hours. Some structural damage was noted from winds, but the primary issue has been the tree and power pole damage in SE MA which has been exacerbated by the amounts of heavy rainfall which have been plaguing the northeast for weeks. Widespread flash flooding occurred from Harry in central and western MA where more than 8" of rain had fallen in 10 hours.

In a tragic turn of events, Harry was followed by strong Category 3 Illia on Thursday August 5<sup>th</sup>. Illia had winds of 125mph as she made landfall near Westport MA. Surge values of over 17' were noted along parts of the SE MA coast including Cape Cod. Winds gusted to 180mph at Blue Hill on Thursday afternoon. Rainfall in central and western MA has exceeded 14" adding to the 8" that had already impacted these areas from Harry. Many areas of central and western MA have been cut off by the flood waters.

Widespread destruction of coastal areas has occurred wiping out many structures near the shore. The damage to structures away from the coast has been considerable with possibly thousands of buildings reporting roof and curtain wall failures from winds that gusted over 140mph. Several fast spin up tornadoes have added to the damage inland from SE MA to the south shore.

MEMA has been active at full capacity since before the landfall of Harry. Search and rescue operations are ongoing in central and western MA for people trapped in flood waters. Helicopters from as far away as PA have been brought in to help facilitate these operations. Shelters have been set up in some of these areas, but people cannot get to them due to the flood waters. Teams are also at the south coast and the Cape/Islands looking for people who may be trapped in their homes. Many residents in the shore evacuation areas were lulled into a false sense of security from the landfall of Harry, believing the impacts would be similar. Some of those residents chose not to evacuate and are now listed as "missing".

The power situation is dire with power out in almost all parts of the state. The power grid along the south coast and the Cape has virtually ceased to exist with possibly hundreds of thousands of trees down. Power restoration could take months as parts of the grid will essentially need to be re-constructed.

On Cape Cod and the Islands, shelters were open and have been open since before the impact of Harry. All shelters, as well as, public safety have been running on generator since that time. There is concern about these generators and fuel availability. Those on natural gas may have fuel for an extended period, but those on diesel are running on borrowed time as trees and debris will make refueling problematical.

Communications along the south coast have been decimated. Most of the 800 MHz antennas have been destroyed on their towers even though the towers themselves survived in many cases. The same is true of the antennas on many public safety facilities. Almost all of the commercial radio antennas have been damaged or destroyed with all local FM radio being offline. None of the amateur radio repeater antennas survived intact. Some of the antennas on Falmouth hospital have survived but will need to be checked.

ARES and RACES have been active since the first impact from Harry. The impact of Illia has made things exponentially more serious with human resources becoming extremely thin. All of the regional shelters on Cape are staffed by ARES communications operators. Some of the antennas have been destroyed at these facilities forcing expedient antennas to be deployed. ARES/RACES and other radio amateur operators are working with several public safety facilities to try to get some communications back up and running on VHF/UHF.

Falmouth Hospital has sustained wind damage but is not cut off as is the Cape Cod Hospital. Cape Cod Hospital is deep in the surge waters that came ashore as the area was in 1938. ARES has established its net control from the Hospital in Falmouth using inside facilities where we can and outside when we must. Three field sites are up. One at Falmouth Hospital, one at Sandwich, and one is being setup on the Lower Cape. A mobile field site may be setup in Chatham. Similar setups are underway on the Islands. This will be a long slog for all of us. Let's get the job done, but remember that safety is job #1.....

# Cape District Exercise Objectives

The objectives of this exercise are as follows:

- Deploy field operations sites to Sandwich, Falmouth and the lower Cape
- Establish contact with other ARES districts and their EOCs where possible
- Test zone relay operations with Home Stations
- Communicate with the Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard ARES/RACES stations
- Use HF 75m and 60m voice in the district and attempt contact with the off Cape HF net\* See page 8
- Practice using 6m FM simplex
- Allow our new people to get some operating experience and field orientation
- Provide guidance for the rest of the Eastern MA ARES section to participate and develop their own local exercise operations
- Send Winlink SKYWARN and ICS-213 message on 2M VHF FM (Optional)
- Send Winlink SKYWARN and ICS-213 message on HF (Optional)
- Send NBEMS messages on VHF (Optional)
- Send NBEMS messages on HF (Optional)
- Pass NTS formatted messages on VHF FM
- Check in on Echolink New-England3 Node 9123

## Operational Ground Rules

### Communications Options to be utilized

Communications options for this exercise will be 2m FM, 6m FM, 440 FM UHF (on field sites), HF 75M and 60M voice. There will be a tactical net on 146.580 MHz FM simplex. VHF and HF Winlink will be used (Optional) along with VHF/HF NBEMS (Optional). Echolink will also be utilized (Optional).

# Field teams must be completely self sufficient

The ARES field teams must bring all of their own equipment and supplies. Served agency communications equipment may **NOT** be used in any way. *We only use what we have brought with us.* Teams operating inside RACES EOC's or other served agency sites are exempt, of course.

## NTS Message Handling

Message handling, on voice, will include the sending of an NTS type formatted message from each field site to the 2m VHF net control in Falmouth. The message will include numbers of operators and whether they are using battery, generator power or both.

## Setup and Timeline

Setup time will be 8:30am. The exercise will begin promptly at 10am (HF). The VHF simplex net will begin at 10:30am. The exercise will last approximately 2 hours and will end at 12pm. Timelines may be adjusted accordingly in response to turnout and early completion 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.



# **Operational Players and Field Units**

## **Sandwich field site**

The Cape Cod ARES Sandwich field site will operate:

- 2m FM 175W station
- 6m FM 50W
- 440 UHF simplex
- 75M and 60M voice SSB
- VHF/HF Winlink and NBEMS

The site in Sandwich will be established at the lower parking lot, of the Human Services Building. It will serve as a field site for medium range coverage. It will operate self-sufficiently.

## **Upper Cape Falmouth Field/NCS Site**

The Upper Cape Falmouth field team will be located inside and outside of the Falmouth Hospital and will operate VHF/UHF voice, possibly HF voice and Winlink VHF. Other bands may be used if they are available. It will operate self-sufficiently.

## **Communications with the islands**

Communications with the Islands will be attempted from the Net control station along with ARES home stations, field teams and any EOC stations. Home relay stations can also be employed where necessary to establish contacts by simplex. Nantucket will likely have one or two stations active. Islands communications are critical, as always. We will also accept any contact with any mobile stations on the islands.

# **Home Operator Stations**

Home operator stations will be of value in this exercise as stations that will communicate with the NCS site and field units within their range. We will continue our test of home stations and their ability to serve as backup stations to ARES/RACES EOCs. Home stations can be the primary anchor points for our zones of operation within the district. This exercise will give our member's home stations a chance for testing of any new or experimental equipment, as well as, their emergency power backup systems. This will be an ideal time for the home operators to fully evaluate their stations performance.

## **Lower Cape field site Brewster**

The Lower Cape field team will operate in Brewster in the lower cape. It will operate VHF/UHF and HF voice. It may also operate other bands if they are available. It will operate self-sufficiently.

## **Lower Cape mobile field site Chatham**

The Lower Cape mobile field site will be operated by a one or two team crew. It will operate from a high location in Chatham with an extension masting system. It will operate 2m FM, 440 MHz, and possibly 6m FM.

# VHF NET Operations

## Primary Tactical NET

The primary tactical NET will operate on the Primary *simplex* operating frequency of 146.580 using FM. The net will begin *30 minutes after the 10am start of the exercise* beginning at 10:30am. HF operations will begin first at 10am sharp. This will be covered in the HF section of the document. The VHF NET may remain at 146.580 or move, if necessary, to alternate frequencies as required for the exercise.

## Operating Procedure for the Tactical NET

The operating procedure for this exercise will consist of a roll call format. The NCS station will do a staggered priority and geographical call up. 1st call will be for ARES/RACES field sites. The second call up will be for any EOC stations in our district (including the Islands). The third call up will be for home and other stations by order of zones in sequence (Outer Cape, Lower Cape, Mid Cape, Upper Cape, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard).

Last call up will be for stations outside the Cape/Islands district. After the initial call up, NCS will call each field site and ask for any NTS messaging from those sites. NCS will take one message from each field site. NCS will then poll all field sites and individual check in stations which will read aloud those stations they could hear on the net and attempt direct contact with each of them when requested by the NCS station. This will give our operators valuable contacts and air time. We will evaluate successful communications paths based on that data. All stations will keep a log of whom they can hear. Mobile units (if any) may call NCS outside of the roll call when any mobile operators feel the necessity of doing so.

## VHF Winlink operations (Optional)

VHF winlink operations for the Cape and Islands district will involve the sending of a winlink ICS-213 message to the DEC WQ10 at email [wq1o@winlink.org](mailto:wq1o@winlink.org) using the W1SGL-10 RMS station in Barnstable on 145.090mhz. The ICS-213 will state the location of your station and the number of modes that you used in the exercise. Any field site or home station may send this message. Stations using Winlink are also encouraged to send a winlink message using an ICS-213 form to our Eastern MA ARES Section Emergency Coordinator Rob Macedo at email [kd1cy@winlink.org](mailto:kd1cy@winlink.org). This will contain the same information as the messages to the DEC. A SKYWARN message can also be sent to [wx1box@winlink.org](mailto:wx1box@winlink.org) using the SKYWARN form in Winlink.

# VHF NBEMS operations (Optional)

Cape and Islands district operators may try NBEMS on VHF to try to connect to any other station using simplex 145.750 MHz Mode will be 8PSK500F at 1800 Hz.

# VHF Winlink P2P (Optional)

Cape and Islands district operators may try VHF Winlink P2P to try to connect to any other station using simplex 145.730 MHz using Packet.

## Echolink operations

Operators with internet access are encouraged to check in on Echolink New-ENG3 9123 node. Although our scenario makes Echolink use unlikely in the area, we wanted to give additional exposure for our members to additional modes of operation.

## HF Operations

### HF voice operations

HF stations in the Cape Cod and Islands district will attempt contact with the Eastern MA section ARES HF nets which may be anchored off Cape to our north. The Net will begin at 10am sharp. The VHF Net will begin 30 minutes later at 10:30am. The reason for this change is that some members would like to participate in both HF and the VHF net. Staggering the time slot will make it easier for those operators to utilize both, especially if they are operating alone at home. Two nets on HF will be operating and anchored off Cape. The first will be 75m at 3930 kHz. The second will be 60m at 5330.5 kHz. Cape field sites and home stations are encouraged to check in on one or both nets. In the future we will be increasing our use of 60m for ARES/RACES operations for drills and actual emcomm. If stations wish to contact each other, they may ask net control for permission to do so.

**Note:**

*With the late start of planning for the exercise, availability of off Cape Net control stations is not assured. If those stations are not available on the exercise day, Cape Cod ARES will assume those functions.*

## **60m voice operations**

HF 60m operation will be first attempted on Channel one 5330.5 kHz. *As we are a secondary user on 60m, any primary user (US Government stations) cannot have interference from a secondary user. Primary users will have priority access at all times.* If a primary user is operating on channel one, the net will fall back and be conducted on channel four 5371.5 kHz.

## **HF Winlink Operation**

Stations having HF Winlink capability are free to attempt to send the messages described under the VHF winlink section by HF. A list of currently operating HF winlink RMS stations with locations and modes can be found on the [winlink.org](http://winlink.org) online site.

## **Problem Solving Situations and Improvisation**

### **Unexpected situations**

There will be one or two unannounced problem situations in the exercise. This will require the operators to improvise and think “out of the box”. These situations will enhance our ability to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. They will occur without notice, so be prepared to act quickly.

## **Incident Command Structure (ICS)**

ICS functions will be assigned before operations begin at the site. An Incident action plan will be created, if time permits, and distributed for all operators participating. We shall continue to use the ICS in future exercises in order for us to become knowledgeable in operating under this system for served agencies.

# Critique and Evaluation of the Exercise

We will have a meeting to critique and analyze the exercise no later than 15 *days* after the exercise. All participants should bring their notes and observations for evaluation by the group. All exercises will produce information that could be useful to future operations. Even seemingly small details can prove valuable to our training and development.

## This is an **Advanced** Level Exercise

Although CCARES has had some multi-site large exercises in the past, this will be an advanced level operations drill rivaling some of the earlier ones. It could be technically demanding on the field sites.

## Cape-Exercise Frequency Usage

**Primary Tactical NET: 146.580 Primary FM Simplex**

**Secondary Simplex 2m: 147.465 FM Simplex**

**440 MHz simplex: 446.000**

**6m FM simplex: 52,540 MHz**

**Primary 75m HF Operations: 3930 kHz (LSB)**

**Primary 60m HF Operations: 5330.5 kHz (USB), fall back to 5371.5 kHz if needed. (See page 9)**

**VHF Winlink: WISGL-10 RMS station on 145.090 MHz**

**HF Winlink: See [www.winlink.org](http://www.winlink.org) website**

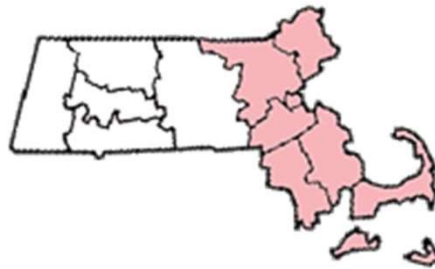
**HF NBEMS: 3583.5 kHz Mode: Thor 22 1500hz**

**VHF NBEMS: 145.750 MHz**

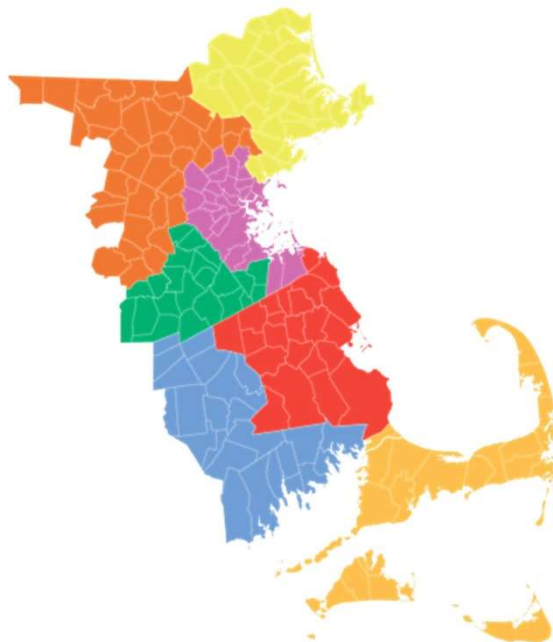
**Winlink P2P: 145.730 MHz**

**Echolink: New-Eng3 9123 node**

# Eastern MA exercise participation



## Eastern MA ARES Map



Although the primary focus of this exercise design is for the annual Cape summer exercise, all in the Eastern Massachusetts section can participate. The scenario was left quite broad allowing for any local and district based emcomm groups to participate. You are free to use any of the operational modes listed earlier in the document or add your own as needed. Some basic objectives are listed below. These are not all requirements. Groups may use what works for them. Given recent high level of SKYWARN Activations not allowing for strong publicizing of section wide participation, section participation for the August exercise is expected to be limited.

## Section Wide possible objectives

- 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/ repeater for your group
- Simulate contact with any Town EOC RACES stations
- Establish contact with other ARES districts where possible
- Establish an HF 75m and 60m voice net for all of MA (and potentially other areas)
- Pass an NTS type message on VHF 2 meters and/or 440mhz UHF
- Pass a SKYWARN and/or tactical message on voice 2 meters and on the HF net
- **Optional:** Pass a SKYWARN report on the Winlink SKYWARN form using VHF/HF Winlink RMS to [wx1box@winlink.org](mailto:wx1box@winlink.org)
- **Optional:** Pass an ICS-213 message form on VHF/HF Winlink RMS to [kd1cy@winlink.org](mailto:kd1cy@winlink.org)
- **Optional:** Send messages to other stations by VHF/UHF Winlink P2P if you have no HF digital or simply want to practice Winlink locally
- **Optional** Send messages locally by VHF NBEMS
- **Optional:** Send HF messages by NBEMS (experimental)
- Check in on the NEW-ENG3 9123 Echolink node

## VHF/UHF operations

Local ARES or RACES groups are free to determine their own local modes of operations for this exercise.

## HF Operations

HF nets are to be set up on 75m and 60m. They will run for the duration of the exercise. There will be an increasing use of 60m in section exercises. 75m operation will also still occur to ensure that those without 60m can still participate (see page 9 for 60m operations).

## Digital operations

Digital modes may be used as an optional activity by any group in the section. You can use your own modes and frequencies in addition to the any Winlink and NBEMS operations.



# Frequency usage

**146.580-Cape Cod ARES Simplex (No PL)**

**Winlink Express VHF: 145.090 FM**

**Primary region wide 75m HF Operations: 3930 kHz LSB**

**Primary region wide 60m HF Operations: 5330.5 kHz USB except fall back to 5371.5 kHz if the primary frequency is occupied by a primary user (see page 9)**

**HF Winlink stations: See online list on the [Winlink.org](http://Winlink.org) site**

**HF NBEMS 75m: 3583.5 kHz Start Mode: Thor 22 1500 Hz center**

**Echolink: NEW-ENG3 node 9123 IRLP: 9123**