

After Action Report
City-wide CERT exercise
November 5, 2022

MTV ARES provided radio communication for a CERT exercise planned by the City of Mountain View. The scenario was a major storm that happened at 10:30 am while large crowds were gathered in local parks. CERTs and ARES were deployed in the afternoon to assess and report damage to the city.

Activation number: MTV-2022-03-C

Schedule: ARES arrived and set up beginning at 12:15. Exercise period was 13:00 to 15:30, followed by demobilization and a debrief at 1000 Villa from 16:00 to 17:30.

Staff: Net Control and Scribe were in the radio room at 1000 Villa. City Packet (MTVEOC) was remote. City Packet 1 and 2 were remote and received DA Summary reports by voice radio from CERTs and entered the reports into the packet system. Five of the CERTs were staffed with a packet operator and three had voice-only operators. There was one observer. Altogether there were 15 operators serving the eight participating CERTs.

Preparation: Signups began about three weeks before the drill and were mostly complete by about two weeks before the drill so that initial assignments could be made. There were some last-minute changes, but operators were flexible about changing positions. A Ham Schedule and Information on CERT Command Posts was prepared by the city and distributed to ARES operators. Operators were given instructions, a form 205, and assignment lists by email. A script and two tracking tools for Net Control and scribe were also prepared ahead of time.

Goal: The main goal for the ARES operators was to transmit Damage Assessment Summary forms from the CERTs to the EOC using packet, resulting in a “whiteboard” display showing a picture of incident status for all the participating CERTs. Operators also followed standard procedures using forms (213, 214, 309) and best practices.

Results: A total of 24 Damage Assessment Summaries were sent during the exercise period and all were correctly included on the “whiteboard” display report. Operators followed correct procedures for checking in and out of nets (voice and packet) and voicing messages, and including “drill traffic” in messages. All of the packet operators for the CERT command posts were able to operate “off grid” during the drill. All of them also had their stations correctly configured to receive the city bulletin that was sent out during the drill.

Glitches, things to improve:

Voice to Packet Pathway: The three CERTs without an on-site packet station had to send in their DA Summary by voice to a remote packet operator. We had two remote packet operators to enter their information into the packet system and two frequencies dedicated for that purpose. Unfortunately, one of the operators had equipment problems and was only able to pass one

message. The other operator was swamped and some messages couldn't be entered into packet during the exercise period. Also, one CERT was sending plain 213's as if they were DA summaries, so the proper fields weren't present and the receiving operator had to ask for clarification. The Voice to Packet pathway would work well with two operators for 4 to 6 CERTs if CERTs in the field without packet used it mainly for DA Summary reports and sent 213 message forms by voice. Further training of CERTs and ARES operators is suggested. (see Forms, below).

Equipment: There were three equipment failures that delayed operations for the operators.

- 1) One of the two remote packet operators had trouble with their equipment and was only able to transmit one DA summary.
- 2) The Radio Room headphone on the shift supervisor desk suddenly stopped working (needs repair). The scribe that had been using that radio was able to move to another radio and was only off the air for about two minutes.
- 3) One packet operator at a CERT had unexpected problems with Outpost crashing and the radio losing its programmed channels, through the operator was still able to recover and transmitted three DA summaries. The problem may have been caused by trying to run on battery. Once the operator changed to a generator they were able to operate successfully.

Forms: There was some confusion at one CERT about which 213 to use. We need further training to CERTs and HAMS about sending a ICS 213 message form for a single incident and a 213 DA Summary for a summary report. Finding the current version of a form online was a problem for some. There is no search function on the ARES website where the current 213 message form may be found, and you have to look for it under Go-Kit items. The 213 DA Summary form on the K6MTV website was an earlier version as well – the instructions for voicing field 12 (the row of boxes) had changed for the latest version. This resulted in some minor confusion as the listener was expecting the information to be voiced one way and the sender was sending it another way.