Radio Relay International Second Quarter Hurricane Reporting Exercise
11-12 May 2018
Summary Report

Objectives: REACT participation in Radio Relay International's Exercise ALERTEX 2018-A was conducted to:

(1) practice providing simulated ground truth weather and situation data for forwarding to the National Weather Service and state and Federal emergency management agencies.

(2) Test REACT's ability to forward standard reports from our Traffic System through Winlink to Radio Relay International's traffic system.

History: This is the second participation by REACT International in a Radio Relay International exercise.

Scenario: The scenario was based on a landfalling hurricane on the East or Gulf Coast. Participating Teams were asked to forward at least one weather report and one impact situation report to the Radio Relay International National Emergency Communications Coordinator. Reporting stations were asked to base reports on expected hurricane conditions for their locality. The REACT Training Committee supported participating Teams by providing a detailed reference sheet of hurricane characteristics including wind speeds, central pressures, expected damages, likely tornado occurrence, and inland rain prediction.

Outcomes: All Teams (16 Teams) on the East and Gulf Coast located within historic hurricane track areas were invited to participate, although invitations were at relatively short notice (3 May) due to relatively late notification to REACT of the exercise dates. On the exercise days the following teams participated:

- REACT Warning Team 6247 (Glen Allen, Virginia – 2 operators, Walter Green and Michele Snyder
- Space Coast REACT 4577 (Melbourne, Florida) – 1 operator, Alan Dixon

One Team (Nassau County REACT) withdrew from the exercise because it was "an amateur radio exercise hammered into a web format. The data call and new web form are not practical. I would not be able to use this format under pressure if a hurricane was impacting Long Island." Further

concerns were expressed about the use of standard amateur radio syntax and garble controls, used by both the National Traffic System and Radio Relay International, for messages that were intended to transition between our communications and Amateur Radio communications. It is worth noting that Amateur Radio is increasingly using an Internet/Radio Frequency mixed system for emergency communications (Winlink) and that our tests show that the average time for a first time user to complete the webform used to collect the data for the exercise is 2 minutes.

Total messages forwarded from REACT to Radio Relay International for eventual delivery were as follows:

Station	Location	Weather Reports	Situation Reports
Traffic 241 (N0WGG)	old Glen Allen, Virginia	2	1
Traffic 242	new Glen Allen, Virginia	1	1
N3HOE	Melbourne, Florida	1	1

Analysis:

(1) Simulated Ground Truth Reports:

(1.a.) Observations of both weather data in weather based disasters and of disaster impacts are important. Further training in what to report is needed to make our reporting participation useful.

(1.b.) In order to do weather reporting to National Weather Service standards used by other spotter systems, including the Spotter Network and the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network, our participating teams need to have basic weather data collection capability for wind direction and speed, rain and snowfall measurement, atmospheric pressure, etc. and be trained in the use of data collection.

(2) Ability to Forward Standard Reports:

(2.a.) Winlink works well and is a survivable system for message communication. The one issue encountered was that the radiogram format provided as a standard Winlink form is the ARRL form and does not permit the use of the precedences Test Priority or Test Emergency. This required use of Winlink e-mail in preference to other Winlink modes. Unfortunately, we do not have any understanding of how many of our Amateur Radio operators have Winlink capability.

(2.b.) The two forms established on the REACT Warning Team website for Radio Relay International radiogram weather and situation reports worked well, and generated the data needed in the format needed for rapid transfer of information from reporting by website form to Winlink format.

Recommendations:

(1.a.) Weather and impact data reporting should be regularly included in ALERTEX exercises, along with forwarding reports by voice or Winlink to Radio Relay International. Development of a demonstrated capability to do this rapidly and reliably when asked is important to our credibility.

(1.a/b.) The Training Committee should identify or develop training materials, standards, and equipment that Teams can use to develop a capability for reporting weather or impacts.

(2.a.) REACT should take steps to identify members with Winlink capability.

(2.b.) The Training Committee should develop a drill program to encourage the development of familiarity with and proficiency in the use of the templates used for messaging and data collection.

Walter G. Green III
Chair, Training Committee
REACT International

Attachment: Final ICS 213F REACT RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT

ICS 213F REACT RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT

EXERCISE MESSAGE

1. Incident Name: Radio Relay International Quarter 2 Hurricane Reporting Exercise
2. To: REACT Board, copy to REACT Archivist, REACT Traffic Stations, RRI NECC
3. From: Walter Green, Chair, Training Committee
4. Subject: REACT SITREP 2 and Final
5. Date: 12 May 2018
6. Time: 2200 EDT
7.A. Message Number 124
7.B. Number of Teams Reporting: 2 – REACT Warning Team, Space Coast REACT
7.C. Teams Released: 2 - REACT Warning Team, Space Coast REACT
7.Q. Agencies Supported: Radio Relay International
7.R. Radio Services In Use: Zello REACT/Traffic System channel, Winlink E-Mail
7.S. Locations Where Work was Performed: Glen Allen, Virginia; Melbourne, Florida
7.T. Number of Team Members Available: 3; REACT Warning Team – 2, Space Coast REACT – 1
7.W. Total Hours of Volunteer Work Today: 9; total for exercise – 12
7.Y. Work Done This Period: 3 Test Priority messages; total messages sent in exercise - 7
7.Z. Planned Actions Next Operational Period: None
8. Individual making report: Walter Green
8.A. E-mail: w.green@reactwarning.org

EXERCISE MESSAGE