

June 22, 2021

ACS Training Overview

1.1 OVERVIEW

Good evening everyone. Before I get started, I'd like everyone to know that the information I am presenting will be available on the Pinellas ACS Web site after the meeting.

Tonight, I would like to set the stage by talking about what ACS training will look like going forward. When I first talked to Clayton about the Training Officer position, I realized that before I could set up a training program, I would need a better understanding of what missions we needed to support, the conditions under which those missions would be performed, and the skills each of us would need in order to execute each mission successfully.

To that end, I have spent a considerable amount of time researching and updating the ACS Emergency Communications plan and developing a new training document for digital communications. These documents identify the skills and detail the procedures that will be used to support each ACS mission and are the source of the training activities being developed.

Currently, we have three activities on our training calendar.

- a. Weekly VHF Training Nets
- b. Weekly 10 Meter Training Nets
- c. Monthly membership meetings

In addition to these activities, we will be adding five additional items to the calendar.

- a. Winlink Training Nets
- b. Tabletop Exercises
- c. Monthly Training Drills
- d. Functional Exercises
- e. Full-Scale Exercises

Detailed information about each of these activities is documented in the updated ACS Emergency Communications plan. Tonight, I'll talk about a few of these activities.

First, let's talk about our weekly training net.

1.2 WEEKLY VHF TRAINING NET

The Pinellas ACS training net will continue to take place once a week here on Tuesday evenings at 1930 Hours. The format and purpose will remain the same. We will continue to use the net to familiarize ourselves with net procedures, message formats, phonetics, use of prowords, and other basic skills.

The training segment of the net will be narrowly focused on a small set of skills each week and will be designed to take about 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Examples of the types of activities being planned include:

- a. Presentations on specific Emergency Communication topics followed by a limited question and answer period. Example topics include ICS message types and formatting, activation and deactivation procedures, online training sources, emergency power, etc.
- b. Practice message exchanges.
- c. Support upcoming training events by providing the membership with detailed information about upcoming drills and exercises.

If you have specific topics or suggestions for training that can be accomplished during the weekly net, please drop me a note via email. If you're interested in presenting a topic during the net, please let me know.

Now, if for any reason you miss a training net, don't worry. In order to ensure that everyone has access to the weekly training segment, the training material used during the net will also be posted on the Pinellas ACS Web Site following the completion of the net. So, you can always go back and review the material when you have an opportunity.

1.3 WINLINK TRAINING

Most of the formal messages we have experience exchanging are reasonably short. We generally try to keep the group count to less than twenty-five. However, during an activation event, more complex messages may need to be exchanged. The ability to exchange information using a digital format will simplify the creation and exchange of these complex messages and, in many cases, increase their accuracy (reduce the probability of an error). Pinellas ACS will be using the Winlink computer program as our primary digital communications tool.

To support digital training, a new net is being created.

1.3.1 Pinellas ACS Winlink Training Net

This training net will be used to familiarize everyone with Winlink and to practice digital network operations.

The net will take place twice per month. I have tentatively scheduled the nets for the second and fourth Wednesday each month starting in July. So, the first net will take place on July 14th at 1930 hours.

No previous experience with Winlink is required to take part in the net. The first net held each month will be designed to support those with little or no previous Winlink experience. To start, these nets will take place using Zoom so that we can get everyone interested in Winlink up and running. And keep in mind, that we can always schedule additional Zoom meetings during the month to help everyone resolve problems.

The second net each month will be designed to support those members who already have Winlink installed and who are capable of exchanging Winlink messages.

So how do we get started? I need everyone who is interested in Winlink to send me an email. Please provide me with your call sign and let me know if you are a beginner or have an operational Winlink station.

On the Monday prior to each scheduled Winlink net, I will send an email and a Winlink bulletin to everyone who has registered for the net. The information in the email/Bulletin will include:

- a. Training Net Objectives
- b. Network type, date, time, and duration
- c. Description of net activities
- d. Location of additional material needed to support the net

The training net will be conducted in accordance with the information provided in the weekly Winlink training bulletin and a new document titled the *Pinellas ACS/ARES® Winlink Training Plan*. The Winlink training plan is available on the Pinellas ACS Website under the Training Tab.

1.4 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

In addition to the Weekly VHF training net and the Winlink training net, we will also be adding Tabletop-Exercises, drills, functional tests, and full-scale exercises to the training calendar.

1.4.1 Tabletop Exercises

Tabletop exercises will take place, periodically, during the ACS monthly meeting at the EOC. They will be used to practice network operations; message creation, transmission, and reception; as well as record keeping. This format will enable participants to ask questions, receive feedback, and recommend changes in real time.

1.4.2 Drills

Drills, in contrast, will take place on the air. They will be used to exercise specific operational skills, practice voice and digital network operations, and assess user and ACS performance. As we become more proficient, the complexity of the drills will increase.

Drills will take place once per month and will be scheduled for approximately one-hour in duration. I have tentatively scheduled the first drill for Thursday July 22nd at 1930 Hours. The title of the first Drill is ***Primary Repeater Failure***.

On the Tuesday prior to the Drill, the weekly ACS training net will be used to distribute information and field questions about the Drill. Detailed information about each Drill will be posted on the Pinellas ACS web site in advance so that everyone can review the material and be prepared with questions during the Tuesday net.

One week after the Drill, the weekly ACS training net will be used to provide feedback to Drill participants, discuss issues encountered during the drill, and field recommendations for additional training and Drill activities.

Note: Information pertaining to the July 22nd Drill is already posted on the Web Site under the Training Tab. The document will give you a pretty good idea about what is expected and how a drill will be conducted.

1.5 FUNCTIONAL EXERCISES AND FUL-SCALE EXERCISES

I'm not going to talk about Functional or Full-Scale exercises this evening. I think I've already thrown enough new stuff out there for one night. That can be a topic for a future session.

1.6 HOMEWORK

What I am going to talk about is Homework. Now that's probably not a word you ever expected to hear again...

Several new documents have been posted to the Pinellas ACS web site. They are:

- a. The Pinellas County ACS/ARES® Emergency Communications Plan and Standard Operating Procedures document.
- b. The Pinellas ACS/ARES® Winlink Training Plan

Please download these documents, take a look, and provide me with whatever feedback you believe is appropriate. These documents are still marked as DRAFT, so please provide comments and recommendations. Links to each document are embedded in the posts on the home page of the web site.

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The presentation from last week's monthly ACS meeting and this Weekly brief will both also be available on the web site.

I can be contacted via email at WA1RYQ@arrl.net. My contact information is also available on the Pinellas ACS Web site and is located within each of the new documents that have been posted.

Now with that, I turn it back to Net Control.