

Start: 1954 L – Stop: 2006 L

Contingency Mode – Failure of Primary & Secondary Repeater

After Action Report

1.1 OVERVIEW.

Thank you, Bob. Good evening everyone. First, I'd like to thank all those who participated in last Thursday's training drill. We had a reasonably good turn-out with 14 members participating. We started at 1930 hours local on the W4ACS repeater and completed the drill 39 minutes later at approximately 2009 hours.

For those who did not participate, I'll quickly review what took place.

Description

The ACS/ARES® Tactical-Resource Net was established at **ACTIVATION LEVEL 1** using the primary ACS repeater system, W4ACS. Once the net was established, we initiated the drill. The Drill had the following three phases.

- **Phase 1:** Simulate a failure of the W4ACS Primary Repeater System. Then transition to the WD4SCD back-up repeater system.
- **Phase 2:** Simulate a failure of the WD4SCD Back-up Repeater System. Then, transition to a county wide simplex net.
- **Phase 3:** Return to the W4ACS repeater system for closing remarks and net deactivation.

The procedures documented in the Pinellas County Emergency Communications Plan and SOP were used to activate, transition, and deactivate the net.

The Net Control Station was WA1RYQ and the Alternate Net Control Station was W8QFV.

Objectives

This drill had three objectives.

- Provide training to the membership on contingency mode operation.
- Evaluate the Net Activation and Deactivation procedures documented in the Communications Plan.
- Evaluate the contingency mode procedure documented in the Communication Plan.

1.2 AFTER ACTION REPORT

Following the Drill several members provided feedback and recommendations on the exercise. I'm going to walk through those comments now. But first I want to remind everyone that the purpose of a drill is to identify shortfalls and areas where we can improve. So, even though I believe we met the drill's objectives we found a few areas that will need attention. Our transition to the backup repeater system went very well with only a few minor hiccups; however, our transition to simplex operation needs some additional practice.

No.	Comments	Response
1	Script for Activation Level 1 did not include a call for Echolink stations. What was the rationale for excluding Echolink stations?	I originally excluded Echolink from the communication plan because I assumed that the internet would probably not be available during an activation event. In hindsight, that was probably a bad decision. During an activation event, ACS should make use of any communications channel that is available... until it is not. Therefore, I will update the plan to include Echolink.
2	During countywide simplex operation, several stations reported that they were unable to hear the net control station. But they were able to hear a few other stations. However, they never heard anyone call for check-ins.	During the Drill, the NCS did ask a north county and south county station to relay check ins; however, the NCS failed to ask the relay stations to request check-ins. This is an oversight in the procedure. I'll be updating the plan to more clearly indicate that the north and south county stations need to call for check-ins as well as relays.

No.	Comments	Response
3.	It might be better to assign an NCS that is at a higher elevation when running simplex nets.	<p>My initial reaction to this comment was that it was a good idea; however, in reality, No matter where the NCS is located, when operating in simplex mode, the net will always need to support members who cannot hear or be heard by the NCS. The issues encountered during the Drill can largely be resolved by improving the procedures used during simplex operations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The NCS should clearly designate North and South Relay Stations. Additional Relays may also be required.2. North and South Relay stations call for Net Check-ins.3. North and South Relay stations call for Relays4. NCS ask North and South Relays to rebroadcast all announcements. <p>Although an NCS on high ground will reduce the number of stations that cannot hear or be heard by the NCS, location alone will not eliminate the problems seen during the drill. Everyone should remember, that during an activation event, we may be operating at reduced power, or with secondary antennas.</p> <p>The Communications plan will be updated accordingly.</p>

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No.	Comments	Response
4	When in simplex mode each station should log the stations that they can clearly hear near them and then forward that information to the NCU.	Refer to previous response.
5	Recommendation for a future drill. Set-up a cross band repeater for contingency mode operation.	Excellent idea. I'll put it on the list.
6	During operation on the WD4SCD system, it would be a good idea for each station to identify the receive site they using to enter the net.	<p>During periods of normal operation, each member should determine the WD4SCD receive sites that they are able to communicate with. During an activation event, it's possible that one or more of these receive sites may become inoperative and members may need to select an alternate receive site to remain in the net.</p> <p>I would recommend that stations notify the NCS when they encounter a problem with a receive site. The NCS could than maintain and announce a list of receive sites that must be avoided.</p>

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7	Net participants need to follow scripts and procedures more closely.	<p>I noticed a few areas where participants could better follow scripts and procedures.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="894 467 1908 553">1. The NCS requested specific information during the call for net check-ins. In general, requested information was not provided.<li data-bbox="894 565 1908 651">2. When switching to the alternate repeater, participants began calling for net control before net control was on frequency.
8	In the future, could the training officer provide more information in the Drill plan posted on the Web site.	The drill plan for July has been updated with additional information so that users can evaluate the content and determine if the updated format is sufficient.
9	Not all operators used the standard phonetic alphabet during net check-ins.	The use of non-standard phonetics can cause confusion during net operations and during voice message exchanges.

1.3 QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

I'd like to pause here for a minute and ask if anyone has an additional comment or question about the drill. If you have a comment or question, please provide me with your call sign, slowly, clearly, and phonetically so I don't make a mistake when I respond. And then ask your question or provide me with your comment.

This is WA1RYQ.

[PAUSING FOR QUESTIONS]

1.4 CONCLUSION.

That completes this week's training session. I'd like to remind everyone who is interested in Winlink training that this Wednesday, July 28th, at 1930 hours local, I will be hosting a Zoom training session for Winlink. This week's session will include a PowerPoint presentation that covers Winlink operating modes, Winlink Connection modes (Packet, VARA, ARDOP, Pactor), Virtual TNC Installation, and Virtual TNC Configuration. If you are interested in taking part in Winlink digital training, please send me an email. I will be sending a Zoom invite tomorrow morning to everyone who has registered for the training.

I can be contacted via email at WA1RYQ@arrl.net. My contact information is also available on the Pinellas ACS Web site.

And finally, I will be on vacation next week so I will not be available to support next Tuesday's training net or a training session on Wednesday for Winlink. I'll be back in town and available to resume training during the week of August 8th.

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

1.5 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.

The following table contains a summary of the comments and questions provided by the membership during the presentation.

No.	Call Sign	Comments	Response
		No questions or comments received during the net.	