



# Boone County Amateur Radio Emergency Service - BCARES Simulated Emergency Test - 2024

## Summary

November 2, 2024

The 2024 SET was a huge success. The scenario was a massive Winter storm with ice and snow resulting in power, cell and internet severely disrupted for Boone County. BCARES members were advised to check into the Emergency net on our local 146.610 MHz repeater and also receive instructions through a RAVE broadcast shortly after 9:00 AM. Hopefully they will have emergency power to establish their home stations and bring up Winlink Express to pass messages to our county EOC. The Severe WX Rprt included in Winlink Express was requested for situational awareness at the EOC from each operator's home location. The EOC also requested specifically an estimate of ice and snow accumulations of 5 stations. The net control Winlink station sent and received these messages.

Next, the EOC requested that BCARES provide communication support to 19 warming shelters in the county, including one in the adjacent county, Callaway County. This required our radio operators to have portable/mobile Winlink capacity. Each warming center was picked within 2 miles of the operator's home. A packet containing an ICS213 was delivered to each center on Friday by exercise planners. The radio operators were to find these ICS213s and send the ICS213 via Winlink Express's ICS213 form. We have one VHF Packet RMS node and one VHF VARA FM node to facilitate the RF connection. We also have a VARA FM P2P station at the EOC on VHF for handling larger files, or forms for the EOC.

We had 18 Check-ins beginning at 9:00 AM. Additionally we had 4 members at the EOC, one of which was the EOC Manager; a total of 22 operators involved. At check-in we learned that we had 15 stations on emergency power, 2 stations had emergency power available. Also, at check-in we learned that we had 14 operators with Winlink capacity. This meant we needed to provide relay stations as a subnet to take the voiced ICS213 from the warming centers, enter the data into the Winlink form and send that RF to the EOC. We used our 146.760 MHz and 444.175 MHz repeaters as subnets to handle the voiced traffic separate from the Control Net, as learned in last year's as indicated in our AAR. This makes more efficient use of our bandwidth.

### RESULTS:

Fourteen Severe WX Reports were received from Winlink users directly and 2 were received from relays of the voiced data. One warming center in Ashland was not serviced since the operator for that location was unable to volunteer that Saturday morning. One operator was too sick to make a portable site. Another operator picked up that packet and sent the ICS213 from that center.

The Callaway County Airport was serviced by a radio operator from that county checking in with our net to see if we needed any help. We asked him to go to the airport where he found the information and voiced the data to one of our subnets resulting in an ICS213 from the Calaway County airport entered at the EOC.

Fifteen ICS213s were received at the EOC directly from the operators with portable stations on site. Three operators actually serviced 2 sites each. Three ICS213s were relayed via our subnets from operators that did not have Winlink capacity.

Three operators manned the amateur radio station at the EOC providing Net Control for the exercise and receiving and logging the Winlink traffic that was coming in like a waterfall. When a digital form came in on the Winlink station, it had to be saved in PDF to transfer to the EOC desk via the software Bride4PS. This software worked very well for communications including file transfer to and from the amateur radio station to the EOC rooms.

The Winlink Peer -to- Peer (P2P) exercise remains a challenge. Ten P2P messages were received at WX0BC. Some pictures were interesting and some were too big and took too long to transmit in our exercise environment. We announced over the net that reducing file size to less than 4 KB would be prudent.

The 2024 SET exercise has given BCARES the chance to practice radio operations in emergency conditions that include providing communications support to the community including email by radio (Winlink) from anticipated warming center's locations. It also demonstrates the capabilities of our BCARES members to our Office of Emergency Management.