

American Red Cross Emergency Training Exercise – April 22, 2007

ARES of Champaign County members attending included: Steve Hilberg (N9XDC), Al Wolfe (K9SI), Mike Haydon (KF8ZN) and Mike Trautman (K9MLT). Red Cross contact personnel included: Jamie Davis (Champaign office), Alyssa Pollock (Peoria office).

The SET was a table top exercise based on a scenario that a tornado had hit St. Joseph, Illinois. The Red Cross volunteer members present included Leads (managers) of all the various teams that would be utilized in the Red Cross operation. From initial notification to requests for meals and cots, the various contacts and communications needed to complete the mission were rehearsed.



All agreed that there were many areas that ARES might be useful to the Red Cross, particularly if normal communications were not working. For example, after the Urbana / Ogden tornado cell phone systems were overloaded and useless for several hours.

Damage assessment, Logistics, and Information / Public relations were highlighted as functions that would benefit from rapid and reliable communications that might be facilitated by ARES.

A few observations:

1. **The local ARC has no communications equipment of their own.** They are dependent on cell and land phones. If phone lines fail they would rely on ARES assistance to provide the communications they need.
2. **ARESCC should be proactive:** The ARC counts on ARES to be ready and it is up to ARES to prepare for activation and to anticipate this served agency's needs.
3. **The ARC is a support agency, not a first responder group.** The ARC provides support for EMS, Fire and Police personnel and other disaster responders as well as food, shelter and support for the victims of the disaster. ARES goals of rapid response and communication could be an important aid to them, but we should not think that we have a central role in their operations.
4. **The ARC is a large, complex organization with many resources.** I was impressed by the scope of ARC operations and the resources they are able to provide in support of disaster responders. They have a large group of volunteers with a strong organization.

Where can ARES help?

1. **Logistics** – ARES communicators might present at the Champaign office, shadowing Red Cross Leads as needed and positioned at the staging areas, shelters, and supply depots to help AC maintain efficient and reliable contact.
2. **Damage assessment** – Red Cross teams assess the number of homes damaged to help determine what resources are needed, for example how many meals, cots, blankets should be brought to the shelter. ARES operator accompanying damage assessment teams might speed up the reporting process.
3. **P.R. and Communications** – ARES could be of service to ARC by providing health and welfare traffic handling and general communications outside of the disaster area. It was specifically pointed out that ARES personnel might help set up computers and printers in field operation processing centers, and perhaps temporary wired and wireless networks.

Future CCARES activities:

1. **ARES capability determination:** How many operators can we provide? What equipment is available? (Example: ARC appears to have ONE generator in its inventory. We can not count on using that generator for operating radios. How many generators could ARES provide for operator usage?)
2. **Additional planning:** Continued talks and coordination with ARC planners is vital. Meetings with the Damage Assessment and other Leads would be very useful.
3. **Training and preparation:** ARES SETS and orientation to ARC procedures should be planned. ARES members are welcome at the ARC offices to visit and familiarize.
4. **Facility development:** The Champaign ARC offices have an area and desk reserved for ARES use. We need to address access to an adequate exterior antenna from that position. Perhaps we could place some equipment at that work station for testing purposes and to indicate that the space is “in use”.
5. **Site surveys:** If we gain access to a list of ARC shelter sites, ARES teams could survey them for possible antenna locations and perhaps test repeater access and simplex availability.



ARES of Champaign County should look forward to making significant contributions to the work of The American Red Cross when called upon in the future.

(Contributed by Mike Trautman, K9MLT)