

# *Emergency Management*

## WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

EOC News

MARCH 21ST, 2025

### **FCEM COMMS EXERCISE from our Lead Radio Op. Rob Zingarelli W4ZNG**

On Saturday March 15th, FCEM staff and volunteers held an exercise using the new Mobile Command Trailer (MCT) and its communications equipment. This included testing all of the MCT's systems in a field setting, and testing radio ranges between the MCT in Tate's Hell Swamp near Carrabelle, the Emergency Operations Center in Apalachicola, the radio base station at Chillas Hall in Lanark Village, and several vehicles dispatched along roads from the MCT. If that sounds like a lot to keep track of, it was! However, with the help of strong coffee, all test objectives were met and the exercise was a complete success. Chief findings were:

- VHF communication between all three of the base stations through the Carrabelle repeater worked extremely well.
- Additionally, direct VHF communication between all three bases worked as well. This was somewhat unexpected, and is a real bonus as it gives us one more means of making contact under emergency conditions.
- HF communication, which consists of bouncing signals off the ionosphere 60 miles up to reach across Franklin County, was also successfully tested between the MCT and EOC.
- VHF contacts between the MCT, FCEM vehicles, and hand-held radios were made, and maximum reliable ranges established. These varied between 5 miles for MCT-to-truck contacts, down to less than 2 miles for handheld-to-handheld radios.

However these successes came with some challenges. Low MCT battery power, a radio-noisy battery charger, and confusion over names and call signs all kept us adapting to the unexpected. Additionally, high winds and an incoming weather system kept the pressure on to get the antennas up, to get the contacts and measurements made, and to get the antennas back down and stowed. In all, it was a very busy day.

In particular, we wish to thank Myrtis Wynn KQ4LIM, Tony Johnson K4TMJ, Tim Keith-Lucas K4TKL, Amanda Anthony KQ4JZF, Connor "Beau" Millender, Jessica Lockhart KR4CHA, and Jennifer Daniels KQ4JXO for their work in making these measurements. Additionally we wish to thank FCEM CERT volunteers for assisting, and Mark & Elizabeth Milliken for serving as official observers for the proceedings









## *Emergency Management Staff, Volunteers, & Stakeholders*

*Shining a spotlight on the people who make this agency function.*

### **Comms Exercise from our OPs Chief Tim Keith-Lucas K4TKL**

Communications exercise is the first use of our new mobile command trailer. Saturday, March 15, FCEM took its new mobile command trailer to Tate's Hell to test both the trailer itself and the radio base station inside. The exercise was very successful.

Saturday morning we towed the trailer to the Off Highway Vehicle parking lot on Gully Branch Road, 7 miles north of the center of Carrabelle. Three FCEM staff, seven volunteer members of CERT, and Commissioner Cheryl Sanders set up the trailer, put up all our radio antennas, and hooked up a Starlink antenna for satellite internet. We projected a Google Earth image of our location on the worktable in the trailer. We made coffee and ate doughnuts. We demonstrated that the trailer can serve as a miniature EOC should we have to evacuate the EOC building.

The trailer has been "in the shop" for many months being converted from an ordinary travel trailer to our mobile office. This was our first experience towing it to a new site away from any infrastructure and then demonstrating what it can do when we need it in the future. We found lots of small problems, all of which we can correct before a real disaster hits. Our activation crew, both professional and volunteer, found their places in the very small space and demonstrated that yes, they can do their jobs in about 280 square feet, including bunk space, kitchen, bathroom, and radio room.

Then came the test of our other new addition to Franklin County safety, our county-wide ham radio system. The core of the system is a base station at the EOC at the Apalachicola Airport, a repeater on top of a Carrabelle water tower, a smaller base station at Chillas Hall in Lanark Village, and the full base station in the trailer. Then we have mobile radios in several vehicles and handheld radios in the hands of FCC licensed staff and CERT volunteers. Our goal is county-wide and beyond communication when cell phones, internet, and electricity are down as they were following Hurricane Michael.

The performance of the system exceeded our expectations. We were able to talk across the county, and even talk from the EOC building to Lanark Village, a distance of 28 miles, without using the repeater. We determined the useful range of our base, mobile, and handheld radios in all combinations. We tested the High Frequency radio and know that it will give us long-range, even continental, communication during a disaster from our mobile command trailer. The data we collected would let us set up a radio net over Tate's Hell, using handheld radios, during a wide area search for a missing person.

## See What We Are Up To

*A glance at the projects that each staff member and prominent volunteer is undertaking.*






- Jennifer Daniels, the Director, has been working on our Multi Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), attending trainings, updating our MOU's, and planning 1 exercise.
- Amanda Anthony, the Coordinator, is working on updating our finance books, and planning our Build Your Bucket Event for early May.
- Jessica Lockhart, the SPN Coordinator, has coordinated a Contractors meeting for March 25, 2025, is still taking training to further her knowledge about the field of Emergency Management, and currently planning a POD exercise for early May.
- Tim Keith-Lucas, the Operations Chief, is refining our checklists to ensure comprehensive hurricane preparedness, equipping our Mobile Command Trailer and preparing our MYSP.
- Scott Bush, the Quartermaster, is currently reorganizing the EOC trailers to accommodate a wider array of events, coordinating the organization of the Hangar, and also assisting with equipping our Mobile Command Trailer.
- Judi Ring, the CERT President, is developing educational materials to raise awareness about the CERT program among the public, updating our event schedule, and prepping our oncoming class of CERTers.
- Rob Zingarelli, the Lead Radio Operator, is concentrating on the radio wiring setup within the command trailer and is doing weekly check-ins with SARNET.
- The Inventory Manager, is in the process of consolidating equipment from various areas within the EOC to both the command trailer and its supporting trailer.
- Robin Gibson, our Vehicle Inspector, has been diligently checking and ensuring that our county vehicles are maintained and ready at a moment's notice.
- Allen Sanders, the Groundskeeper, has resumed grounds maintenance activities in preparation for the forthcoming summer season and is currently maintaining chainsaws.
- The team eagerly awaits the review and approval of the new building plans by the state Office of Environmental and Historic Preservation.

## Upcoming Events

Event	Description	Date	Time	Location
Contractors/ Subcontractors Meeting		Tuesday March 25, 2025	2PM	28 Airport Road, Apalachicola, FL
2025 Seahawk College & Career Day	College & Career Day	Friday, April 4th, 2025	8:30A - 12:30P	1250 US Highway 98, Eastpoint, FL
Cops & Kids Day 2025		Friday, April 11th, 2025	8:30A - 1:30P	1250 US Highway 98, Eastpoint, FL



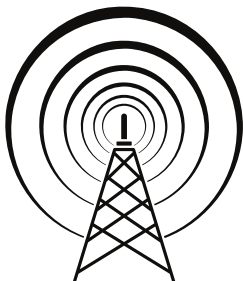
Weather Outlook

	<u>Sat, March 22</u>	<u>Sun, March 23</u>	<u>Mon, March 24</u>	<u>Tues, March 25</u>	<u>Wed, March 26</u>
<b>Weather</b>					
	Sunny	Sunny	Scattered Thunderstorms	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy
<b>Temp. (F)</b>	<b>50 / 71</b>	<b>60 / 73</b>	<b>58 / 72</b>	<b>59 / 75</b>	<b>56 / 79</b>

EOC Tip of the Week

# Ham Radio

We just wrapped up some super fun Ham Radio review classes, and boy, were they a blast of knowledge! Everyone who attended and took the plunge to test totally aced the exam! Now they've got their very own call signs, and guess what? When cell phones decide to take a nap, our trusty ham radios will swoop in to save the day and keep us chatting away!



Let Us Know What You Think

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