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Successful emergency communication exercise

Lee County Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), LeeCARES, held another successful emergency communication exercise in Lee County.

In the Nov. 14 exercise LeeCARES mapped the area North of Lexington to the County line, which is more prone to severe weather events. The group exercised direct communications by deploying amateur radio operators who set up and used portable radios and antennas. Members were able to successfully communicate to the base station in Lincoln through both the NE5DX and KD5BJ repeaters, and also by simplex (without repeaters). Radio operators were able to mark on the map locations with poor or non-existent cell phone communications and test radio signal strength for communication purposes. The results were excellent: where cell reception was low or missing, the radio signal was strong into the base station in Lincoln.

Due to the changes implemented after the first exercise in April, such as antennas on 20 foot masts and methods that allowed fast and easy antenna set ups, communications between mobile units were greatly improved. However, mobile to mobile communications were still not at the level of proficiency desired for reliability.

The results of this exercise will assist LeeCARES to identify strategic locations for a 40 foot or higher permanent mast with antenna. This would allow mobile emergency responders to assist during a disaster, giving them more reliable communications within the affected community. Mobile emergency responders would be able to connect their equipment to it, and be operational in minutes during a disaster, bringing solid communications between mobile units and to neighbors in a part of the County where no other communication is possible.