

Last time I was on the air with training I explored the month of September as National Preparedness Month. October, for us radio operators, could be called Emergency Communications Exercise month. About every ARES group has a Simulated Emergency Test, or SET, of their capabilities to communicate with one another and outside their county in the most redundant ways possible. Communications through HF and simplex frequencies are tested in case the repeaters do not work.

We Lee County ARES will be involved in an exercise from home trying to communicate with Williamson County without a repeater this coming Saturday Oct. 12; on October 17 we will participate in the Great Shake-Out drill simulating passing traffic in the aftermath of an Earthquake. More than Millions of people have registered all over the world, including Lee County ARES. And on November 2 we will have our own SET, spreading around the County, checking signals and giving reports.

What about non related radio preparedness for us and for those who do not hold an FFC license? Be ready for an emergency is vital, as these emergencies and disasters do not send warnings. Natural or man-made disasters show up unexpected. These are a few things to consider. Please visit Ready.gov and Airforce Be Ready at beredy.af.mil for resources.

These are a few tips:

- Stay informed: Check on the repeater with your radio, or a scanner, for announcements from your ARES group (hopefully, we will be able to give announcements on the top of the hour or however needed); be attentive to the National Weather Service for warnings through their social media, wireless emergency alerts, and/or weather alert radios.
- Make a plan: talk to your family members, neighbors, and employees before an emergency arises about how to communicate before, during and after a disaster. Discuss with your family where to meet them if phones do not work; discuss in advance shelters, and evacuation routes. With hurricanes, start a week earlier. I just learned today that some Floridians must shelter in place because they waited until this morning to make plans and fuel is not to be found.
- Make a plan: if a natural disaster hits, or a man-made one such as civil unrest or an attack launched in your neighborhood October 7 style, do you have a place to hide, do you have a way to defend yourself? At least some Israelites might be alive and not been kidnapped had they had handy methods to defend themselves. About 200 were saved at the festival by a smart Security Guard who knew a place to hide them. Don't wait for security. Find out where a hiding place might be.
- Always have shelf-stable food for two weeks per person and do not forget your pets. Calculate at least 1 gallon of water per adult per day just to drink, more to consider washing, cook, or re-hydrate food. Although FEMA recommends to have food and water for three days minimum, two weeks minimum is recommendable as electricity might not come back for that long or longer. In North Carolina I heard an operator using a generator to keep fridge cool. It will be for the long haul.

- Do you have a go-kit with meds, food, water for your family, special need family members, and medical records of your pets (are they current on their shot?). Also remember to have documents with you from insurance papers, to IDs and prescriptions.
- Do you have battery power and solar power for your radio (did you test them?), and for other appliances and tools like flashlights. Do you have First Aid Kits, whistles, dusk mask, plastic sheets, scissor, and duck-tape to shelter in place in case of biological accident or attack? The degree of exposure for people inside of buildings is reduced by a factor of two or more in the typical home and as much as 10 or more if the room or building is sealed. And we live in a County that has much traffic on wheels and rails carrying hazardous material.
- Toilettes, garbage bags and plastic ties,
- Manual can openers
- Local printed maps
- Cell phone chargers, some kind of small or larger generator and the fuel for it
- Your vehicles maintained and filled with fuel
- Baby supplies, feminine supplies, etc.

When preparing, always play the “What If” game. What if the air outside is contaminated? Get family and pets inside, seal windows and doors, stop the AC and fans, etc.

Never underestimate a flood. So far this year, floods have killed 7,763 people, affected more than 30 million people, and caused \$20.4 million of dollars in losses. These stats do not include NC and those affected by the last hurricane, Helene, nor Milton, that is predicted to make landfall in Florida as a category 5.

Other risks mentioned by Ready.gov and other websites are mass attacks caused by vehicles, active shooters, homemade bombs, or other weapons: always stay alert and look around you 360 degrees. It takes less than two seconds for a man to run 20 ft toward you and stab you. Establish your safety circle at least at 20 ft.

See something? Say something! Pay attention to any unusual behavior and listen to your gut feeling. Unusual behavior might be people who do not watch the parade, but watch the crowd, or people in the store who do not pay attention to the merchandize. Call the Law. It is best to apologize for having called an officer for nothing than apologizing to victims wounded by that strange package you noticed earlier.

Have an exit plan: Identify exits and areas to hide wherever you go, including work, school, grocery stores, and special events. If you cannot escape, where is a hard cover?

Again, when you walk or drive, keep yourself alerted. Do not watch your phone, it can wait. While driving keep your distance from the car in front and on the internal lane so that you can maneuver your vehicle out of there.

Learn lifesaving skills. You are 911 until help arrives.