

2024 Lee County ARES Year in Review
By KD5BJ

Lee County ARES has been busy and accomplished quite a lot in 2024. As time passes, we tend to forget or take things for granted. We should not, and this is the reason for 2024 in a wrap. This was a year of a lot of training, activations, exercises, and new and stronger relationships.

As usual, members have been busy in honing their skills with local, state, and out of state nets such as, but not limited to, WC-ARES net, Travis Co. ARES nets, HF ARES and RACES nets, Winlink nets, Gulf Coast Hurricane nets, Louisiana, Mississippi and Northern Florida nets. One station, KC5DJT, has faithfully participated in the ARCHES (Amateur Radio Communication Hospital Emergency Service) program by testing monthly the equipment at the North Dell's Children Hospital.

Lee County ARES members participated in several in person and Zoom meetings with other ARES groups and with RACES. We also hosted two meetings to learn about EMP after County Judge charged us to explore possible solutions.

Members have expanded their knowledge in digital methods of communications. We thank WB5YYQ for exploring, learning, and sharing about the DSTAR system (Digital Smart Technology for Amateur Radio) and Radio at low power (QRP). He also activated POTA and tested technology new to us.

KD5DJT and KF5SSW have been busy also in expend their education obtaining certificates in Cybersecurity. KC5DJT has also obtained FEMA 300, FEMA 400, COML. Yours truly has obtained certificates in two bioterrorism classes, renewed CPR and AED license, and attended the S-203 Public Information to Incident. I also represented Lee County ARES as AUXC in the AUXC in the State of Texas Communication Exercise (COMMEX) at the Dept. of Public Safety in Florence sponsored by CISA. We have established a relationship with the Texas Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) who was Incident Commander of the exercise.

All members participated in our own net as NCs, BNCs, and/or training stations. Special thanks to each and all of them and to KI5LNM for her phenomenal weather-related trainings. We are enthusiastic that the number of visitors has picked up on our nets. Thank You and Welcome each and all of you! You are what makes us all and Lee County stronger!

W5TRL, KI5UAJ, KF5SSW, KC5DJT participated to Bastrop CERT meetings and training including, but not limited to, Search and Rescue, Shelter preparation, HAZMAT, prescribed burning, mental illness after reporting from a disaster, among others.

W5TRL helped Bastrop County IT to start an RMS station and radio portable radio go-kit. W5TRL and his Tower Crew, KI5ABB and KI5MA, helped to inspect and dismantle a few Rohn towers to be repurposed for ARES use. We also moved a donated trailer under the care and control of

KI5ABB so he can better cover our eastern counties, besides using it for hi radio activities and experiments.

KI5QHC has upgraded the trailer and worked in upgrading the backup solar power at the 147.24 site. He started our Face Book page and worked on solving login problems with Windows 11. We are also very thankful to NA5RT for donating, among the rest, a repeater for the trailer, which KI5QHC is installing with the newly bought duplexer. The repeater will be tested for the first time in the upcoming WFD on the Lee County Fair Grounds at the end of the month.

We had interface with the public by making a presentation to the Noon Lions Club who requested an update on our activities, and a special presentation on radios and ARES and RACES objectives and capabilities to a family in rural Lee County that wanted to know more about their possible role in ham radio and emergency communications.

We served in two community events, Blue VFD Springfest and Cars and Coffee where we were able to inform and educate the public. We were honored to receive a donation of HTs from Blue VFD and to be able to help them program their radios thanks to the leadership of WB5YYQ.

We were also able to have our own Internet at the Sheriff's Office, thanks to a generous donation of Zochnet. And as a consequences, we were able to successfully remotely control the radios.

We also initiated a dialogue with the County about interoperability.

We are proud to be helping Grimes Co ARES, just newly established, in their EmComm trailer needs and MOUs with their own County. Grimes Co ARES together with Robertson County ARES and the ARES D7 and D5 ECs came to Lee County to meet us and see our assets.

We participated in exercises with the Emergency Training Operation, RACES winlink exercises, The Great Shakeout and the WC-ARES Simulated Emergency Test (SET) in which we were able to connect successfully on different frequencies and modes with the WILCO EOC.

We realized during that exercise, however, that we could not tune our current antenna on the higher part of the 80m band, prompting W5TRL to look for and finding another NVIS HF antennas safe for the Sheriff's Department that we will buy when donations of grant money comes in. By the way we are a tax exempt 501 (c) 3.

We organized our own first County-Wide SET starting a relationship with each VFD in the County, using for the first time injects to simulate possible real events.

Lee County ARES extended its reach to Giddings Police Department. WB5YYQ has started a relationship with the Chief and the GPD dispatch.

Because of Winter Field Day, that we treat as a multi-County ARES exercise, we are also establishing a relationship with the Giddings VFD.

And from Exercise to almost deployments. We were called to service when on February 22 cell services went down nation-wide. We were activated, but fortunately the problem was solved and our service was not needed. Our thanks to W5TRL for leading the effort in my absence and with KI5ABB, and KI5MA for being available fill potential day and night shifts.

KI5QHC and KD5BJ provided assistance to WC-ARES and the WILCO EOC for the eclipse.

Rudy KI5UAJ, our own Safety Officer, was almost deployed to Houston in the wake of Hurricane Beryl. Even though at the last moment Harris Co. ARES stood down their operations, he had much to share with us in the preparing that goes with a deployment.

We have also fired up a few SKYWARN Nets and contributed information to the NWS and our local County Emergency Coordinator. We were ecstatic for the increasing participation on these nets of other radio operators in the County and nearby.

Last but not least, we are grateful to WD5EGD and KI5JXO for being responsible to link the Bastrop system (a three-repeater system in Bastrop, Flag Hill, and Elgin) via RF to our NE5DX 147.22 repeater. This has enlarged our area of coverage and once the bugs are overcome, we are hopeful to link the WC-ARES repeater in Georgetown as well.

In total the hours are as follow below.

Thank you Lee County ARES members for your service and visitors for your support during 2024 making it a special year! We are looking forward for an exciting 2025.

Month	net part.	Exercises	Training	Public Serv	Community	SKYWARN	Meetings	Miscellaneous	Total	
January	34	11	46	63.5	0	0	14	13	147.5	
February	33	0	190.2	43.75	3	8.15	17.15	13.75	276	
March	34	2	91.65	84.5	4	0	38	29.5	249.65	
April	44	0	105	79	15	13.75	25	14.25	252	
May	37	3	82.51	32	0	0	15.5	9	142.01	
June	30	0	90.41	40	0	1	17.5	5.75	154.66	
July	18	0	87	51.75	0	0	10	12	160.75	
August	33	0	71	56.65	0	0	14	50.5	192.15	
September	48	0	125.5	55.5	0	0	18	35	234	
October	43	53.5	111.5	66.25	30	0	38.5	48	347.75	
November	45	85.5	113	24.5	0	0	58.5	50.5	332	
December	53	0	108.75	26.75	0	7	42	20.5	205	
Total	452	155	1222.52	624.15	52	29.9	308.15	301.75	2693.47	
		539.5	1077	936	145	24.25	233.4	163	3123.8	2024