2006 S.E.T. EC’s Report for Towns Co. GA.

ARRL Section: GEORGIA ARES  
Area of Jurisdiction: NE District, Towns Co., GA  
DEC's or EC's Call sign: W4VFZ  
E-mail address: manmtn@brmemc.net  
Date of local SET: 10-14-06

### Computation of score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computation</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Number of amateurs who participated in the test</td>
<td>6 X 2 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Number of new amateurs (licensed on or after January 1, 2002) participating</td>
<td>4 X 3 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Number of formal 3rd party written traffic messages originated or delivered during the SET on behalf of served agencies</td>
<td>0 X 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Were TACTICAL communications conducted on behalf of served agencies? (1 hour or more, score 20 points; 1/2 hour to 1 hour, score 10; less than 1/2 hour, score 5.)</td>
<td>yes N/A 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Number of stations on emergency power during the test</td>
<td>5 X 2 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Number of emergency-powered repeaters used during the test</td>
<td>0 X 10 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Is dual membership in ARES and RACES actively encouraged? If YES, score 10 points.</td>
<td>yes 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Was liaison maintained during the SET with an NTS section or local net? If YES, score 10 points.</td>
<td>no 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Were digital modes utilized at any time during the exercise? If YES, score 10 points</td>
<td>no 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Number of different agencies for which communications were handled</td>
<td>3 X 5 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Number of communities in which agencies were contacted. (If none, score MINUS 10)</td>
<td>2 X 10 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L Was a press release submitted? If YES, score 10 points, attach copy.</td>
<td>yes 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF POINTS</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deadline for reporting is January 31, 2007.  
Mail to: ARRL HQ, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111 USA  
CC: ARRL HQ, SEC/DEC

Following are the EC’s Report, Reports from several of the ham operators, a scan of the published article preceding the event, and the EC’s summary.
EC’s REPORT:

Prior to the Simulated Emergency Test (S.E.T.), a newspaper article (scanned copy of the one published in the Towns Sentinel is attached) was supplied to both local newspapers (only one printed the article), and a planning meeting was held among local officials including the following (an asterisk, *, indicates those who attended the meeting or sent their representatives, others did not appear at the meeting):

Amateur Radio EC *
EMC Director *
Mayor *
City Police*
Sheriff
Public Health
Water Department*
Fire Chief (both Hiawassee & Young Harris)
Ambulance Service * (Same as EMC)
Red Cross
WNGM Radio
Wolf Broadcasting
Towns News

It was determined at the meeting that a good scenario would be to simulate poisoning of our water system. Hiawassee (and much of the county) is on the same water system that draws its water from Lake Chatuge. Young Harris is on a separate, well system. Risks discussed were: any terrorist group could easily dump a viral material in the lake that might pass undestroyed through the water filtration plant and cause death or serious illness to many people in the city and county.

Currently, locks are being placed on all fire hydrants and fences put up around the storage tanks (which have venerable air vents at their tops).

“Water Buffalo” (water tankers) are available in an emergency to transport water into this area, but they are housed in a remote location, and authorities did not deem this drill worth the expense of using them. Water is also available from a bottled water plant in nearby Blairsville.

It was decided that in all public information to be released in advance of, during, or after the drill would only refer to it as “a water shortage problem drill”, rather than “a toxic substance has been injected into the water supply”, for fear that there would be some who would not realize this was a test only, and a resulting panic rumor might start. It might also give the wrong people an idea!

The Red Cross was notified of our plans, and did participate in the event, which occurred on the following schedule:

9:00 A.M. The drill starts when a Red Cross volunteer, Mrs. Stonebreaker, pretended to be a victim of unknown distress and called 911. She was transported by ambulance to the local
hospital. In accord with advance planning, 911 then notified EMS that 12 victims had been transported to the hospital with the same symptoms (E. Coli), and the source had been identified as a toxic substance in the water supply.

Rickey Mathis, Director of the EMS (Emergency Management Service) then gave the EC (W4VFZ) a call at his home and advised that an emergency condition existed in the county. The EC then called participating Amateur Radio operators by phone and told them to monitor our local NET repeater, N4WCO, for emergency instructions. He contacted Ham operator Chris Evans and Red Cross volunteer Ironta Higgins and requested them to report to and act as liaison at the hospital.

The EC dispatched the other operators as follows:

Gigi Smith (KI4OYJ) and Kathryn Stewart (KA4TEO) to man the fixed station at the Red Cross headquarters in Young Harris.

Doug DeLorme (KI4NRY) to go to the Red Cross headquarters, pick up bottled water, then set up a water distribution station in the Ingles (grocery store) parking lot of Young Harris.

Rickey Mathis (EMS Director) to requested a police officer at the Ingles water station (one patrol car was present).

Bob Bonnett (KI4NRZ) was dispatched to man the ham 2 meter station at the EMS station.

All stations were 2 meter and requested to report in to the EC when they reached their assigned posts.

Once all stations had reported in, the EC went mobile and continued contact via the Repeater until he reached the water station at Ingles.

The EC contacted the hospital and was advised that they had a total of “12 simulated victims and the situation was under control”.

The EC advised the hospital staff to stand down, and once Doug reported in with the bottled water at Ingles, the EC advised all stations to stand down, and meet at the Ingles parking lot for a critique of the drill, and for KI4NRZ to advise the EMS director, Rickey Mathis, that the drill was complete and his crew could stand down.

The EC returned the repeater to normal operation.

The following are attached reports by various operators, with the EC’s comments in red.

In general, this was the first S.E.T. performed by joint efforts of the EMS, hospital, police, Red Cross, and Ham radio operators in Town’s County, GA., and was basically a success.
Deficiencies are noted in the various reports, but primarily (from a ham radio issue standpoint) they include: better planning of who goes where and does what, more power needed for mobile rigs, easier access to the Red Cross station (KI4ENN), and a method to alert all NET members.

A study is in progress to equip all NET hams who would participate in such a drill (or the “real” thing) with an inexpensive 2 meter receiver, fixed on N4WCO’s repeater frequency. It would remain on (receiving 24/7, with battery back-up) and would sound a short alarm, followed by the setting of one of three different colored lights, and a periodically repeating alarm, should it receive a pre-determined coded signal from the repeater. There would be three possibly alerts: (1) immediately turn your station on to the Repeater, (2) tune in to the repeater at a specific, pre-arranged time for traffic or information, and (3) call the EC by land-line for more information.

Since being able to notify all responders in the event of a real emergency is imperative, such a system would be inexpensive and replace costly “beepers”.

Submitted by Alton Higgins, EC for Towns Co., GA.

The following are reports filed by participants:

Volunteer report by: Bob Bonnett, Bob is Amateur Radio Operator, KI4NRZ. Bob is a Red Cross member.

Report:

Towns County Radio Test Report by Bob Bonnett, KI4NRZ

A call was received at approx. 10:10 AM that a problem at the water plant in Hiawassee had occurred, I went to my assigned post which was the Emerg. Center and I arrived at approx. 10:20 and turned on the transceiver and called net control that I was on site, during this time other sites called in, the hospital was very weak and sometimes could not be heard, I believe that a 35 watt brick would improve signal strength, also the call in at the school (Young Harris Red Cross Headquarters) was also weak but I think that the person was not holding the mike close. At about 10:45 I was told to secure the site and go home.

Volunteer report by: Rita & Howard Doug DeLorme. Doug is Amateur Radio Operator, KI4NRY. Doug and his wife, Rita, are both Red Cross members.

Report:

(1) 10/14/2006, 09:10 AM. Received Ham Radio Simulated Water Shortage Emergency call from Alton Higgins, W4VFZ (Towns Co. ARES & RACES EC) on 146.865 mHz (N4WCO Repeater).
(2) Was advised to proceed to Red Cross Office (in Young Harris, GA.) and pick up needed water, then proceed to Ingles (grocery store) parking lot and set up Water Disbursing Station.
(3) 09:12 A.M. Made Land Line phone call to Mike Ackland, advising him to meet Rita and me at Red Cross Office to assist in Simulated Water Shortage.
(4) Loaded Ham Radio equipment, Red Cross gear, and Rita in my truck. Left my home at 09:20 A.M., arrived at Red Cross office at 09:25 A.M. Mike
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arrived at 09:20 A.M., but office was locked. Could not get water or First Responder Kit. Tried repeatedly to raise Alton (W4VFZ) on HT radio (via Repeater), could not. Need better antenna for mobile operations. (NOTE from W4VFZ: If Doug could have gotten inside the Red Cross office, he could have used the more powerful radio there, KI4ENN, with a tower antenna.) Need a way for volunteers to have keys or gain access to office in emergency.)

(5) Decision made to set up station at Ingles Parking, then Mike would bring water when Gigi Smith and Kathryn Stewart arrived and opened Red Cross office in Young Harris. (NOTE from W4VFZ: Gigi has keys to the office).

(6) 09:35 A.M. Started to Ingles. Stopped at highway 76 and 69 intersection, raised Alton (W4VFZ), advising him we were proceeding to Ingles to set up Water Dispersing Station.

(7) 09:45 A.M. Set up Water Disbursing Station at Ingles parking lot.

(8) 09:52 A.M. Mike Ackland arrived with water.

(9) 09:52 A.M. Called Alton (W4VFZ) on ham radio, advising him water has arrive and Station is manned by Doug & Rita DeLorme, Mike Ackland, and Anne Caron.

(10) 09:54 A.M. Volunteers Jack & Dorthy Stonebreaker, and Kathy Barker arrived at Water Station.

(11) 10:10 A.M. Alton (W4VFZ) calls on ham radio, advising to Stand Down. Advised all present to Stand Down.

Comments:

Only Coordination of Response I was aware of was 911, EMS, and Sheriff making the rounds. Need better Antennas for mobile operation. (NOTE from W4VFZ: I have recommend that all our operators obtain rooftop, magnetic mount 5/8 λ antennas so their typically 5 to 7 watt Hand-Held Transceivers can raise the local repeaters. This would replace the “Rubber Duckie” normally found on these radios.)

Need base at Red Cross Office and EMS to be manned first, to relay messages & info. First Responders Kit is required to accompany Red Cross People to disaster areas. (NOTE from W4VFZ: An emergency communications kit is being prepared, and will contain a 2 meter HT, plus a pair of Citizen Band Radios, rechargeable flashlight, first aid materials, water, snacks, etc. It will be located at the EMS station which is always manned and open in Hiawassee).

In case of a real emergency, we still don’t know who will be required to do what. Meaning, someone possibly hampering someone else’s efforts.

Had excellent response to all called & cooperation. Found equipment results.

Responders:

Mike Ackland *
Anne Caron *
Jack Stonebreaker *
Dorthy Stonebreaker *
Kathy Barker
Rita Delorme *
Doug Delorme, KI4NRY *
Irona Higgins *
Alton Higgins, W4VFZ, EC *
Christopher Evans, KI4FUJ *
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Bob Bonnett, KI4NRZ *
Gigi Smith, KI4OYJ *
Kathryn Stewart, KA4TEO

* Denotes Red Cross members.

Volunteer report by: Gigi Smith, Gigi is Amateur Radio Operator, KI4OYJ. Gigi is a Red Cross member.

Report:

Receiver phone call from Net Control (W4VFZ) at 9 AM to turn my radio on for instructions. Of course, I could not transmit back to Net Control (NOTE from W4VFZ: Gigi has antenna and transmitting power problems which are being addressed) so I called Katherine Stewart to answer for me. I heard him (W4VFZ) give instruction to Katherine for us to go to the Red Cross Headquarters (in Young Harris) and run the ham radio there. I called Katherine (and told her that) I was on my way to pick her up. I left at 9:12 A.M. and got to her house in 8 minutes, then arrived at the Red Cross Headquarters at 9:35 A.M. It took me 23 minutes to make this run. On the way over we could hear Al (W4VFZ) trying to raise Doug (KI4NRY). He had left (Red Cross) headquarters by the time we got there for higher ground (NOTE from W4VFZ: and the higher power Red Cross radio with tower mounted antenna) to respond to Al (W4VFZ). The person with the water buffalo was there also. He loaded up the water and left for Ingles. (NOTE from W4VFZ: The Water Buffalo was unavailable as it is stored some distance from Hiwassee. We need such a water transport system closer at hand. The water transported was packages of bottled water.) We heard Bob (KI4NRZ), Christopher (KI4FUJ) and Doug (KI4NRY) talking to Al (W4VFZ). Net Control (W4VFZ) went from the base station at his home to the truck (Ingles) with his mobile rig. He called us back at 10:00 A.M. and said the drill was over. We all met at Ingles and discussed the exercise. (NOTE from W4VFZ: There is a time discrepancy error here.)

Improvements:

1. Chris (KI4FUJ) needs something done to improve his volume at the hospital. (NOTE from W4VFZ: Chris is VERY soft spoken and did not get close enough to his radio microphone. I’ve addressed this problem with him.)

2. Doug (KI4NRY) needs to be on higher ground to transmit at Red Cross Headquarters. (NOTE from W4VFZ: Doug was using his HT with only a “Rubber Duckie” antenna. Had he access to the Headquarters station, he would have had no trouble in communicating through the repeater, N4WCO.)

3. Gigi needs to get the trench digger and bury the coax in PVC to keep the dogs and bear off the coax so as to transmit from home. (NOTE from W4VFZ: Inspection of the coax revealed no damage, however, plans are to indeed bury it in PVC. It has been recommended that Gigi needs to obtain an amplifier for her HT for use at home.)

4. For the most part, I think this drill went really well.
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Jack D. Stonebraker, 03:00 PM 10/16/06, Red Cross Emergency Simulation Exercise 10-14-06

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To: Alton Higgins
From: Jack and Dee Stonebraker
Re: 911 call and response
Date: October 16, 2006

911 Call

1. A call was made to Towns County 911 at 9:00 AM on Saturday, October 14, 2006
2. The caller designated opened the call with a statement that "This call is a simulated test of the Towns County Emergency Response Team."

The 911 operator asked the following questions:
   a. For a confirmation of the address since we had purposely called on our cell phone to determine whether the 911 operator was able to determine our address with their current system.
   b. The operator confirmed our names and address which appeared on her screen.
   c. Asked the caller to describe the symptoms of the "patient".
   d. Asked for directions to the house.
   e. Reconfirmed that the call was a simulated test
3. The ambulance arrived at 9:09 AM with two EMT personnel, Ray Giles and Terry Parker
4. The stretcher was deployed from the ambulance and taken to the room where the patient was located.
5. The EMC's
   a. Took the patient’s vital signs (blood pressure and pulse)
   b. Asked the following questions
      1. Name and age of the patient.
      2. The name of the patient's doctor
      3. Presence of any underlying medical conditions
      4. When the symptoms had started
      5. What the patient had eaten in the last 24 hours
6. The patient was taken to the ambulance via stretcher
7. The ambulance left the residence of the victim at 9:23 AM
8. In route to the hospital the cardiac monitor was applied; oxygen mask and emesis bag were made available.
9. The ambulance arrived at Chatuge Regional Hospital at 9:32 AM
10. Patient was taken via stretcher to the holding area in the hospital where Christopher Evans and Mrs. Higgins had established a ham base.

Possible improvements that could be made:

1. Installation of a 911 system that can locate cell phone callers.

Below are the pictures we took during this simulation.

Ray Giles, Terry Parker.
Transporting the patient, Ray Giles, Terry Parker.
Terry Parker taking

Printed for Alton Higgins <manmtn@hrmemc.net> 10/28/06

(Continued)
The article on the next page was submitted to the two local newspapers, but published only by the Towns Sentinel.
Are you set for S.E.T.?

By ALTON HIGGINS, W4VFZ
Amateur Radio Emergency Coordinator for Towns County

Each year at this time, the various emergency, law enforcement, and public health agencies in the county and throughout the nation, in conjunction with radio amateur operators, conduct a drill to determine how well they would all function together in the event of either an emergency or a disaster. This year, the event will occur on Saturday, October 14, from 9 a.m. until around Noon.

Emergencies come in two categories: (1) natural, and (2) man-made. During some natural emergencies, such as a hurricane (remember Katrina?) as well as some man-made emergencies (a terrorist act), vital communications between these agencies could be disrupted. Much needed blood plasma, for example, could not be readily obtained if the phone lines were down. During a terrorist threat, the government has the capability of shutting down the cell phone towers (to prevent terrorist communications), making all cell phone operation impossible.

This is where Amateur Radio Operators come into play. Although primarily a hobby, Amateur Radio operators can send and receive emergency messages to anywhere in the world, particularly if the radio station is equipped with emergency power. Here in Towns County, we have a network of such Radio Amateurs, who meet on the air regularly to practice their message handling skills. Such a meeting is called a “net,” and all members check in and pass any messages they may have along to the next “ham” (nickname for Radio Amateur) down the line. Our local net meets every Sunday at 5 p.m. local time, on a frequency of 146.865 MHz. Members that check in then get credit on our state-wide net at 6 p.m. on 3.975 MHz, on the ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) net.

During an emergency, these Radio Amateurs often provide communications between disaster or emergency areas and emergency responders such as the police, fire,

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and ambulance services, should there be no telephone service available at the emergency site or the normal radios of these services be blocked by mountains, etc.

The “Hams” pay for all their own equipment (which can range from under $100 to over $10,000), and are not allowed to accept payment for their services—it is all strictly volunteer work. Most ham’s equipment includes some sort of backup or emergency power, such as large battery packs or generators. When the telephones fail, the hams get through!

We’ve added a permanent antenna to the hospital, and it will be manned by our youngest ham, 14 year old Christopher Evans, whose “call” letters are K14FUJ.

So, if on Saturday morning, October 14th, you see a bunch of activity among the local police, fire, and ambulance services, it’s just part of the drill, so we’ll be ready for the real thing if it should happen.
Summary:

The first objective of our Towns County ARES/RACES net is to get all three fixed stations completed for 2 meter operation, to include antenna/ground switches, and emergency power supplies. The only remaining work toward this goal is the installation of the 2 meter station at Fire Station # 5 (equipment is on hand), and the installation of grounding systems and antenna switches at the EMS station and Fire Station # 5.

Next is the completion of all 2 meter documentation (manuals, operating privileges and frequencies, emergency procedures, etc.) for each of the three fixed station. Much of this has already been accomplished.

Continue with our monthly technical club/class sessions, designed to advance our Technician licensee’s technical knowledge above that required to pass the license exam.

Engage in construction projects which will aid in the above task.

Install HF stations and antennas at the Young Harris (KI4ENN) and EMS station. Donated Transceivers are already on hand, power supplies and emergency power are yet to be built or purchased.

Assist present Technician licensees in obtaining their General License (two have already passed their written exam).

Continue to publicize Amateur Radio both as a hobby and an emergency service in Towns Co., GA.

Submitted by:
Alton Higgins, W4VFZ
EC for GA ARES and RACES for Towns Co., GA.