

2007 Maine State SET Exercise
Saturday October 20, 2007
“Maine Burns”

1. Purpose:

This Simulated Emergency Test will:

1. Test the readiness of Maine ARES to handle emergency communications in support of wildfire operations by the U.S. and Maine Forest Services throughout the state.
2. Test the readiness of Maine ARES to handle communications in support of the American Red Cross for evacuation shelters within the affected counties.
3. Test the ability of Maine ARES to integrate ARES leaders and members into the ICS structure for assistance with communications in the statewide incident.
4. Test the ability of Emergency Coordinators in Maine to solicit mutual aid from surrounding counties during operations in their respective counties.
5. Test the ability of counties not affected by the wildfires to supply human resources and equipment in support of counties affected by the wildfires.

2. Exercise Date:

Saturday, October 20, 2007, 0800 to 1100 Local Time.

3. Goals:

1. Test the strengths and weaknesses of Maine ARES communications system under a statewide wildfire threat.
2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of Maine ARES in such a scenario.
3. Find solutions to any weaknesses identified.

4. Objectives:

- a. Maximize participation by ARES communicators.
- b. Activate all 16 local county nets and assign a liaison station to their respective district nets.
- c. Activate and identify district nets, coordinate county nets in their district and assign liaison stations to the state nets.
- d. Activate ARES HF net and coordinate the district nets.
- e. Activate the Maine Emergency Communications Net and move traffic to and from the NTS.
- f. Solicit mutual aid from surrounding counties from those affected counties.
- g. Counties unaffected by the wildfires provide mutual aid to counties in need.
- h. Operate as many stations as possible on emergency power.
- i. Use as many modes as possible, including but not limited to: HF Phone, HF digital, VHF phone, VHF packet, UHF, APRS, Echolink, etc.
- j. Encourage served agencies such as Red Cross and emergency government agencies to participate by passing message traffic.
- k. Activate as many Emergency Operations Center (EOC) stations as possible.
- l. Encourage media coverage of the exercise by sending press releases to local print and broadcast outlets.

5. Exercise Scenario:

Due to a long, rainless period and a series of severe weather fronts passing through the state, several wildfires have started and are expanding in area. Currently, high winds are adding to the fires spreading. The fires are located in the following counties: Kennebec (1 fire), Androscoggin (1 fire), Penobscot (2 fires), Piscataquis (1 fire), Washington (2 fires) and Cumberland/York (1 fire). In each of the counties, the fires are being fought under the direction of the Maine Forest Service. The U.S. Forest Service is assisting with firefighters and equipment. The Maine Forest Service is also being assisted by local fire departments (where available). In most areas, mandatory evacuations of residents have been ordered as most of the fires are still burning out of control. The Red Cross has been asked to set up evacuation shelters for residents of affected areas. County EMAs have set up EOCs in the affected counties. MEMA has activated a small EOC to handle requests for assistance for resources not available through participating agencies and to keep the Governor informed as to the progress of the wildfire suppression.

Maine ARES has been asked to provide communications teams to provide communications for logistics support for the firefighting efforts of the Maine Forest Service. County EMAs in the affected counties have asked for ARES communications teams to aid with communications in their EOCs. The Red Cross has requested ARES communications teams to assist with communications for the evacuation shelters in the affected areas.

In the affected counties with multiple fires, there are the following requirements for ARES communications teams: 24 hour coverage for the EMA EOC in the county, 24 hour coverage for the ICP in each county, 24 hour coverage for 2 Bases 2 Camps in the county and 24 hour coverage for 2 Red Cross evacuation shelters. This will add up to between 16 and 24 ARES communicators needed in each affected county. In the affected counties with a single fire there are the following requirements for ARES communications teams: 24 hour coverage for the EMA EOC in the county, 24 hour coverage for the ICP in each county, 24 hour coverage for 1 Base 1 Camp in the county and 24 hour coverage for 1 Red Cross evacuation shelters. This will add up to between 10 and 15 ARES communicators needed in each affected county.

It is obvious that the affected counties will not be able to staff all of their requirements with the ARES members that they have. Mutual aid will be required from surrounding counties and beyond that are not affected by the fires.

The National Weather Service is reporting that the general weather conditions of windy and dry weather are expected to continue for the next three days. NWS expects that a low pressure system with soaking rain and diminished winds to stall over Maine in about 72 hours.

6. General Instructions for the Maine State SET Exercise

Timeline:

0800 – Maine Emergency Communications Net is activated on 3940 kHz and takes check-ins ARES ECs and DEC's (or their designated representatives) will check into the Maine Emergency Communications Net.

ARES DEC's and EC's notify ARES members of activation of ARES statewide and will advise members to report to staging areas for assignments (in the affected counties) and for ARES members in unaffected counties to standby for possible deployment to the affected counties for mutual aid. Local nets will be established as per county and district plans.

ECs in the affected counties that find themselves understaffed will evaluate their human resource shortfalls and request mutual aid from surrounding counties that are unaffected.

ECs in the unaffected counties will evaluate the number of ARES members they have that can deploy to the affected counties for mutual aid.

0900 – Initial situation report will be made to the SEC via the Maine Emergency Communications net (on either 3940 kHz or 7262 kHz, depending on conditions). In the affected counties, ARES members will arrive at staging areas for deployment and will deploy to their assigned locations.

1000 – Interim situation report will be sent to the SEC via the Maine Emergency Communications net (on either 3940 kHz or 7262 kHz, depending on conditions). County and District ARES members will report their deployed locations and situation to DEC's and EC's.

1100 – Final situation report will be sent to the SEC via the Maine Emergency Communications net (on either 3940 kHz or 7262 kHz, depending on conditions) Maine Emergency Communications Net will secure and all local nets may secure. The 2007 Maine State SET is completed. DEC's and EC's will complete the 2007 ARRL SET Report and forward to the ARRL and SEC (on or before 11/30/07) along with any comments regarding the 2007 Maine State SET Exercise.

Comments:

Situation reports should be made by all DEC's and EC's hourly to the SEC from 0800 through 1100 (on the hour). EC's should also forward their report to their respective DEC, if applicable. The report should be sent in ARRL radiogram format with the following text format:

1. Time of Report
2. ARES members contacted (number, not call sign or name) (DEC's: EC's contacted)
3. ARES members participating (number, not call sign or name) (DEC's: Counties participating)
4. Agencies Served (by name)
5. Locations deployed (by number, not actual location)
6. Human resource shortfalls (by number) (for affected counties)
7. Mutual aid requests made (by county and number) (for affected counties)
8. Mutual aid requests filled (by county and number) (for unaffected counties)

Other traffic, such as messages from served agencies, requests for information, supplies, etc. should be sent throughout the SET to the SEC who will be simulating his position at MEMA. Remember, messages to MEMA should be those from agencies that have exhausted their ability to obtain supplies locally or through the served agency.

Messages sent to and from the U.S. or Maine Forest Services should be sent via the ICS-213 Form. Written traffic sent within ARES should be in ARRL Radiogram format. Messages within the Red Cross should be per American Red Cross directives.

Use the number of written messages sent and received for point scoring for messages. All traffic for the 2007 Maine State SET Exercise (County, District or Section) should always contain “**Test Exercise**” at the beginning and end of all messages (no matter if written or tactical (verbal)). **One never knows who is listening.**

For the affected counties requesting mutual aid, use whatever means necessary to contact EC's in surrounding counties – Maine HF Emergency Communications Net, repeaters, telephone, etc.

For those unaffected counties that are providing mutual aid, ARES members need not deploy, but if ARES members can, all the better.

This is an ARES exercise. We are testing a small part of our overall plans (notification, staging, mutual aid and deployment). Many of our served agencies may not wish to participate due to potential overtime payments on a weekend. Invite them to participate, but if they are unable to participate, simulate them (as, overall, we are not anticipating any served agency message traffic). Try to set up an EOC at a simulated location. ARES members should actually deploy to their assigned location to send their report back to the EC (have them, if possible, turn out to the staging area with their “ready kits”). This is **not** a “no notice exercise”. Talk it up at meetings and on nets. Remember, if you wish to make this a “no notice” exercise, then you will be testing how many ARES members will be able to turn out on a typical Saturday in October with no anticipation of a disaster (usually a disaster in itself). Most natural disasters give us some prior notification (remember the Ice Storm of 1998 had predicted heavy icing 3 days before it hit). In our scenario, we are expecting to support the logistics requests of the firefighting efforts and requests for support of the evacuation shelters established by the Red Cross. It is expected that most repeaters will be functioning, although those in the affected area may be down due to the fires.

As ECs and DEC, don't try to do everything yourself. As this is **not** planned as a “no notice” exercise, plan to have help from your AECs and other ARES members. Line up those HF Liaison Stations and VHF Net Control Stations in advance. Have someone planned to be the ARES Staging Area Manager in advance (for assignments). Play the exercise out realistically. Plan out your deployments (for your anticipated served agencies) and staff them realistically based on the number of participants you get. It's a good way to identify potential staffing problems if the “real thing” occurs.

The 2006 Maine State SET Report may be downloaded from the Maine ARES web site (<http://www.maineares.org/>) and click on the “Downloads” page. Count the served agencies you would potentially serve (even if they cannot participate – simulate).

Use that count and the names on the 2006 Maine State SET Report. Be honest!

Interview your served agencies in advance. If they are unable to participate, ask them how many locations they might anticipate having to staff with communicators if this were an actual event. Do your planning from there. Again, be honest with how many ARES members you have and how many locations you might be asked to staff.

This Maine State SET Exercise, is an exercise in developing a response to an incident and provide the necessary support and information to save lives and provide communication. It's a learning experience for all participants to see where we may have holes in our plans. Review your plans in advance and see if you have any anticipated holes in the plans before the exercise and fix them. Be honest in evaluating the SET and how your county or district did. Again, this is to evaluate a portion of our plans (notification, staging and deployment of ARES resources).

Some counties and districts may have already had an exercise like this to test the very same plans.

Remember, this is a statewide exercise and some other counties or districts may not have tested these portions of their plans. Different counties and districts have different levels of readiness and exercises. If you don't know who your ARES leadership officials are, look them up on the Maine ARES web site (<http://www.maineares.org/>) and click on the “Contacts” page. It's up to each DEC and EC to make the 2006 Maine State SET Exercise as realistic as possible.

Simulate what you need to. Be creative! Throw some “wrenches in the machinery” if you wish. Make it as basic or extensive as you wish. Have fun!

If there are any questions regarding the above 2007 Maine State SET Exercise, please feel free to contact Bryce K1GAX (k1gax@juno.com)