

Sarasota Tactical Search & Rescue Drill - March 14, 2006

Sarasota County held its annual Tactical Search & Rescue Drill, on March 14th, 2006. Members from the Sarasota County Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), handled the communications duties for this drill.

The main operating location, was from our Communications Trailer located at the drill site Command Post located in the extreme south-east corner of the County, in North Port. In addition to the Command Post, Amateurs covered the local Red Cross headquarters, and six Task Forces that were staged at various locations throughout the county ... three in the northern part of the county, and three in the south.

Part of the communications objective set by the drill planners, was to establish communications from the Command Post to Red Cross HQ. Using this link, the Command Post directed the Red Cross to dispatch the northern county teams, while the south county teams were dispatched directly from the Command Post.

While this wouldn't be the normal method used to dispatch and communicate with the teams, it did meet the objective set for us by the drill planners, and allowed us to test our relay capabilities, using multiple dispatch points.

Before the teams deployed, they were given a specific latitude and longitude, to which they had to travel. Once they arrived at that location, they would report back a number that was painted on the street (each team was sent to a different location). From here, they were then sent to the drill location, where they would perform various tasks. These tasks included, downed power lines, trees blocking the roadway, a collapsed building, vehicle accident and hazmat spill, explosive device, and lost/deceased person K9 search. Various members of each team, would perform their specific tasks. Information and specific requests for assistance would be radioed in by the Amateurs on each team to the Command Post, and from there, the information would be relayed to the "Incident Commander" using an FRS radio.

There were some minor radio glitches, including the loss of an 800 MHz radio in our Communications Trailer right at the start, but using backups or spares, communications between the teams and all participants was never lost.

We used the Sarasota Emergency Radio Club's 145.130 MHz repeater for communications between the Command Post and the Red Cross. (We also tested, and had available a Red Cross UHF repeater for this link.) The club's 146.730 MHz repeater was used by the Red Cross to dispatch the north county teams, while the North Port Amateur Radio Club's 147.120 MHz repeater was used to dispatch the south county teams. 146.580 MHz simplex was used for communications between the Command Post and the teams at the drill site, while FRS and 800 MHz direct were used for communications between team members.

After completing their tasks, each team turned in their ICS paperwork, had a debriefing, and then took a break for lunch.

The following ACS members participated in this drill:

Rich Ballou, K3MQH - Red Cross HQ
Burt Corbus, KC4FVC - Red Cross HQ
Bob Davisson, KA4BOB - Task Force #1 and Command Post
Joe Thiel, WA1VNP - Task Force #2
Bob Thornton, K9SRQ - Task Force #3
Eddie Palmer, K4JP - Task Force #4
Charlie Larson, KD4FZ - Task Force #5
Karl Goudy, K1ARL - Task Force #6
Mike Zimmermann, KI4KTP - Red Cross functions at Drill site
Ron Wetjen, WD4AHZ - Command Post

Ron, WD4AHZ
EC, Sarasota County