



Trial Monthly Packet Message Passing Exercise Review

Period: 12/15/2021 09:00 to 12/22/2021 ~~17:00~~ 18:45



Santa Clara County ARES®/RACES/ACS

Last Updated: 22 December 2021

Author: Mark Laubach, K6FJC

ARES and Amateur Radio Emergency Service are registered service marks of the American Radio Relay League Incorporated and are used by permission.

Simulated Shelters and Messages Passed

Number counts from the simulated EOC ICS-309:

Shelters assigned (people signed up):	34
Shelters participating:	33
Messages sent *:	503
Form MuniStat	22 **
Form SheltStat	32
Form ICS-213	117
Courtesy	10

Thank you for participating in this exercise!!!!

* Excluding DELIVERED:, includes resends

** Reduced due to script error and missing messages

Exercise Objectives

- Based on SCC documentation
 - SCCo ARES/RACES Packet Operations - Type III, Part A and Part B courses
 - How to Send a Packet Message with Outpost - 09/19/2013
 - Standard Packet Message Subject Line - 02/22/20202
 - Standard Packet Check-in/Out Message - 09/25/2021
 - Outpost Users Guide, Basics; Version 3.4 | July 2020
 - RACES Recommended Form Routing Cheat Sheet [Rev: 04-May-2019]
- Exercise simulated 3rd party and operator-to-operator messages
 - Check-In and Check-Out, Plain-text status
 - ICS-213 sending and receiving
 - XSC OA Municipal Status sending
 - XSC OA Shelter Status sending
 - City Notice retrieval
- In addition
 - Outpost configuration and message numbering
 - Immediate message handling order processing (as best as possible)
 - Challenges for form completeness
 - Following instructions

How did we do?

- Message numbering
 - A few bumps, mostly very good
- City Notice XND@XSC downloaded and instructions followed
 - Only six shelters responded - needs improvement
 - SCCo ARES/RACES Packet Operations - Type III, Part B course, page 90 “Using City Bulletins”
- Check-In and Check-Out
 - There were a few restart/resends
 - A couple spelling errors
 - Some “Present are:” format errors
- ICS-213 Packet Set Up
 - Script should have accepted “set up” and “setup”. Was fixed on last evening.
 - Couple swaps of ICS TO <> ICS FROM information
 - Several missing “This is exercise traffic” directive
 - Some “bonus” extra information provided beyond instructions

How did we do ? XSC OA Shelter Status

- Need to drag some folks back to:
RACES Recommended Form Routing Cheat Sheet [Rev: 04-May-2019]
 - Some handling order errors
 - Some ICS To: errors
- “Amateur Radio Information” fields
 - Ideally, shelter’s tactical call should have been entered for “Tactical Call Sign”
 - 12 shelters didn’t fill in this field
 - 3 shelters put in different voice repeaters – we didn’t use voice this exercise
 - But what to do with “Repeater” fields?
 - Hopefully: this is a packet net, enter BBS used for the Repeater Call Sign, maybe also enter frequency information in for other fields.
 - 1 shelter innovated and filled in all fields for the packet BBS they were using
- Future Improvement: better clarity on who and how to fill out the Amateur Radio Information fields
 - Training Coordinator is aware of this issue.

How did we do ? Participants List

- Small number of different flags for message content
 - One shelter provided a text “Reference” message number of the message that requested the participants list. Bravo! (hint for others in the future)
- For all received `_P_SheltStat` (handling order Priority)
 - Two messages were sent back in the same session to the Shelter
 - Request for Participant List
 - Request for XSC OA Municipal Status
- For all received `_I_SheltStat` and `_R_Sheltstat` :
 - The Xanadu EOC Outpost script omitted sending the request for MuniStat
 - Apologies!
- For all shelters that sent both Participant List and MuniStat responses:
 - 6 shelters sent the Immediate in a session before the Routine
 - 11 shelters sent the Immediate and the Routine in the same BBS session
 - 3 shelters sent the Immediate well after the Routine, e.g. many minutes or hours
 - 8 stations didn’t receive the request for MuniStat
- Improvement needed in Handling order (and scripting!!) :
 - Read: SCCo ARES/RACES Packet Operations - Type III, Part B course, page 70
 - Recommended: for Immediate(s), stop work on any other priorities. Process Immediate(s) ASAP and “Send” for each. Then “Send Only” over “Send/Receive”. Supervisor or operator contacts recipient via voice method (no delay) on heads up to retrieve message from BBS.

How did we do ? XSC OA Municipal Status

- Need to drag some folks back to:
RACES Recommended Form Routing Cheat Sheet [Rev: 04-May-2019]
 - Some handling order errors
 - Some ICS To: errors
 - All could have been prevented
- Several missing “This is exercise traffic”
- One didn’t set Current Situation > Communications
- We didn’t have a voice net for this exercise however, one shelter did document this and their simulated attempted to contact the Xanadu EOC. Another Bravo!

How did we do ? ICS-309

- Looking for:
 - Task name correct
 - Legal information correct: full name and FCC call sign
 - + first Check-In sent for the exercise and delivery receipt.
 - + Check-Out sent for the exercise and delivery receipt.
 - + two messages sent in response to Check-Out
 - + final two delivery receipts sent from Shelter -> EOC for the two messages
- Some common issues found:
 - Task name was not as specified in the directions:
 - “Xanadu City Shelter XX – Monthly Message Exercise’..replace XX with your Shelter number”
 - The end of the log didn’t show the Check-Out DELIVERED receipt from the EOC and/or did not show the last two message sent from the EOC to the shelter and/or the two DELIVERED receipts sent for those two message from the shelter to EOC.
 - Radio Operator Name and/or Station ID not FCC callsign
- Otherwise, nice job!

Summary

- Nice job, great participation for this trial run!
- Areas for improvement identified

Going Forward with these exercises:

- Response to the trial so far has been positive. We have scheduled an event for the third Wednesday in January.
- Question will be how often these are offered, e.g. every month, two months, three months, etc.
- In the mean time, keep up with the weekly practice and study up!

Next UP: Exercise Shelter Scorecard

- Reminder, there is no pass or fail
- The scorecard is a tool for indicating areas for improvement

Office Hours Follow Up on Future Exercises

- Office hours were held on Wednesday, 22 December 2021 start at 19:00 in Zoom.
- On how often to hold this, the feedback was:
 - If the same scenario is run, don't do it that often
 - If the scenario varies (which has been the intent all along) then people would like to see this held every month.
- Question was asked if people could “retake” this month's exercise:
 - Answer was yes, can be made available for limited windows of time
 - Instructor will be archiving each month permitting any previous exercise scenario to be re-run with coordination