

This report was submitted to ARRL HQ at 10:02 AM March 13, 2021
 SM, SEC, ASEC, DEC and EC's are copied. Thank you for your input.

Monthly Section Emergency Coordinator Report to ARRL Headquarters			
ARRL Section: South Texas		Month: February	Year: 2021
AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE			
Total number of ARES members: 1640		Change since last month: 20	
# DECs/ECs reporting this month: 31			
# of ARES nets active: 196		# with NTS liaison: 59	
Calls of DECs/ECs reporting: AE5VV K0LTB K0YA K5BV K5DDM K5LGV K5RIK K5WEL K7MAL KB5DTS KD0RMK KD5BJ KE5FGA KE5HAM KF4WSO KG5IRM KG5JRA KG5RXG KI5FU N4DDM N5MTX N5SBN N5TW/XYL N5WKM NA5RC NT5CC W5ATN WB5HJV WB5TAD WB5UZZ WP2AHG			
Number of drills, tests and training sessions this month		78	Person hours: 2482
Number of public service events this month		23	Person hours: 444
Number of emergency operations this month		20	Person hours: 4329
Total number of ARES operations this month		317	Person hours: 7317

SEC
 Work on STX webpage updates of ARES Content
 STX SEC Report generation
 4 weekly HF 3873 nets
 Jim Lawrence, NA5RC appointed EC for Fayette County in District 7 Feb 1

I was asked on February 12 if a traffic net should be organized for Winter Storm Uri. My response was that I do not know of any planned or foreseen power outages. Boy was I wrong on all counts.

ASEC Web
 Maintain backups of the ARRLSTX.org website, do updates as needed. Groups.io; ARRLSTX 73 members, STXARES has 579 members.

ASEC Other
 STX Depot web pages and database oversight. Monthly review & stats.
 Weekly Depot bounce report for pages sent during each week.

DISTRICT 01

EC Fort Bend County
 Was active during the Ice storm with people monitoring the frequency and WebEOC. We Continue to receive Winlink opportunities from other organizations. For our nets alone we had 72 Winlink messages. We were are actively sending Winlink messages to Winlink Wednesdays, Great Lakes Nets, Weather Net, Waller, NW and SW STX nets and ARC. Have NTS involvement weekly with participation growing weekly as are the NTS messages.

EC Galveston County

The number of man hours for drills, tests and training include 10 ARES members who are participating in a Hurricane Preparedness Committee in support of Galveston County Emergency Communications Group, 5 ARES members who are VEs supporting the CLARC monthly VEC test session, 2 ARES members supporting League City's Emergency Communications team and 4 ARES members supporting other ARES events.

DISTRICT 02

EC Walker County

Two weather events. One member patrolled county for high water. 12 hours. Snow/ice event garnered total of 36 hours from 4 operators. Power/water issues affected several operators. All good at this time.

DISTRICT 03

DISTRICT 04

DISTRICT 05

EC Brazos County

First Tuesday monthly ARES net. Monthly meeting second Monday was Zoom meeting. Had Winlink monthly exercise. Asked members to do a better job in reporting their hours. Brazos Co ARES was asked by Red Cross to be on standby Feb 14th to 18th. we were not needed.

EC Grimes County

We were on standby for the winter storm, and we did a simplex test this past Saturday around the county.

DISTRICT 06

EC Medina County

Emergency Ops included 3 days during snowstorm. No water or power for most of the county. Routine health status reports and road conditions.

DISTRICT 07

DEC

February brought a record cold spell to Central Texas. Williamson County ARES maintained an emergency net for 138 straight hours. Lee County maintained a net for a similar time frame. Other counties had periodic nets. With periodic power outages, all participants demonstrated professionalism and adaptability to maintain communications. Williamson was activated by the Office of Emergency Management and routine reports were transmitted to them. At least one instance a person with medical needs was rescued from a home without heat or power.

EC Caldwell County

hours and training reported under Hays Co.

EC Hays County

Continue with ARCHES station problem corrections/testing.

EC Fayette

I have a minor coordination update. During the weather problems of last week, I was contacted by the Emergency Manager wanting to know if I had heard of rolling blackouts. He was especially concerned with the Flatonia and Schulenburg areas because of the retirement communities and elderly care facilities.

In checking with some of the local Hams, I learned that Fayette Electric, FEC, has a Facebook page where they disseminate information on their system's status, including rolling blackouts. I passed this info to the EM. In an ongoing exchange with the EM, we agreed that this was a poor way of getting info out considering the FB venue.

I contacted a member of the FEC Board and suggested that FEC adopt a similar system to Fayette Water Supply Corporation, FWSC - they use a subscriber text alert system. The FEC Board member was not aware of such a system and thought it a good idea. The FEC board will present this new method of status alerts to FEC and asked that I coordinate by have the EM chime in with support at the right time.

The EM was very pleased with this idea and coordination.

EC Lee County

February has been an intense month for LeeCARES. We finished the After Action Report for the January 16 exercise, and started planning for the March one. The Precinct 4 Commissioner and businesses in that precinct were contacted for permission to use their premises for the March exercise.

Most of our members participated to in the SKYWARN training provided by the National Weather Service. During the Winter Weather crisis, LeeCARES members held a Winter Weather SKYWARN Net giving periodic announcements in Lee County, one of them on emergency power and another part time on emergency power. Two members of LeeCARES participated at the IMT level in the activities of WC-ARES SKYWARN net for the winter storm, assisting in different manners from NC to logging or monitoring. While members have been working to acquire or improve personal equipment, this recent winter weather event has brought other areas or readiness into our thoughts as well. LeeCARES has and a couple of members have been participating in training with the Red Cross so they can in preparation for their drill in their May drill.

We have begun working on a Five-Year Strategic Plan, with priority focused on improving radio coverage around the county which would include more antennas on higher towers and additional repeaters in the county.

EC Milam County

Assisted Milam SO with setting up local Warming station during the Freezing weather.

EC Travis County

Severe Winter WX event. TCARES was on standby with ARC. Operators checked Winlink at pre-determined intervals for priority traffic. TCARES worked with WilCo ARES to provide NCS for their net. TCARES hosted Welfare Check net.

EC Williamson County

I have one word for our team in the FEB2021WINTERWEATHER activation. Professionals. Every single member that participated, performed, and maintained, as professional demeanor and skills as any of the Served Agencies we supported. In our county, that was every Emergency Service county supports.

We Train, We Practice, We Prepare for "When all else fails." Around here, it is referred to as preparing for the Zombie Apocalypse. Well, WE HAD THE BIG ONE this February. And our team performed with excellence, and rose to every occasion, task, and assignment. For 6 continuous days. Many in the midst of dire personal circumstances. Like one Net Control operator that still ran 2 hour shifts with power out over 80 hrs at their home. Some recharging batteries with solar, in the snow and single digit temps, to be ready for their next assigned shift.

WCARES ran our SKYWARN Severe Winter Weather Net for 138 consecutive hours from Saturday the 13th, to Friday the 19th. Twelve consecutive 12-hour operational periods with our Blue and Red Teams rotating. We had additional SKYWARN nets on the 11th and 12th at the Sheriff's office requests. So, 14 consecutive days of operations. A large part of the time we had NCS, Backup NCS, Logger, and Team Lead on shift. Sometimes less were available. No two-hour shift was ever silent, even once. And we supported Red Cross communications forward on Winlink from Sunday forwards. Even after trees fell on antennas.

Everyone operated from home. Most of the time we could not get to the EOC if we tried. There was no room there anyway. EOC had full staff living in EOC for days. Including 911 dispatch.

WCARES Command Staff was in 13 shift change briefings with Emergency Management, NWS briefings at least once per day, and several ARES Command Staff meetings. Along with several impromptu conferences.

WCARES ran a continuous collaborative ICS 309 log on Google Sheets. One log at 152 pages long. How did we do that with internet and power fails? Creativity. Generators, Batteries, cell phone internet. It was all up and down. However, we had enough operational members that would fill in on the logs as they had internet. Some could only hear the net, but not reach the repeater with compromised shacks and antennas iced over. It worked.

WCARES used whatever comms vehicle we could. Our ICS217 is voluminous with repeaters to use here. But everyone was down for some period, most at the same time, after a couple days power out. Except one of our backups, that is on a water tower. It never lost power. Coverage was not as good, but it worked. We used ARRLSTX paging, Email, Winlink, our Slack app, FirstNet phones for those that have them, others when they worked to keep the net operational.

We have members in Lee County that are dual memberships and operate with us that provided support. On Wednesday, I contacted the Travis County Emergency Coordinator for additional NCS stations, and within hours we had four members there that could hit the repeater, joined us for several shifts. That was a great relief to our team. And we thank both counties for that support.

When every service failed a tremendous number of our county's citizens, and that includes Power, Water, Heating Gas, Cell Phones, and even Land Lines. Seriously. I have received numerous emails and had many conversations where Amateur radio was the ONLY source outside communications they had. For days. Our public service announcements led people to fill bathtubs with water in a timely manner before water failed most of us. More than a couple citizens of the county informed me that we were the "the voice they clung to in the night that gave them comfort for them and their families." Many reported they made family decisions that saved lives based on what was broadcast.

I am proud of WCARES operation during this event. And humbled at the same time. So many of our members sacrificed, in a sometimes dire situation, to provide a service to our communities, and to support their fellow team members. There are too many super performers to list their names here. And that is a compliment in itself. Our volunteers are the best ever in ARES as far as I am concerned.

Following is a summary list that was submitted to the Hot Wash with Williamson County Emergency Services we participated in a couple days after the event.

Subject: WCARES AAR Preliminary Report

Summary of Actions for FEB 2021 Winter Weather Event:

- WCARES net operated 24 Hours per day for periods #1 thru #12, 138 Continuous Hours
- 35 Net Controls, Backups, Loggers, and Supervisors operated during event
- Generated in excess of 480 hours on 214's. This will increase as we get all 214's submitted (edit: we are up over 1100 person hours now)
- On ICS 309 there are 152 pages with 1231 Transmission Interactions logged, 736 Public Service Announcements, 495 Public/ARES/EM Contact Reports.
- Reported actions needing Emergency Service Support: 5 to ESOC, 1 to CTCC (in Travis County), no 911 third party calls. When EMS could not respond, we coordinated other solutions.
- Directly assisted 2 persons in life threatening home situations to get to shelter
- Reported at least 2 Neighborhoods with over 80 continuous hours no power to EM, Power was then restored.
- At least 85% of our operating staff had extended power and water outage up to 80+ hours
- Directly assisted 2 persons in life threatening home situations to get to shelter
- Prepared for support of Communications for Prime Site Failure per Emergency Manager
- Took SITREPS from members and Public such as road conditions to inform ESOC
- Numerous listeners had no power, no water, no cell or land line service, Amateur Radio only
- Recorded and Relayed calls for assistance; Threshold changed thru event per ESOC
- Provided information for open Gas Stations for Generators and Cars
- Provided Public Service Announcements
- Monitored and broadcast Social Media for Road Conditions, Public information, Weather
- Broadcast fill bathtubs with water before water failed, prepared public for loss of water
- Net Controls/Supervisors operated on battery in these situations, some recharging with solar
- Per reports from numerous individuals, net was in unique position to be only source of information in complete power out situations.
- Full WCARES After Action Report will follow

All of WCARES is compiling a Lessons Learned document to be published and share with members, and for future training.

As Emergency Coordinator, sometimes we wonder if what all we train, prepare, and push our organization to prepare for is really going to be used at that level ... I have been WCARES Emergency Coordinator for almost 5 years now. We have trained and prepared diligently. Some have said we are overachievers. It paid off. If I

am here decades longer, and we never have another event like this, I am OK with that. We did what we say we can do, When ALL Else Fails.

DISTRICT 08

DEC

Red Cross Disaster 717-21 216 hours, planning section

DISTRICT 09

EC Jasper County

All ham equipment made it through the big freeze.

EC Jefferson County

ARES provided communications for the Liberty Freedom Ride that aids the Liberty ISD Foundation. Utilized ARES members from Jefferson & Orange Counties. Also, thanks to Harris Co Southeast Unit EC Andrew Downing and his son working with us.

EC Newton County

See Jasper county for additional details.

EC Orange County

All Ham antennas (VHF, UHF, & HF) at Orange Co. EOC survived the snow and ice storm in February. Also, the 2- Two Meter repeaters (147.180 & 147.060) remained operational and had no damage from snow and ice storm.

EC Tyler County

Tyler County ARES plans to start meeting again in April.

DISTRICT 10

DEC

Great progress on getting our systems back up and on the air. Jackson County UHF repeater is now in its permanent home. 444.500 + 103.5

The Louise VHF repeater is now back on the air, and is permalinked to the Jackson County VHF. The Louise DMR has been returned to the airwaves at 442.275 standard shift CC 7. TS1 is used for the TG's that are active. All "TEXAS" groups except that 3148 is on C_Bridge, NOT BM. TS 2 is for Local 2 and SE Texas 50.

DISTRICT 12

EC Gonzales County

22 DTTN

20 NTTN

2 STXARES

DISTRICT 13

DISTRICT 14

DEC

- WEBEOC Training 02/07 (12 participants)- D14 members log into WEBEOC and perform functions including STAR requests
- ECHO Society Meeting 2/7/21 (13 attendees)

- 21-0003 February 2021 Winter Weather Storm Event 02/13 1100 - 02/19 2021 1200 local - Activation of Harris County ARES by Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to provide field reports related to storm: Type of Reports / Traffic handled: Snow and Ice reports, icing and hazards on roadways, power outages, water supply outages, health and welfare communications to family members and friends, cell phone provider outages, internet provider outages, locating generators and other items for individuals with critical needs, locating open gas stations, firewood, plumbing and other needs. Storm related reports forwarded to National Weather Service. Activated a communications booth at an area warming center to pass health and welfare traffic. 127 unique Amateur Radio participants (WB5HJV)
- Retired ADEC Linda W5LDK, monitored and handled frequency duties during Winter Storm
- 02/15 1900 ARES Activation status meeting (virtual)
- 02/16 1500 ARES Activation status net (147.000 / WB5HJV)
- 2/17 0900 ARES Activation status net (147.000 / WB5HJV)
- 2/17 1500 ARES Activation status net (147.000 / WB5HJV)
- 02/18 1000 ARES Activation status net (147.000 / WB5HJV)
- AE5PA Earl ADEC - Training - District training work - preparing / refreshing training articles in the HCARES training database in use across multi sections

EC Harris-NW County

This month Harris County ARES provided support for emergency winter storm. We took reports from members with their status of utilities and fuel availability. We remained available for our served agencies if they needed us.

EC Harris-SW County

- Winter Storm Uri activation brought many of our ARES operators online to check in to daily nets, to report safety issues like iced road and, power outages, and to pass health-related traffic.
- Several D14 SW Unit hams enjoyed working a PSE, Pedaling the Prairie.
- Training net participation remains strong & steady.

DISTRICT 15

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