1 November 2022

**FIARC Meeting Minutes – 29 October 2022**

**Attendees:**

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|---|---|---|
| N7NW – Hal Goodell | KI7CQM – Jim Braden | KJ7RVR – Jane Tollett |
| KI7CQS – Dave Federighi | K7ND – Jim Christianson | AC7QN – Chuck Kemmer |
| KK7IVT – John Merryman | WA7KCK – Ken Rowley | N7BRR – Brian Hevly |
| K1GCF – Gail Ferguson | | |

The October 29 FIARC meeting was convened a little after 10:00am after several of us went outside to check out the GoKit deployed by Jeff Ferguson(K7CRZ) in Paul Thorpe's(KJ7JCB) motorhome. Attachment A is an account by Jeff of what was accomplished during the exercise. Thank you to Gail Ferguson for the delicious cookies.

**1. Minutes from the September 24 meeting were unanimously approved.**

**2. Updates from Hal Goodell, President**

- The VHF Weak Signal conference in California was well attended
- IEEE(Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) conference had about 150 Hams
- For directional finding contests, like Fox Hunts, AM is used, as it is more difficult to find a receiver if frequency (FM) is being modulated. Apparently, handhelds are used – great! Hal thinking of building a receiver. Chuck has a handheld tape measure Yagi antenna which is indestructible. This was all very supportive of the educational opportunities surrounding a Fox or Bunny hunt, possibly hosted by FIARC.

**3. Updates from Jim Braden, Vice-President**

- Currently overhauling the Emergency Prep/Block Coordinator(BC) system
- Always looking for more Hams to help in an emergency; please contact Jim
- Jim is also working with Anderson Island and Mason Lake on their community programs
- Jim is taking the CERT(Community Emergency Response Teams) training, and highly recommends BCs take Disaster First Aid. Aid. Jim is trying to get a Disaster First Aid class set at Fox Island sometime in 2023.

**4. Updates from Jane Tollett, Secretary**

- Our new webpage is up and live on the FICRA page under the "Programs" tab.
- Suggest that everyone check with PCAlert accounts. We suspect that the County migrated to a new platform called "Everbridge", but no data migrated over. Likely you will need to set up an account with username and password to be re-enrolled.
- Still no word from the Boy Scouts if they would like us to help with a badge. Gail suggested we contact the Girl Scouts; Jane will try to do so. It turns out that the Girl Scouts do have a radio badge, sponsored by the ARRL. http://www.arrl.org/girl-scouts-radio-patch

**5. HAM Class October 22-23 Update**

- We welcomed John Merryman, a new Ham to the club. Additionally John is a also a Block Coordinator and interested in drones and drone programming.
- Out of the 14 people who attended the first day, 3 did not return for Sunday, and 3 did not pass their test. This left 6 who passed the Technician level, 2 who passed at General, and one person who passed the Amateur Extra.
- While we know the instructors tried very hard, we are not happy with these numbers. It may be the "Ham Cram" method has outlived its usefulness. Feedback we received included such comments as:
  - a "fire hose" of information on Day 1

- was not aware of the class format, so did not study ahead of time
- overheads difficult to read
- too much emphasis on questions, not enough on teaching

- Several folks are now enrolled in the Canterwood class, which meets twice weekly for 6 weeks, I believe.
- Hal mentioned that the testing instructors are really not supposed to do the teaching, conflict of interest.
  - We will look hard at what format to use if we sponsor another class. We want a higher pass rate! Gail stated that the culture of learning is changing, and no one disagreed. Jim is working with Canterwood (Doug Munday) to learn how they are getting both lots of new HAMs and a very good pass rate.
- The "Get On The Air" class was proposed for 12/10, after our meeting that morning. Jane will ask for volunteers to help people program their radios, do a quick demonstration of how to use, then we will hold a practice Net to give everyone a chance to talk and use their radios.
- PLEASE NOTE:
  - 9-10am – FIARC meeting (Early!!)
  - 10a-12p – Get On The Air Class

**6. More Training**

- There was some interest in working to hold a Fox or Bunny hunt in the future. Lots of ways it could be done, but the basics are that a receiver is hidden somewhere in a defined area, and individuals or teams try to locate it. The receiver may need a call sign – Chuck is going to try to locate a receiver and figure out the details. We think it might be a fun and educational activity. So potentially lots more to come on this.
- Jane will contact Jeff about GoKit training. Apparently the GoKit is to be located in the trailer at the water tower and in an emergency will need to be set up if the NCC is not usable. There are no more than four people currently who can set up and use the GoKit and this number should be increased. As an afterthought, people will also need to be trained on how to access the trailer.

**7. Running the Net**

- The net can be run from other locations, but the location should be stated at the beginning.
- If running off-site from the NCC, the Net Control should request a Net Control Back-up.
- Jane reviewed procedures to use if the Net is interrupted by priority traffic, and they will be added to the Net instructions as well as placed on the bulletin board with a printed form to help remember what to ask.

**8. Next meetings:**

Saturday 10 December, 9a-10am will be the meeting, 10a-12p, Get On The Air class (currently we have two attendees).

Respectfully Submitted,


EJ Tollett KJ7RVR

**Attachments**

A – 10/29/2022 ARES Exercise learnings by Jeff Ferguson
B - Revised(again) Net Control Preamble and instructions, 11/3/2022 version
C – Emergency instructions and form

Attachment A – ARES Exercise Notes

On Saturday October 29th Paul Thorpe (KJ7JCB), Bob Holzgraf (W7RWH) and I (K7CRZ) participated in a statewide EMCOMM exercise as District 5 ARES Peninsula Team members. During the exercise we were tasked with operating remotely on Fox Island while employing ARES Go Kit #3 (W7AAO-3), voice and digital, then displacing to an alternate location and resuming operations. To that end we decided to operate from Paul's motorhome starting at the Nichols Community Center then moving to the former Fox Island Alliance Church north parking lot.

Operations at the Nichols center were completely successful. We gained good antenna height by deploying the tripod mounted antenna mask on top of the motorhome resulting in perfectly reliable voice communications, employing medium power, with Peninsula Team net control and the Peninsula Multi Agency Communications Center (PMACC) at the Fire District 5 Headquarters Building via PC-8S (KA7EOC repeater), the Peninsula Team's primary channel. During past exercises we've had difficulty communicating digitally directly with PMACC from the Fox Island EOC at NCC. This time however we enjoyed perfectly reliable digital communication with PMACC due to a new capability first tested during this exercise. Ron Jarvis (AI7RJ) recently established two new VARA FM digital gateways, digipeaters and a local "post office" at Wauna. His installation enabled reliably digital communication with PMACC by sending messages via the Internet employing gateways (AI7RJ-11 & AI7RJ-12, 144.990 MHz), employing direct peer-to-peer (P2P) digital comms passing through digipeaters (AI7RJ-5 & AI7RJ-6, 433.330 MHz) or, and this was the innovation first tested during this exercise, simply leaving traffic at the "post office" (AI7RJ-13, 144.990 MHz) where PMACC picked it up through subsequent connection to AI7RJ-13. Unlike digital gateways post office messages are held on the local system until retrieved locally, not distributed via the Internet. The post office capability provided a reliable and remarkably efficient means by which to pass digital traffic. We try not to use gateways due to their dependence on terrestrial Internet service. P2P doesn't depend on any outside infrastructure but it does require coordinating frequencies and times to pass digital traffic which slows EMCOMM considerably. But the post office enables passing of digital traffic independent of outside infrastructure and requires no coordination, which proved to be very efficient. If we left priority or emergency traffic at the post office we simply notified PMACC through voice net control so they would retrieve the traffic right away. We passed much more digital traffic than during past exercises due to this new capability. I think it fair to say the local post office feature is a game changer! Credit to Ron Jarvis for his innovative efforts.

While at the NCC site we also tested various motorhome systems (generator, inverter, lights, etc) to see if they caused interference and all remained quiet. We were able to demonstrate that Paul's motorhome, if available, would serve well as a backup EOC if NCC were to be unusable for any reason.

At 1035 local we moved the field station to the alternate location and were back in operation in about 25 minutes. However we experienced a great deal of trouble with digital comms at that location due to local interference which may have been coming from power lines running along Island Blvd. Digital failed to connect about half the time and when it did connect transmissions were very slow. We didn't have any serious difficulty with voice comms, though I believe there was some interference. Note, if the power were down the site might work just fine.

All in all this proved to be a very worthwhile exercise with a number of lessons learned, techniques proven and new EMCOMM resources tested.

A note for Fox Island's EMCOMM effort...you could use your Signalink interface and free VARA FM software, in conjunction with Winlink Express, to enable digital communications through AI7RJ's resources, as well as additional local VARA FM assets which exist or are being developed in the area.  To enjoy full speed you would need to make a one time VARA FM license purchase but you can test at reduced speeds for free (you also can't use VARA FM digipeaters without the license).  While the go kit is capable of providing VARA FM service it would be advisable for the Fox Island EOC to have its own VARA FM capability in case the go kit were unavailable.  We might also want the option of deploying the go kit to an elevated area on the island to act as digipeater for Fox Island's digital comms.

If anyone has any questions about the exercise, EMCOMM resources employed or techniques discussed just let me know.

73

Jeff

*K7CRZ* (Amateur Radio Service - volunteer, District 5 ARES, Peninsula Team)
*s/v* Satori

# Running the Fox Island Emergency Preparation Net

1. The net is sponsored by the Fox Island Amateur Radio Club (WA7FI) using their equipment located in the basement of the Nichols Community Center, in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) room. Your call sign is what legally allows you to broadcast on the equipment. The station is licensed with W7KJ, Ken Kivett as Trustee.

2. If you are not running the net from the EOC, please ask for an Alternate Net Control to help hear the call signs as receptivity varies greatly across the island.

3. As Net Control, you are running the net/conversation. You are empowered to request that other traffic allow us to use the 146.54 frequency, to keep the net moving, manage the traffic, and suggest that extended or possibly tangential conversations move to after-net contact.

4. Make sure you turn on switches #2, and #3 to make sure both the 2-meter and the Repeater radios are on.

5. Open the logbook and date a page for any notes you wish to leave behind. Make sure you get all the call signs and names of those who check in as well as any pertinent comments from the Net. There is often a fair amount of "frost" in connections and do not hesitate to ask people to speak more slowly or repeat.

6. If there are any unresolved issues from the net or anything needing attention, please log in the book and contact Hal Goodell, N7NW, FIARC President, at n7nw.hal@comcast.net

7. When acknowledging check-ins, state as follows(for example): **N7NW, Hal, copy. Next check-in please.**

8. FCC rules require you to identify yourself at the beginning, end, and every 10 minutes during transmission. As the net generally runs longer than 10 minutes, there are several times the Preamble has you announce your call sign so that this last requirement is met.

**9. In the event of an emergency call requiring use of the frequency:**

a. Stop the Net, asking everyone to be on standby

b. If the caller needs us to help them, get as much of the following information as possible:

-Nature of emergency (are people or property in danger)
-Location, if unknown get landmarks, lat/longs, Park, City, Trail, street signs, etc
-What assistance is required
-Number, age, condition of people involved
-Safety or other equipment available
-If a vessel get its name and description and condition

c. As information flows in, have Net members call for help.

d. Useful numbers:

911 – life-threatening or imminent danger
USGS – vessel missing or in danger – 206/217-6001
VHF Distress Call – Ch 16

e. Stay on the line as long as reasonable possible, they may have low batteries and need to hang up.

f. Get volunteers to monitor the frequency as long as possible until situation resolved.

# Fox Island Emergency Preparedness (FIEP) Net Preamble

Sponsored by the Fox Island Amateur Radio Club - WA7FI

**1850 - 1855: May I have your attention, please. This is (your call sign) preparing for the Fox Island Emergency Preparedness net scheduled for 1900 hours, terminating at approximately 1920 hours. We will be broadcasting on 146.54 MHz. May I have a radio check from any station (your call sign).**

**1858: May I have your attention please. The Fox Island Emergency Preparedness Net will begin in two minutes. This is (your call sign & first name), this evening's net control. Tonight, we are running the net from (**state location – if NOT the EOC state it will be run only on 146.54 mHz**). All stations standby(your call sign).**

**1900: This is WA7FI, net control for the Fox Island Emergency Preparedness Net. The net control operator tonight is (your call & first name). May I have a volunteer to serve as Net Control Backup?** ( Log name and call sign in book.) **This net convenes every Sunday at 1900 hrs PST on 146.54 MHz, and on our repeater on 440.575 MHz**(repeater ONLY if running the Net from EOC)**. The purpose of this net is to practice radio operation, test equipment, communicate messages, share technical knowledge, and confirm range. We welcome all listeners to check-in during open check-ins. Say BREAK.** (Pause ~ 3 seconds)
**Emergency traffic has priority. Is there any emergency traffic at this time?** (PAUSE ~3 seconds)

**This is WA7FI, net control, calling for open check-ins. We will first ask for check-ins on the 440.575 MHz repeater**(again, only if at the EOC)**, then we will ask for those checking in on the 2-meter 146.540 Mhz Simplex. Please provide your phonetic call sign, name, and if off island, state your location. Wait for confirmation of the last check in before reporting in, and please wait for two seconds before attempting to transmit after the last traffic to allow the system to reset. Additionally, the repeater identifies itself every 10 minutes with a Morse Code signal, and again wait two seconds after that ends before transmitting.**

**Check-ins on the repeater on 440.575 please:** *(Acknowledge and record check-ins – again, only if at the EOC)*
**Check-ins on the 2-meter on 146.540 please** *(Acknowledge and record check-ins)*

**This is WA7FI, net control, checked-in stations will now be contacted.** *(Ask N7NW – Hal, FIARC President/WA7FI Trustee for any announcements first, then ask stations in check-in order.)*

**This is WA7FI, are there any late or missed check-ins?** *<PAUSE>* **Does anyone have final traffic for the net?** *<PAUSE>* **Are there any after net contact requests?** *<PAUSE>*

**Standby:** *(count check-ins)* **We had _____ total check-ins tonight, _____ on 440.575, _____ on 146.540.**
*Verify that WA7KCK-Ken Rowley has the number for his report to ARES.*

**This concludes the Fox Island Emergency Preparedness Net. We will meet again next Sunday at 1900 hrs. Closing net at (time) hrs Pacific Standard Time. Have a great week everyone! WA7FI CLEAR.**

## NET CONTROL OPERATOR - In the event an emergency needs our frequency:

a. Stop the Net, ask everyone to be on standby
b. If the caller needs us to help them, get as much of the below information as possible
c. As information flows in, and if needed, have Net members call for help. STAY ON THE LINE!
d. Useful numbers:
    911 – life-threatening or imminent danger
    USGS – vessel missing or in danger – 206/217-6001
    VHF Distress Call – Ch 16
e. Stay on the line as long as reasonably possible, they may have low batteries and need to hang up.
f. Assign volunteers to monitor the frequency as long as possible until the situation resolved.

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|---|---|
| **Nature of the Emergency** – are people or property in danger and what kind of danger. | |
| **Location** – if unknown get landmarks – what can they see. Ask for last known location, where were they heading, how long since last known location, mode of transportation, etc. | |
| **What assistance is required?** | |
| **People:** Number, age, physical and mental condition. | |
| **Safety or other survival equipment available.** | |
| **Vessel name, description, condition** if relevant. | |

# Ham License Class Feedback

19 signed up: 16 Technician/2 General/1 Advanced Extra (test only)
15 showed up: 12 Technician/2 General/1 Advance Extra
6 signed up but did not show
3 – DNF
5 - DNP

1. Preparation
    - many unprepared and did not study ahead of class or study enough
    - felt at least 2-4 weeks study needed ahead of class
    - Michael Burnette Fast Track Series well received
    - hard to prepare on their own
    - felt the material was very technical

2. Class Format
    - did not understand it would be "Ham Cram" format
    - the "Fire Hose" dump of material was very frustrating
    - not enough teaching, too fast on the question review
    - question/answer format did not work for the "less technical", who just got lost
    - Overheads were very difficult to read
    - Instructors stood in front of the overheads
    - many felt a longer class would be better, like Canterwood, and two taking it now

3. Instructors
    - very knowledgeable
    - one explained topics better than the other
    - material pacing was difficult on Day 1
    - too many personal issues discussed, distracting

4. Housekeeping/Organization
    - well done, getting FRN numbers in advance helpful
    - price is low for all that was offered