



SCEMD Statewide Communications Exercise

After-Action Report/Improvement Plan

July 15, 2019

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns exercise objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	SCEMD Statewide Communications Exercise
Exercise Dates	June 8, 2019
Scope	This exercise is a functional exercise, planned for approximately 5 hours at each participating facilities location. Exercise play is limited to prescribed communications over Amateur radio equipment, LGR Low Band, Conventional 800MHZ and Satellite systems located in the participating facilities. (Substitutes will be allowed for facilities without working equipment.)
Mission Area(s)	Response
Core Capabilities	Operational Communications, Situational Assessment, and Operational Coordination
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate operational readiness of auxiliary communications at participating EOC's and other facilities during the Exercise by successfully sending messages by Amateur radio, LGR and or Satellite phone using prescribed communications protocols. 2. Facilities will transmit information during the Exercise needed to support development of a common operating picture and situational assessment for local communities and the State for resource support. 3. SC Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) Logistics Section will consolidate information received from participating facilities into Palmetto for record tracking and situational assessment.
Threat or Hazard	Hurricane impact causing widespread power outages and communications disruptions.
Scenario	A major Hurricane makes landfall between Hilton Head Island and Charleston, causing widespread power outages and communications disruptions throughout the entire State of South Carolina. Phone, internet and 800 MHz radios are not available. Some damage to infrastructure and multiple facilities has occurred with significant damage to key resources throughout the State. County EOC's experience a loss of mainstream communications systems.
Sponsor	SCEMD, 2779 Fish Hatchery Road, W. Columbia, SC 29172

Exercise Name	SCEMD Statewide Communications Exercise
Participating Organizations	SC DHEC SC State Guard Civil Air Patrol Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) Auxcomm SCNG SC HEART
Point of Contact	Gabe Turner, Communications Manager SCEMD (803) 201-3823 email: gturner@emd.sc.gov

ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
1. Demonstrate operational readiness of auxiliary communications at participating EOC's and other facilities during the Exercise by successfully sending messages by Amateur radio, LGR and or Satellite phone using prescribed communications protocols.	Operational Communications		X		
2. Facilities will transmit information during the Exercise needed to support development of a common operating picture and situational assessment for local communities and the State for resource support.	Situational Assessment		X		
3. SC Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) Logistics Section will consolidate information received from participating facilities into Palmetto for record tracking and situational assessment.	Operational Coordination		X		

Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance

Ratings Definitions:

Performed without Challenges (P): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

Performed with Some Challenges (S): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to

additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.

Performed with Major Challenges (M): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

Unable to be Performed (U): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Objective 1. Demonstrate operational readiness of auxiliary communications at participating EOC's and other facilities during the Exercise by successfully sending messages by Amateur radio, LGR and or Satellite phone using prescribed communications protocols.

Core Capability: Operational Communications

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: 27 counties actively participated (most ever for a state-wide communications exercise) which greatly expanded the volunteer pool.

Strength 2: Operators recognized and took initiative to utilize alternate modes (SAT, LGR, relay) when SC HEART system was disabled.

Strength 3: Operators efficiently deployed and established good coverage. Net was quickly established and well maintained.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Need to improve knowledge/operability of HAM operators with public safety communications equipment.

Analysis: Several Operators were noted during the exercise using Amateur call signs on LGR radio.

Area for Improvement 2: Need a better sustainment and relief plan for operators during extended operational periods of higher than normal traffic requiring long term operations of more than 4 hours.

Analysis: Several operators noted that they were not given any relief during the exercise. During a long-term event having multiple operators that can rotate out would be beneficial.

Area for Improvement 3: Need additional AuxC operator in State Warning Point to handle SAT & LGR calls as needed.

Analysis: During the exercise it was noted that the State Warning Point Operators became overwhelmed answering LGR and Sat calls from the Counties. During an activation they would not be able to handle the additional traffic load in addition to everyday tasks.

Objective 2. Facilities will transmit information during the Exercise needed to support development of a common operating picture and situational assessment for local communities and the State for resource support.

Core Capability: Situational Assessment

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: 76% of messages sent and received (38 out of 51) were complete and accurate.

Strength 2: Interaction with Sim Cell, Logistics Section, Radio Room and State Warning Point was good across the board.

Strength 3: Operators were able to remain flexible while answering calls on multiple systems within the SWP and Radio Room.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Need to increase operator proficiency with Palmetto Common Operating Picture allowing for the electronic submission of resource requests.

Analysis: It was noted during the exercise that operators were not able to use Palmetto due to lack of training thus requiring them to hand write all requests.

Area for Improvement 2: Train operators to recognize Priority Information Requirements (PIR) in order to ask the right questions to clarify demand signals (i.e. if they ask for a generator, ask some questions to clarify what type, size/capacity, how they want to use, where and when is it needed, for how long, etc).

Analysis: There were several requests for a generator, however there were no instructions provided as to the exact location for delivery and expected use of the generator. Thus, causing a delay in processing the request.

Area for Improvement 3: Need more utilization of DMR system and incentives for counties to acquire and use.

Analysis: The DMR system provides a secondary Statewide system for communications across the State, however there was little traffic across DMR during the exercise. Use of this system could help alleviate traffic congestion on the analog system.

Objective 3. SC Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) Logistics Section will consolidate information received from participating facilities into Palmetto for record tracking and situational assessment.

Core Capability: Operational Coordination

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: The ability to enter all resource request received from the radio room in a timely fashion.

Strength 2: Logistics was able to quickly assess resource requests for proper and complete information.

Strength 3: The timely ability to coordinate with radio room operators for answers to any questions regarding resource requests.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Standardization of written message forms is needed to ensure legibility and clarity of message traffic.

Analysis: It was noted during the exercise that there were a few instances where messages were not legible by the log unit or not clear on what was actually being requested.

Area for Improvement 2: There were several instances during the exercise where messages were taking longer times than normal to reach the Logistics desk.

Analysis: One operator was handling the delivery of all messages to the Logistics unit and at times got behind.

Appendix A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for SCEMD as a result of SCEMD Statewide Communications Exercise conducted on June 8,

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element (POETE)	Primary Responsible Organization & POC	Start Date	Completion Date
1. Operational Communications	1.1: Improve operator proficiency w/ public safety comms equipment	Quarterly training	Training	SCEMD	November 2019	Ongoing
	1.2: Need operator sustainment & relief plans	Evaluate staffing plans for SCEMD Radio Room/County EOC's	Plans	Various	July 2019	August 2020
	1.3: Need additional operator in SWP to handle SAT calls	Updated Plans to include additional Operator to be posted in SWP for large scale events	Organization	SCEMD	July 2019	July 2019
2. Situational Assessment	2.1: Increase operator proficiency with Palmetto	Schedule operators to attend Palmetto training	Training	SCEMD/ARES	July 2019	August 2020
	2.2: Train operators to recognize and use PIR	Quarterly Training	Training	SCEMD	November 2 2019	Ongoing
	2.3: Increase acquisition and use of DMR system	Increase County awareness of DMR and Enhancement of capabilities	Equipment	SCEMD/AuxC	July 2019	Ongoing
3. Operational Coordination	3.1: Standardize written message traffic for clarity and legibility	Upcoming Quarterly Training	Training	SCEMD	November 2 2019	Ongoing
	3.2: Shorter times for message delivery to Logistics	Upcoming Quarterly Training	Training	SCEMD	November 2 2019	Ongoing

2019.

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations
Federal
Civil Air Patrol
State
SC DHEC
SC State Guard
Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)
AUXC
SCNG
SC HEART
[Jurisdiction A]
[Jurisdiction B]