Santa Cruz County
Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Anatomy of Planning for a County Weather Event Disaster

JoMarie, KM6URE, Scribe

Inside this issue
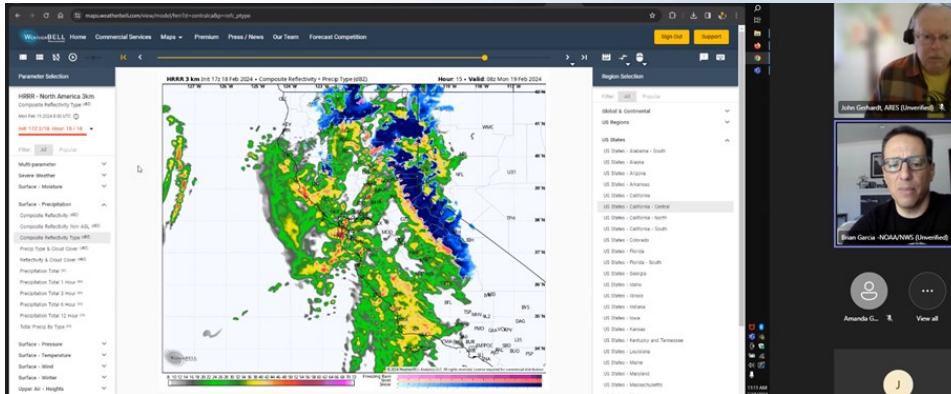
As part of your Level 1 or higher ARES membership, you took the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) courses of the Incident Command System (ICS) - IS 100 and 200. But, have you seen or heard the Incident Command System in action? Some have but many have not. Let's explore how our county prepares for a significant weather event and how the incident command system is followed.

In 2020, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors restructured the county's emergency management and created the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3) to go beyond the "traditional emergency operations and create a full-service division to help our community prepare for disasters, respond during emergencies and assist with recovery". It's director is Dave Reid and the office has been gaining many more staff to support their efforts. The Response team provides emergency management services, including disaster preparedness for residents, development of written guidelines for emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation for disasters and operation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC serves as a centralized point for emergency operations coor-

dination during a disaster or significant event.

OR3 partners with the National Weather Service (NWS) whose mission is to provide weather, water and climate data, forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services for the protection of life and property. When a forecast reaches a certain risk threshold, the OR3 team begins their planning and alert communications with other agencies. These other agencies, with a wide variety of experts and talents, include Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, Santa Cruz County Flood Control, PG&E, Caltrans, Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, CalFIre, multiple local Fire Agencies, Extreme Weather Shelters, County's Public Information Officer (PIO), County of Santa Cruz Department of Public Works, City Emergency Operations representatives of Watsonville, Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, County Superintendent of Schools, Red Cross, Community Emergency Response Teams, and ARES.

OR3 takes the helm but works with these other agencies in a unified command structure. Recall, unified command is used when more than one agency has incident

S.A.F.E. is NEXT Sunday, February 25, 2024, 10 am to noon. Hope to hear you then!

Equipment available to loan

Santa Cruz Communications Support have two kits available for loaning to allow ham operators participate in a deployment when they have limited equipment. One kit is for a vehicle deployment and includes Mobile dual-band radio Icom IC-2730, mag mount antenna, battery and kneeboard. The other kit is for stationary outdoor deployments and includes the vehicle kit with additional supplies of a tripod antenna, lighting, and pop-up.

New Technician class?

We still need more interest in a class to organize. It is a bit of work to coordinate and host a class. Please encourage sign-ups if you are aware of interest.

Do you have family, neighbors or friends interested in getting their ham radio license and want a class? We are taking sign-ups from people interested to assist in planning. Please share this link to those interested: https://rebrand.ly/ham class

S.A.F.E. Is Happening Soon
Allison, KM6RMN, Public Information Officer

Save the date: *Sunday, February 25, 2024, 10 am to noon.*
[*This event was rescheduled from 2/4/24 due to an extreme weather event forecast. And it came true for most with lots of rain and wind causing havoc in the area.*]

Get ready for a little outdoor fun and exploration as Santa Cruz County's ARES conducts its Scavenging Around Field Exercise (S.A.F.E.). This exercise is a rerun of previous successful events, focusing on developing our mobile radio skills and overall disaster preparedness.

The SAFE exercise follows a systematic process that includes checking in on the resource net, moving to a tactical net to receive instructions, and driving to nearby locations for field assignments. Participants will report their observations from their vehicles while maintaining a record of their actions using ICS-214 log sheets. The exercise concludes with participants demobilizing and reporting their safe arrival home. It is a voluntary skill-building exercise, not a formal ARES activation.

We aim to achieve several goals:

▶ Enhance mobile radio communication and logging skills — Participants in S.A.F.E. will actively work on improving their mobile radio communication and logging skills. Engaging in field assignments will provide hands-on experience, helping participants become more proficient in effective communication during emergencies.

▶ Boost confidence and proficiency in field operations — The exercise encourages participants to practice executing field assignments, providing tasks that help participants to increase their confidence in independent operations. This will boost proficiency during emergency situations when quick and reliable communication is paramount.

▶ Deepen knowledge of county geography and repeater coverage — Navigating through vetted locations all over Santa Cruz County will not only improve our geographical knowledge but also contribute to a better understanding of the local infrastructure and propagation conditions.

▶ Promote fun and build a strong cooperative force — Yes, fun. It's a fact that people learn better when having fun. And fun is also good for team building. The exercise is not just about developing individual skills but also about building a strong, united force for disaster preparedness.

S.A.F.E. goes beyond traditional training by combining education, practical experience, and cooperation. As we work towards achieving these goals, we contribute to a more resilient and prepared community, ready to face Santa Cruz County's frequent communication challenges.

Want to know more? Watch your in-box for informational emails as February approaches. You will be directed to online instructions, FAQs, forms, and any other information you might need. Contact me if you have specific or unusual questions.

Report your volunteer hours!

The reported volunteer hours for December was 514 hours. Please remember to enter your hours on the form on https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/

Reporting the time you spend on ARES and ham radio activities reminds county public safety managers that we're around and ready to serve in time of need. Also, when you report your hours, your call sign is entered in a monthly drawing. When you win, you get to select one of these valuable prizes!

Save the Dates: ARES Events

2024 SCC ARES Events

Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date?	Description
May 19, 2024	Strawberry Fields Forever Bike Ride	Confirmed	Strawberry Fields Forever is an annual benefit bike ride through some of the most beautiful regions of Santa Cruz County. ARES provides comms between rest stops and SAG vehicles.
June or July, 2024	Santa Cruz Regional Active Shooter and Casualty Care Response Training	Approximate	This event is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's department and provides first responder training for an active shooter. ARES provides perimeter monitoring in maintaining a closed event location.
July 4, 2024	Aptos 4th of July Parade	Confirmed	We provide monitoring of the public to provide information to the Sheriffs
July 27, 2024	Santa Cruz Mountains Challenge	Approximate	An annual benefit bike ride through some of the most beautiful regions of Santa Cruz County, organized by the Santa Cruz County Cycling Club. ARES provides comms between rest stops and SAG vehicles.
August 18, 2024	Race through the Redwoods	Confirmed	Race through the Redwoods is a 10K foot race that starts and finishes at Roaring Camp but the majority traverses the redwoods in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. It is promoted by the Felton Business and Community Association. ARES provides monitoring of runners positions and safety for the organizers.
September 11-15, 2024	Santa Cruz County Fair	Confirmed	ARES provides Net Control functions for Sherriff Office, Security, and Fair personnel.
September 22, 2024	Santa Cruz Triathlon	Approximate	Santa Cruz Triathlon is a non-profit that donates proceeds to various athletic programs in the county. ARES provides monitoring of participants positions and safety for the organizers.
October 25th, 2024	Halloween Trunk or Treat	Approximate	Trunk of Treat is organized by the Santa Cruz Sheriffs. ARES provides monitoring of participants along with closed road staffing and shuttle parking location.

Save the Dates: Other Events

2024 Other Radio Events for Ham Operator Participation

Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date	Description
April 18 - 21, 2024	Sea Otter Classic	Confirmed	World premiere Cycling festival. Ham radio operators provide communications from the Fort Ord National Monument backcountry. More information: https://sbcara.org/otter/
April 28, 2024	Big Sur International Marathon	Confirmed	Point to Point foot race/run along Highway 1 from Big Sur to Carmel. Ham radio operators provide communications along the route. e email: Jeff Ackerman—KG6UYZ at kg6uyz@gmail.com for a volunteer form.
June 22-23, 2024	ARRL Field Day	Confirmed	A national activity promoted by ARRL to share all the various aspects of the Ham Radio. Often hosted by both radio clubs of the Santa Cruz County. More information to be shared at a later date.

Resources

- Website:
  https://xczcomm.com/

- Reporting volunteer hours:
  https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/

- Upcoming events:
  https://xczcomm.com/index.php/calendar-of-events/

- Facebook page:
  https://www.facebook.com/ARES-of-Santa-Cruz-County-Ca-296232310799866

- Facebook group:
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/431308973875528

- PIO Articles:
  https://arrlsantaclaravalley.org/news/ or https://xczcomm.com/index.php/news/

- XCZ Comm You Tube:
  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHZH8TUSgh4SqHTPXSWolPA

- Submitting deployment documents: **send in PDF form** to EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov

- Submitting personal information such as DSW application, personal data update, education certificates:
  email K6PDL@ARRL.net, KM6SV@SLVARES.org, and EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov

FOUND ON THE WEB

Allison, KM6RMN, PIO

S.A.F.E.R.
Situational Awareness For Emergency Response

This month's noteworthy site is the newly launched application, *S.A.F.E.R.*, an aggregation of situational awareness tools collected by Santa Cruz Office of Response, Recovery, and Resiliency (OR3). The *SAFER* acronym expands to Situational Awareness For Emergency Response. Many thanks to Tami, KK6LJX of San Lorenzo Valley Emergency Network for calling my attention to it.

The app makes heavy use of GIS (Geographical Information System) maps, which manage and analyze many kinds of conditional data. Using this, you can get instant assessments of road conditions, traffic, approaching weather, fire zones, flood warnings, and a number of other factors in map and summary form.

This site is visually simple, with the Santa Cruz County seal and site title on the left and some plain oval tabs along the top. The shortened URL I've selected lands you on the *Summary Page* tab, which is the best place to get an overview of Santa Cruz related conditions. If there are no storms or emergency situations, there will be little information populating the page, but during an event you'll be able to home in on vital information as it evolves.

There are two map tabs in the desktop version of S.A.F.E.R. but only one map tab on the phone version, due to small-screen real estate. *Map Views Single* gives you a selection of real-time maps depicting weather, flood/tsunami, fires, PG&E outages, shelter locations, road conditions, and more. Each map is a specialized overlay that can be manipulated in different ways. *Map Views Dual* (only on the desktop version) lets you view two of these maps side by side.

The *Links* tab leads you to additional informational pages, grouped by subject. It's a little underpopulated due to the newness of the app, but the links lead to decent, information-rich sites, usually pre-focused on Santa Cruz County information.

The *Social Media* tab is filled with agency links to Facebook and X (Twitter), with a smattering of Nextdoor and Instagram references if the agency has them. They are good for checking out timely updates from the first responders or agencies who may report situational updates about an area you are going to or reporting on.

Overall, S.A.F.E.R. is a handy information tool for deployment or disaster event activity. Kudos to Santa Cruz OR3 for launching this in time for the big storm in early February. There's lots of room for further growth and usability, and that will come in time.

However, this application has one big problem: findability. Unless you have the site book-marked, you might have trouble locating it with your search engine. Since the tool is built on a third-party platform, its web address is obscure. The platform is called ArcGIS, and the web address starts with …
experience.arcgis.com/experience/… followed by a very long string of numbers. No reference to "SAFER" at all.

Search engine queries for "SAFER" turn up a number of other sites with that word in the title but not the Santa Cruz application. When I query "SAFER SC" in Google I can find it, but neither Yahoo nor DuckDuckGo have a clue. There are some back-door entries on the OR3 site, but you have to dig for them through specific information requests.

So why is *ArcGIS* in the URL? I went to their home site. The ArcGIS platform aggregates information in map and graph form so clients can assemble data as they would on a webpage template. This allows OR3 to make the information available quickly and effectively without having to reinvent the wheel.

The inconvenient URL may be a temporary condition, as the Santa Cruz app is so new. I don't know if *ArcGIS* offers URL alternatives to their clients or if search engine optimization will smooth things out as time goes on. In the short term, I'll give you a *TinyURL* to get you there. Put it in your notes for accessing away from your desk.

Long URL: https://experience.arcgis.com/experi-ence/299b805ef98440e48ebd82a6b7958c9b/page/Summary-Page/

Shortened URL: www.tinyurl.com/OR3-safer-app

If you know a cool website, podcast, YouTube series, or online tool, send me a heads-up at KM6RMN@SLVARES.org. I'll check it out and pass it on to the community.

Santa Cruz County ARES Purpose

- The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment with their local ARES leadership for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes

- We are not fire fighters or police or sheriff's officers. We are volunteers who care about our communities by using our emergency communication skills.

- Before volunteering in an emergency we first take care of ourselves, our family, and our home.

- We value every member's contributions, irrespective of license class, years of experience, or the price tag of equipment.

Ham Radio's Motto

"When all else fails – ham radio works". That is because, when all the normal communication systems stop working, Ham Radio is still in operation, helping people, conveying messages, and sometimes, even saving lives.
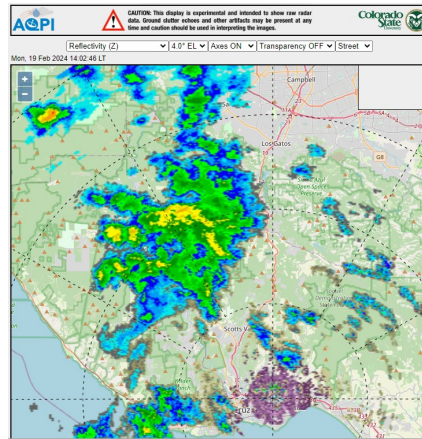
jurisdiction and the purpose to provide a single set of objectives to guide a incident response. Most of the agencies represented work with a ICS structure utilizing planning, operations, intelligence and logistics sections.

Included in the planning are several County of Santa Cruz Operational Area / NWS briefings scheduled multiple days in advance of the weather event. These 30-minute meetings are for the agencies to come together as a coordinated group (about 60–70 people!) to track and prepare for the event. The meetings begin with an up-to-date weather forecast by a local NWS representative followed by the multiple agencies reporting out on their preparations and needs. At the end of the meeting it is expected each agency to have gathered a situational awareness about the forecasted weather event, potential impact, and how each jurisdiction and partner can prepare for, communicate about, and respond to potential flooding and what our shared roles and responsibilities will be. John, N6QX, as our ARES District Emergency Coordinator, attends to identify the potential of activation.

As OR3 has matured so has the organization of these operational area briefings and each of the represented agencies. Compared to last year's weather events the agencies have figured out how to work with each other in a much more coordinated effort and get their needs

addressed or clarified. ICS is definitely a practiced structure and each organization is honoring it. In preparation for this weekend's storms, we heard that the fire departments prepositioned 4 type-3 high water engines with staffing throughout the county after approval from the State. We also heard Flood Control usually work with calls received through Netcom (i.e. Santa Cruz Regional 911) but if the flooding calls becomes too great, they transition to their own dispatch system. NWS even shared data that is coming from the radome ('big white ball') on top of the EOC. Note: The radome data (called XSCR RADAR) is available on the S.A.F.E.R. platform. See article on page 4.

Once the weather event has started, the operational area calls may continue and/or we may be emailed a 'Sit Stat report' (Situation Status report) which outlines any updates. Today's Sit-Stat mentioned minimal impacts thus far from the storms and the EOC transitioning from a Level II activation to Level III (See insert for Level definitions)

	Activation Level	Description
3	Normal Operations/Steady State	• Activities that are normal for the EOC when no incident or specific risk or hazard has been identified • Routine watch and warning activities if the EOC normally houses this function
2	Enhanced Steady-State/Partial Activation	• Certain EOC team members/organizations are activated to monitor a credible threat, risk, or hazard and/or to support the response to a new and potentially evolving incident
1	Full Activation	• EOC team is activated, including personnel from all assisting agencies, to support the response to a major incident or credible threat

Has CERT and ARES always been included? Nope! There has been great work among the varied multi-agencies for understanding the scope and abilities of the various volunteer groups. We appreciate being included.