

The Red Cross EmComm Fall Drill 2020 – Summary and Results

The Red Cross nationwide emergency communications drill was held on Saturday, November 14, with ARES and other operators asked to demonstrate the ability to deliver digital messages using Red Cross forms to specific addresses via Winlink. Participants were tasked with sending one message to the Red Cross Divisional Clearinghouse for their geographic area.

Only Winlink-generated messages were requested. This drill was an exercise in sending messages from local sites to one of seven Divisional Clearinghouses (that is, one for each of the six Red Cross Divisions, plus Hawaii) both to practice and to demonstrate the capability of amateur radio operators across the nation to relay information in times of need.

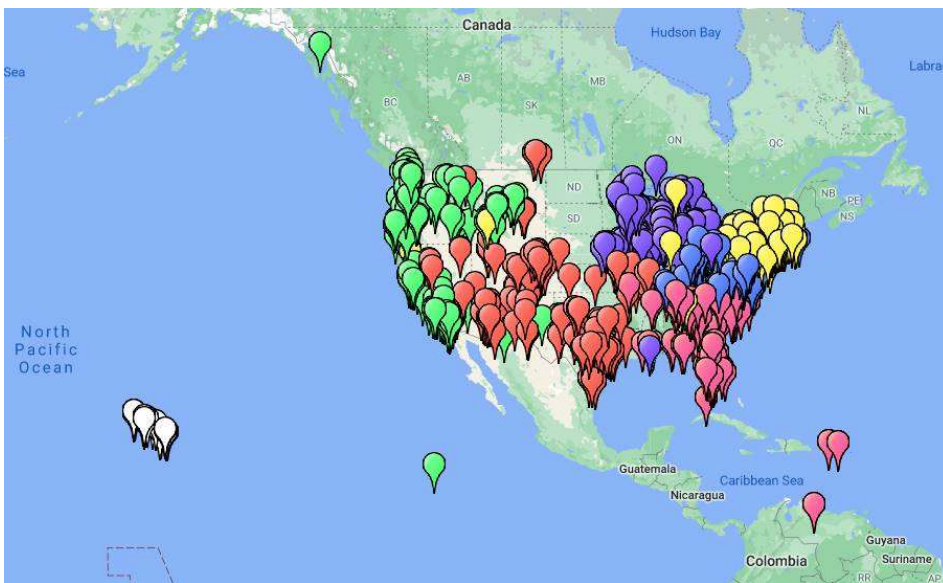
This drill used the messaging program Winlink as the method of delivering preformatted messages. Operators were free to use any connection mode that they had available, including the variety of digital modes on HF, VHF, UHF and Telnet.

The goal was to encourage more operators to become familiar with Winlink and its associated message templates. The primary message template for this exercise was the ARC-213 found in the Winlink catalog of forms templates. This message format allows for standardized messages to be sent and allows for the messages to be easily evaluated for correctness.

The drill started at 9:00 Eastern time and continued until 18:00 local time in each time zone. Thus there was a 9 hour window for each operator to create and send his/her message.

After many hours of number-crunching by our Divisional Clearinghouse managers, the results are in: a staggering 1,750 messages were sent by 1,550 amateur radio operators in forty-seven states, plus Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Canada. This is about twice the number of the very successful first Drill in Spring of 2020.

The map below shows the locations of the participating radio operators.



Our thanks to Rob Jagde, KD2GRS, of Long Island, New York for preparing this map.

For a zoomable map, go here: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Ep-rXb_aOExZAZSIXb0Jx6DRyRuqfp4&ll=10.050625266534244%2C0&z=2

The Red Cross EmComm Steering Committee will begin planning for 2021 Spring and Fall Drills soon. The very popular Winlink training and practice sessions, called Winlink Thursdays, will continue on at least a monthly basis going forward. An important goal is to continue to raise the bar for Winlink Proficiency and Bill McFarland's (NOAXZ) Winlink Thursdays are instrumental in this.

There will be a follow-up report with lessons learned and additional information in the near future.