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What Were Your Expectations for this Exercise?

To learn how to do radio traffic in an emergency.

What Actually Took Place?

I sort of learned how to do message passing. Mostly it seemed to be very chaotic. I arrived at the rescue squad and I had no idea how to work these particular radios. I didn't know how to switch to simplex mode. I didn't know what repeaters were programmed and what memories they were stored in. I didn't know if a frequency that was requested on the radio was a simplex or repeater frequency and what tone to use. They started using some simplex frequencies early on and later switched to repeaters. I tested the winlink as soon as I arrived and found that it worked perfectly with W4GHS-10. Later it stopped working and I switched to W4VZH-10 and that worked for a short while. I did have some problems unlocking the radio and changing channels with this radio as well. Later W4VZH-10 stopped working as well. The winlink portion was pretty much a complete disaster. At one point I thought that bringing winlink down was part of the drill. Later, I came to the understanding that winlink was completely broken.

I attempted to run the radio and do the logging at the same time. That was super hard to do. My logs are a complete train wreck.

What Went Well and Why?

Towards the end I became fairly comfortable using the radio and following the processes. I had completely given up on the winlink by the end and that greatly reduced the stress level. I did figure out the memories on the radio.

What Can be Improved and How?

I visited a location where I had never been and saw a station setup I was completely unfamiliar with. My comments are with this in mind. An experienced operator might need some helpful reminders in a stressful situation as well.

The manual for the radio needs to be stored right with the radio in a very obvious place.

There needs to be a laminated piece of paper detailing the radio memories. It would be best if the radio memories were grouped in a logical order -- either in ascending order or grouping the core repeaters in consecutive memories. (The main net frequency was in memory 3 and the channel I was shunted to most of the time was 22. I believe I used memory

50 something once or twice as well).

The winlink station should have memories for the local gateways programmed into it. There needs to be a laminated piece of paper detailing what gateway goes with each memory channel, i.e. W4VZH-10 via N4USA-5 145.510, W4GHS-10 via W4GHS-5 145.570, etc.

Someone needs to monitor the gateways and report to the net any congestion issues, clogged pipes, idle connections, etc. This person also needs to reset the gateways when/if they get stuck.

Handing large messages on the primary frequency was HORRIBLE. I waited 30 minutes for my turn to pass a message. Any message longer than 10 words, needs to be passed to a side channel. The side channel I keep being sent to was totally clogged as well. More side channels need to be made available, and the net controller somehow needs to know the traffic level on these.

There should be sandwiches.