Alachua County ARES®/NFARC
2026 WINTER FIELD DAY
Jan 24/25 2026

After Action Report/Improvement Plan

Expanded Version for Exercise Planners

WRITTEN Feb 2026

DRAFT

HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Points of Contact:

Alachua County ARES®:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES®) typically organizes at the County Level and upward. In Alachua County, multiple amateur radio clubs support the ARES® mission, including the Gainesville Amateur Radio Society, the North Florida Amateur Radio Club, and the Alachua County EOC Radio Club.

WINTER FIELD DAY is a relatively newer exercise/contest which is held the last full weekend in January to test field preparation of amateur radio for service to the nation as listed in FCC Part 97.1 **During Winter Field Day, participants attempt to make as many short radio connections with others all over the world, exchanging a simple but precise text, and doing so on as many different frequency bands, and by as many different radio techniques as possible.**

This is the third year that the North Florida Amateur Radio Club/ARES(R) group has carried out a WINTER Field Day effort.

We chose to operate out of the existing Alachua County EOC, which is further challenged by have NO coaxial cable for HF antennas due to a cable cut. We are able to install a cable across pavement with protectors against tires, and then use our home-developed Antenna Multiplexer/Bandpass system to allow multiple stations on that one coaxial cable.

In addition, as part of the published national Objectives, we established additional antennas in the front of the EOC, and in the Grassy Field.

This is a smaller exercise than Summer Field Day, and our effort was much more hampered, but we still accomplished 340 contacts and 18 multipliers (counting participation as = 1) , leading to a total claimed score of 10.944, which was a reduction to only 77.8% of the contacts accomplished in 2025, but with only 54% of the number of active operators as that previous year.

Significant Advances as a Result of this Field Day Effort:

- **First time** that our group operated ALL of our equipment from batteries in WFD
- **First time** for Earl Sloan to deploy his new RV trailer as one of our transmitters.
- Fifth contest exercise in which we have **operated simultaneous transmitters on a single coaxial cable,** something with which we are getting quite comfortable out of necessity
- First time that our antenna multiplexer system operated flawlessly without a component failure.
- 100% success at MESH-microwave networking

Major Strengths

- Successful deployment of cross-pavement new 200-foot coaxial cable.
- Successful improvement of the 7MHz(40 meter) bandpass filter.
- Successful deployment of two low-RFI BESTEK 1kW pure sine wave inverters, one for computers in the EOC, another for the MESH and database system.
- Successful in-event recharging of several batteries using a 900 watt governor-controlled camping generator.
- Very successful inverted V Off Center Fed Antenna deployment on carbon fiber mesh antenna (leveraging the success of the AA3YB end-fed antenna from 2025 Field Day GOTA station)
- Simultaneous Training Conference held for first time.

Primary Areas for Improvement

- Improve training of newer participants from recent Technician Licensing Course to increase number of qualified HF operators.
- Increase ARES(R) participation in exercise events such as this.
- Far better pre-event testing of existing antennas needs to be completed
- Better full station checkout by qualified HF operators to include not just

installation of software but full operation of the station, at least to include VOICE and DIGITAL modes.

Summary

Our effort this year was our third Winter Field Day, with somewhat better performance of some of our radio systems, but somewhat reduced participation in actual operating by our local members. Weaknesses in experience and training contributed to reduced participation, and as an emergency communication group, light the way for training we should accomplish with newer members prior to hurricane season.

THIS DOCUMENT

This document is prepared to help the group improve its emergency communications, deployment abilities, and to assist those who will be planning the next year's event. As a consequence, it is lengthy and detailed as to what were our methods, what were our results, and how they compared to our previous Exercises.

Most groups have a variety of participants, ranging from those who are planners, "movers and shakers" and ranging toward those who, for reasons of limitations, other responsibilities, or disinterest, are only peripherally involved (at this particular time). This document is primarily addressed toward the former, rather than the latter group.

For those with more limited time for review, the most important sections are probably Section 3 (Analysis of Objectives/Results), and Appendix A (Improvement Plan)

David Huckstep explaining operations to Chris Cochran, new volunteer

SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	**Winter Field Day 2026**
Exercise Dates	24-25 January 2026
Scope	Full-scale exercise at the Alachua County EOC. Winter Field Day is a Winter Field Day Association-sponsored national event that typically draws 2500 submitted logs.
Mission Area(s)	Response
Core Capabilities	Operational Communication, [1] Planning, Information Sharing, Public Information, and Community Resilience[2]
Objectives	1. Provide safe experience for all. 2. TRAINING for our current members and others who wish to learn. This includes but is not limited to Alachua County staff from the EOC and other county's AUXCOMM personnel. 3. OPPORTUNITIES for our members to assist others in their learning (mentoring/elmering). 4. OPPORTUNITIES for participants to acquire signatures in their ARES or local EOC task books. 5. EXPERIENCE in actual operating conditions, and in using real radio equipment, making multiple contacts in the event sponsored by the Winter Field Day association for these purposes 6. Increased understanding and cohesiveness between participants.
Threat or Hazard	No threat or hazard in this effort but **preparing for loss of normal communications**. The goal is to contact as many other stations as possible using as many different bands and techniques as possible, and to learn to operate radio gear in abnormal situations and sub-optimal conditions [3]
Scenario	Amateur Radio Contest / Communications Testing
Sponsor	Winter Field Day Association.

1 https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_ESF_2_Communications.pdf
2 https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/mission-core-capabilities
3 http://www.arrl.org/files/file/FieldDay/2021/2_1-%20FD%20Flier%20-%20What%20is%20FD%20generic.pdf

Participating Organizations	Winter Field Day is a US/Canada-wide event. This AAR reports on the specific details of NF4AC. NF4AC is the call sign of the Alachua County EOC Radio Club.
Point of Contact	Gordon Gibby, MD, Docvacuumtubes@gmail.com

Event Planning Team

Gordon L. Gibby KX4Z
David Huckstep W4JIR

Number of Participants

1. Earl McDow K4ZSW (Database / IT)
2. Mark McDow KN4POZ (Database / IT & Operating)
3. Gordon Gibby KX4Z
4. David Huckstep W4JIR
5. Earl SloanKI4OXD
6. Mike Hasselbeck WB2FKO
7.. Mannish Sahni KZ4KC
8. Jeff Capehart W4UFL (assisting, setup)
9.. Susan Halbert KG4VWI (teardown)
10. Charlie Scordo WR4BDJ (teaching, setup)
11. Brett Wallace NH2KW (setting up, teaching)
12. Emily Wallace (setting up)
13. Angela Basham AA4BV (setting up)
14. Mark Miller (observing)
15. Christopher Cochran N1CSC (observing, teardown)

SECTION 2: EVENT DESIGN SUMMARY

Event Purpose and Design[4]

Winter Field Day is a relatively recent Exercise that has undergone various changes over the recent few years, but emphasizes winter emergency communications.

A short "exchange" must be communicated from/to each contact made during a 24-hour period. There are penalties for incorrect reception. Scoring rewards communications, but is greatly tilted to reward communications over a variety of frequency bands and by multiple "techniques," which include (a) voice; (b) Morse Code; and (c) any "data" technique capable of transmitting significant emergency communications information..

4 Much of the material of this AARIP repeats standard information nicely summarized by Brett Wallace NH2KW in the 2021 AARIP

For our group, we had to transmit and receive acknowledgment for the exchange 4I NFL because we utilized up to 4 simultaneous transmitters indoors at our EOC, and one travel trailer station, and our location is within the Northern Florida ARRL Section.

The Callsign utilized was **NF4AC** which is the callsign of the Alachua EOC Radio Club.

For our group, this was a proof-test whether we could continuously operate more than one station combined through our single HF coaxial cable, which is a very significant hindrance, limiting our ability to perform simultaneous communications on any one band and limiting and reducing the output power that would actually reach the antenna.

The Incident Action Plan (IAP) included:

- Full explanation of the event and the location and equipment for each station.
- List of assets required for positioning

  The Full Incident Action Plan is available at: https://www.nf4rc.club/historical-exercises/2026-winter-field-day-iap/

Pre event training on PSK31

Actions, Strategies, and Tactics [5]

Timeline Summary - Significant Events

Planning for this potential Field Day began in November, 3 months in advance. However, there was a lower level of interest and disagreements in the group as to the event and possible alternatives.

No.	Date	Item
1	Nov 12, 2025	15 minutes set aside at the November ARES meeting to discuss possibilities for Winter Field Day (far in advance of the event). Susan Halbert **preferred to do a TRAINING CONFERENCE instead of participating in Winter Field Day.** Multiple possible venues were discussed, due to uncertainty of the status of the new EOC building.
2	December 8, 2025	Request to Emergency Management for use of the EOC facility for Winter Field Day (previous year went in approx 2 weeks earlier)
3	Dec 10, 2025	20 minutes allotted for planning at the December ARES Meeting. A combined WFD/Training Conference drat schedule that was very ambitious was discussed and most participants thought it was far too ambitious. There was a lack of consensus as to direction of effort. Brett W. attempted to get a group together to come up with a smaller set of training ideas.
4	Dec 12, 2025	Response to a "sign up" request for who was interested in participating in a combined WFD/Training Conference included the following: 1. Me (Gordon) —prep/operate/ able to teach a bit 2. Manish — able to teach a bit/operate/prep 3. Mike H — but very limited in time right now 4. Earl McDow — database/ networking 5. mark McDow — database:networking (more?) 6. David Huckstep — some operating/prep 7. Rosemary— operate 8. Craig White — prep/operate
5	Dec 12 2025	Response to a signup to hold a stand-alone Training

5 These are taken from the 2020 IAP. Unfortunately, these objectives were not carefully reviewed in the planning for this year's event, but are generally still applicable.

		Conference included: NO ONE -- not a single person indicated interest in holding a standalone Training Conference.
6	Dec 2025	No one appeared to offer assistance to Brett in coming up with a more manageable Training Conference/WFD set of topics, but Brett did come up with a list of his own. Gordon thought they were excellent and largely completely adopted them from then on. (Brett at that point had a prior job commitment and had been very open about that conflict that would prevent his involvement.)
7	Dec 2025	Operating Signup Google Document The following people signed up for operating time on the public document: 1. Manish Sanhi 2. David Huckstep 3. Gordon Gibby 4. Rosemary Jones 5. Mike Hasselbeck There were no other signups. The actual operators during Field day included only those persons (minus Rosemary who was feeling ill) and two additional: Earl Sloan and Mike McDow. Thus the lack of signups on the page predicted low involvement of actual operators.
8	Jan 6, 2026	Approval received from Sheriff's office via David Peaton
9	Jan 14, 2026	Ten minutes allotted on Jan Meeting ARES to finalize plans for WFD/Training Conference. A FLDGI training 3-hour program (similar to a very successful WINLINK training held the month before) was also available.
10	Jan 17, 2026	3-hour FLDGI training opportunity at the EOC was attended by about 7 participants.
11	Jan 2026	Earl Sloan possibility of adding a travel trailer in the Grassy Field materialized. Request to the Sheriff for permission to use the grassy field was made, and granted a few days later.
12	Jan 2026	Due to ice storm, Brett Wallace's conflict resolved and he became available to assist.
13	Thu Jan 22, 2026	Gordon created a "group" to send out requests over Winlink for 2-meter and 70cm contacts

14	Fri Jan 23, 2026	David Huckstep and Gordon Gibby set up physically the three stations in the EOC without setting software etc fully, to leave something for setup teams on Saturday
15	Sat Jan 24, 2026	WFD Setup begins at 0900

Pre Event Training on PSK31

EQUIPMENT Year Over Year

YEAR SUBJECT	2026 (3rd Year)	**2025** **(Our Second Year)**
Radios	Same as 2025, but additional Travel Trailer radios	4 ICOM 7300s (EOC, Huckstep, EOC-go-box, and GLG) Available EOC VHF/UHF FM radios
Amplifiers	N/A again	N/A this year; Limit for power is 100 watts
Antennas	#1 - 135 foot end-fed half wave, using MyAntenna low-loss 2K+ 49:1 Balun and ground rod. #2 - 270 foot off center fed dipole at approximately 40 feet, with homebrew 4:1 Guanella Balun. (Not used) #3 - OCFD 65 foot deployed on carbon fiber mast out on Gordon's trailer Hitch #4 -- Telescoping simple vertical out front #5 -- 2 meter and HF antennas deployed by Earl Sloan #6 EOC dual band VHF/UHF vertical antennas on EOC tower	#1 - 135 foot end-fed half wave, using MyAntenna low-loss 2K+ 49:1 Balun and ground rod. #2 - 270 foot off center fed dipole at approximately 40 feet, with homebrew 4:1 Guanella Balun. (Not used) #3 - 65 foot OCFD sloping vertical installed on pine tree in grassy field (new for 2025) #4 - "PVC" 6meter semi-inverted vee installed in pine tree in grassy field (new for 2025) #5-- EOC dual band VHF/UHF vertical antennas x 3 @ 60 feet on EOC tower.
Computers	Approx 7 Windows computers as 2025, deployed NTP server but not used significantly 1 computer developed networking issues and "blue screen of death" multiple times....	Approximately 7 Windows computers (most Windows 10 but 2 Windows 11) Did NOT use NTP server in 2025
Power systems	Multiple 35- and 100Ahr LIFEPO4 batteries throughout. Charged when needed by 900W camping generator and 20A AC chargers (First year we were completely alternative power for WFD)	EOC commercial power (backed up by generator etc) Generator trailer + LIFEPO4 + lead acid batteries for the travel trailer (new 2025)
Trailer(s)	First year that Earl Sloan provided the grassy field trailer. Significant issues with an MRAP that showed up in the field at WFD.	GLG used 2016 24-foot travel trailer. Difficulties were avoiding frozen pipes, so kept it at least 50 deg F using propane heater. Obtained full tank of propane right before event. Measured approx 3 lbs of propane kept trailer at 55 overnight in

YEAR SUBJECT	2026 (3rd Year)	**2025** **(Our Second Year)**
		weather down into the 20's F.
Winlink Emails	From EOC radios to KX4Z-12 direct	From EOC Shelter Data Radio over VHF to W4DFU-12 (VARA FM)
Incident Command Post	Not used.	Main room, center table, used frequently
Meal Support	Gordon brought in breakfast snacks Mark McDow had great sandwiches for lunch We had so much left over that we didn't order supper. Jeff Capehart handled sweets for Sunday morning.	Saturday - Chili, Birthday Cake - Gordon Sunday - Breakfast muffins, coffee. Lunch Pizza from left over nutritional funds under care of Susan.
Networking	Similar to 2025 -- worked very well except for one Lenovo with networking interface issues.	Ethernet cabling to most computers in EOC; 2.4 GHz Part 15 MESH networking to the travel trailer; wifi from the lower fence post to the computer in the trailer. 120VAC modified sine wave from battery operated inverter to feed the MESH and wifi systems. (Worked much better with LIFEPO4 battery and removing the laptop from using this power.)

EQUIPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS MADE AS A RESULT OF 2026 WINTER FIELD DAY		
1	Detected bad coax on EOC Station #1	
2	First large test of BESTEK 1kW pure sine wave inverters for entire event.	
3	All Multiplexer bands appeared to work well except 80m SWR climbed in continuous use of PSK31 at 100 W. New 40m filter worked well!	

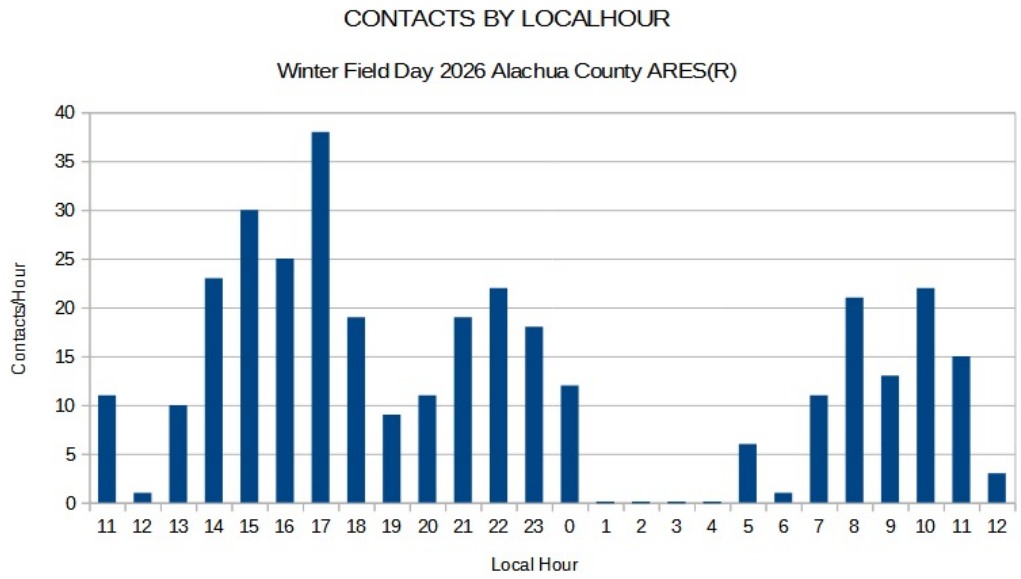
SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVES / RESULTS

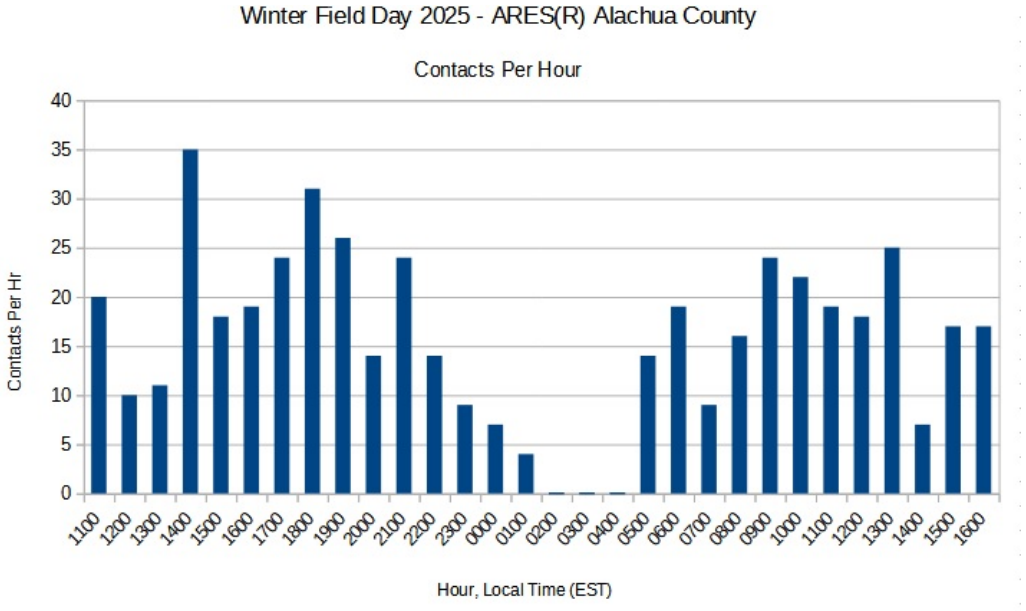
CALCULATED PERFORMANCE[6]

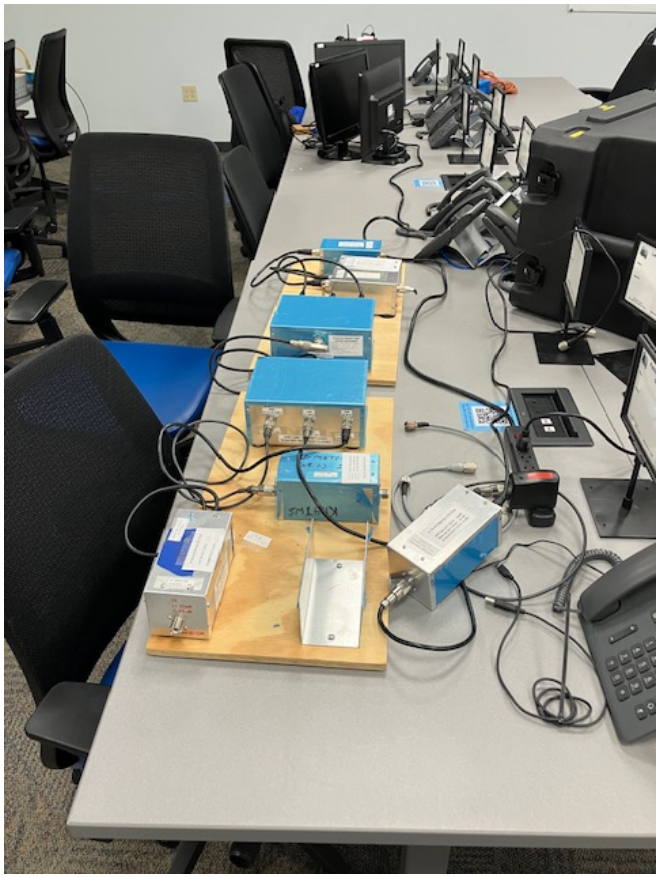
	2024	2025	2026
Total CW Contacts	111	154	140 (almost as good!) CW WINS THIS YEAR!!
Total Phone Contacts	129	173	72 (WAY down!)
Total DIG Contacts	64	146	128 (almost as good)
Total Multiplier	21	16 (Vastly different calculation 2025)	18 (Another vastly different calculation)
Total Score	10,059	12,368	10,944
Total on-site operators	13 (counting some not in logbook) Log: 12	14 (counting some not in logbook) Log: 11	Total participating: 15 (Counting setup, teaching, teardown) 3 Marion County Visitors Log: 6 (five operators short of 2025 results)
Primary off-site contacts	1 (K9RFT)	N/A this year	N/A this year

6 This is prior to checking and correction by the Winter Field Day Association, which may reduce the score.

TOTAL CONTACTS BY HOUR 2026 VERSUS 2025







Antenna Multiplexer Shifted to Inverted Vee during confusion over EFHW Antenna

CONTACTS PER OPERATOR 2026

Total Contacts by Operator:

Operator	Total	%
KX4Z	97	29
KZ4KC	92	27
W4JIR	84	25
WB2FKO	51	15
KI4OXD	11	3
N4TEK	5	1

Total = 6

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Perform-ed (U)
1. Safety for All	Community Resilience	**P**			
2. TRAINING for our current members and others who wish to learn. This includes but is not limited to Alachua County staff from the EOC and other county's AUXCOMM personnel.	Operational Coordin-ation; Operational Commun-ications	**P**[7]			
3. OPPORTUNITIES for our members to assist others in their learning (mentoring/elmering)	Operational Coordin-ation; Operational Commun-ications		**S**		
4. OPPORTUNITIES for participants to acquire signa-tures in their ARES or local EOC task books.	Operational Commun-ications				**U**
5. EXPERIENCE in actual operating conditions, and in using real radio equipment, making multiple contacts in the event sponsored by the Winter Field Day association for these purposes	Operational Commun-ications		**S**		
6. Increased understanding and cohesiveness between participants.	Operational Commun-ications	**P**			

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

7 The participating members had great fun and learned.

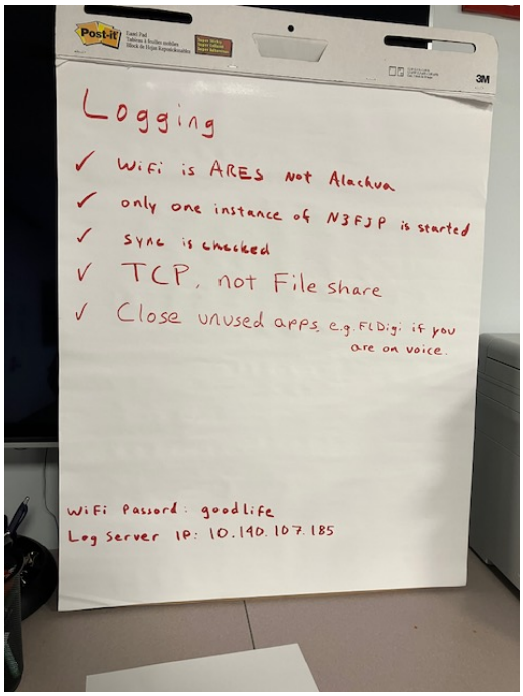
Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Perform-ed (U)

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).

Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance

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.



Helpful Instructions From IT Crew

OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE SAFE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL.

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *Our pavement protectors work well and keep coax from causing damage or injuries related to passing vehicles*

Strength 2: *The carbon fiber mast and simple vertical were safe to deploy.*

Strength 3: *The RG316 coax worked well under rugs. We had all coax in walkways protected to reduce trip hazards, and we also protected with blue painters' tape, all coax crossing walkways in our operating sphere.*

Strength 4: *There were no electrical disasters with high power batteries.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *In the frantic work to figure out antenna issues, coaxial cable went "everywhere" in the night, increasing risk of trip and fall.*

OBJECTIVE 2: TRAINING FOR OUR CURRENT MEMBERS AND OTHERS WHO WISH TO LEARN. THIS INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO ALACHUA COUNTY STAFF FROM THE EOC AND OTHER COUNTY'S AUXCOMM PERSONNEL.

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *We provided excellent hands-on opportunities for antenna and equipment setup practice in deploying multiple "new" stations and antennas. The following personnel took advantage of this unique training opportunity:*

1. Earl McDow K4ZSW (Database / IT)
2. Mark McDow KN4POZ (Database / IT)
3. Gordon Gibby KX4Z
4. David Huckstep W4JIR
5. Earl SloanKI4OXD

7.. Mannish Sahni KZ4KC

8. Jeff Capehart W4UFL (setup)
9. Charlie Scordo WR4BDJ (setup)
10. Brett Wallace NH2KW (setting up)
11. Emily Wallace (setting up)
12. Angela Basham AA4BV (setting up)
13. Christopher Cochran N1CSC (teardown)

Strength 2: *We opened up our effort to assist any other county leadership who wanted to get experience.*

Strength 3: *We held TWO lengthy training sessions prior to WFD: 3-hour training on WINLINK and 3-hour training on keyboard-specific FLDGI These had moderate attendance of about 8 persons each.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *We just didn't have enough TIME to conduct setup in a measured fashion and this severely limited training opportunities. 9AM - 11 AM was completely inadequate and would have failed completely if Col. Huckstep had not exerted leadership to get a lot of equipment already in place*

on Friday afternoon (in accordance with the rules). Strongly suggest much more leisurely setup plans for next time!!

Area for Improvement: *There were many more ARES(R) volunteers who might have benefited from being part of the setup effort. Find ways to increase engagement beyond those who "are always there."*

OBJECTIVE 3: OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR MEMBERS TO ASSIST OTHERS IN THEIR LEARNING (MENTORING/ELMERING).

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *We provided the opportunities and a modest number of ARES(R) participants took advantage, gaining very valuable insights, particularly from Dave Huckstep.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *Limited number of ARES(R) volunteers took advantage.*

Area for Improvement: *Dropping all the new trainees on David Huckstep decreased his productivity and reduced his overall enjoyment of the activity. Try to find ADDITIONAL persons who are qualified enough to mentor in these kinds of exercises.*

OBJECTIVE 4: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS TO ACQUIRE SIGNATURES IN THEIR ARES OR LOCAL EOC TASK BOOKS.

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *We were accomplishing a LOT of training-potential efforts.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *The modest number of participants, lack of pre-event division into teams, made for rushed opportunities for training. Better to appoint someone to oversee signoffs, and arrange specific opportunities.*

OBJECTIVE 5: EXPERIENCE IN ACTUAL OPERATING CONDITIONS, AND IN USING REAL RADIO EQUIPMENT, MAKING MULTIPLE CONTACTS IN THE EVENT SPONSORED BY THE WINTER FIELD DAY ASSOCIATION FOR THESE PURPOSES

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *We had good equipment set up for 3-4 stations and working antenna multiplexer, and lots of OPEN BANDS for people to experience making lots of Voice, Digital or CW contacts.*

Strength 2: *We had held two 3-hour training sessions to give participants advance training to help get them ready.*

Strength 2: *The Informatics portion of our effort was just amazingly good this year and is a testament to how their assets and capabilities have grown, even when thrown the curveball of adding a distant station.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *Lack of pre-event study of the antennas led to tremendous confusion when other failures (coax, switches) also happened -- reducing valuable time for actual on-the-air effort.*

Area for Improvement: *Lack of a written set of goals for the "station setup teams" led to equipment that really wasn't ready for duty at the beginning.*

Area for Improvement: *Inadequate experience on the part of the setup crew led to missing items that might have been checked.*

Area for Improvement: *Lack of careful pre-event check out of equipment led to much confusion and frustration trying to figure out failures such as a shorted coaxial cable line.*

Area for Improvement: *Some participants don't' have a solid grasp of the skills required for advanced operations such as Winlink or CW and need more training to understand the level of time and practice needed to master some of the communications skills that our volunteers need to have.*

Area for Improvement: *Need to significantly broaden the training and participation by larger number of the members who show up every Thursday for the ARES net but not so much for annual exercises.*

Event	High performing group (subjective observation of totals)	% of total QSO's achieved by small group
2024 ARRL Field Day	KX4Z, WB2FKO, KZ4KC,W4JIR,KI4OXD -- 1281 contacts	78%
2025 Winter Field Day	KX4Z, W4JIR, KI4OXD, WB2FKO -- 334 contacts	70.6%
2025 ARRL Field Day	W4JIR, WB2FKO, KX4Z, KZ4KC, W4UFL -- 1038 contacts	71.3%
2026 Winter Field Day	KX4Z, KZ4KC, W4JIR, WB2FKO -- 324 contacts	95.3%

OBJECTIVE 6: INCREASED UNDERSTANDING AND COHESIVENESS BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS.

CORE CAPABILITIES: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Strengths

Strength 1: *Our teams worked extremely well together during the entire event.*

Strength 2: *We had a lot of effort by a large number of our volunteers to bring this about.*

Areas for Improvement

Area for Improvement: *For various reasons, we didn't have as much participation as we would optimally have. Should work to increase training and participation to develop a larger well-rounded team of volunteers, who prioritize these kinds of opportunities.*

Area for Improvement: *Try to get everyone on the same page well in advance so volunteers recognize chances to join in and grow their own capabilities right on site, without having to be away from the group separately growing their capabilities. Work to make as wide a range of opportunities available as possible.*

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

- We had fewer problems with our Antenna Multiplexer and Informatics systems this year, but lack of pre-preparation resulted in massive confusion about the antenna performance and a miss of an important coaxial cable failure in Station 1.

- We had excellent performance of our CW team, who ended up with the largest number of contacts. The WINKEYER was generally reliable (if the port had a default 1200 baud) with only a few mix ups. Best to open it, get out out of the setup and just use it.
- Our improvements and fixes to the Antenna Multiplexer (2025 Improvement Plan) were well rewarded with failure-free performance and much better isolation between some troublesome bands.
- Our improved coaxial cable reduced losses, likely by significant amounts, making it possible for us to "work anyone we could hear" (2025 Improvement Plan)
- Our LabNLunch testing of INVERTERS led us to procure much RF-quieter inverters and these, with filtering resulted in excellent performance this year. (2025 Improvement Plan)
- Many of our members purchased 100AHr LIFEPO4 batteries with Bluetooth monitoring and these worked perfectly for our group! (2025 Improvement Plan)
- One of our members purchased additional high power 20A chargers and those were extremely helpful in charging larger batteries.
- Our wired connection for Ethernet for a trailer in the grassy field worked very well, but somewhat constrained parking of the trailer. (2025 Improvement Plan)

- We needed a LOT more time for setup! Including time on the day before and very careful study of equipment and antennas beforehand. This is hampered by the cable cut our team endured a few months back.

- We needed better planning for the "teams" doing setup -- more skilled HF operators and more detailed checklists of items to check.

- Our extended effort to get contacts on two difficult bands (10meters by Gordon, and 2 meters by Earl) resulted in very significant improvements in not only our SCORE, but our understanding of how we could use those bands in actual conditions. We learned we really could find people on 146.520 for example.

- Tremendous success in operating completely from batteries and alternative charging

systems for the first time in WFD. We learned the computers are the largest draw!

Although we had a modest crowd for much of the event and severely limited setup time, we still managed to get a nationally competitive score (upper 6% of the entire Indoor category) and were the highest known scoring team in Alachua County due to our careful effort on the published OBJECTIVES and extensive capabilities in Digital and CW techniques. We can do even better, but will need to work on more training for newer persons and those with more limited skillsets and work to improve engagement by more volunteers.

Inverted Vee on carbon fiber mast

APPENDIX A
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2026 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

No.	In Area	Item	Comment / Assignment / Completion
	RADIO / NETWORK / COMPUTING ASSET IMPROVEMENT		
1.	#1	Do a much better job of **pre-event testing** of antennas and stations: a) Run SWR curves in repeatable fashion on each antenna b) Test equipment for each station well before event: - ability to tune on several bands at minimum - correct SIGNAL LEVELS on multiple bands on receive - ability to connect to canned text for digital and CW modes - connection to database - loose coax - power supply losses	
2.	#2	Get rid of RG58 level coaxial cables on setups, particularly where they are subject to BENDING. Make all jumpers RG8X or bigger and added fixed 90 degree angle connectors where needed.	Gordon will work on HIS go-box on these items as well.
3	#3	Significantly improve Station 1 by rebuilding its DC feed to make it much more simple; also provide obvious IN and OUT connection to the external amplifier and station switch, so operators could easily recognize how to jumper if used by itself.	
	INCIDENT PLANNING IMPROVEMENT		

4	1	Involve a wide group of people in the planning phases. Make it more of a group effort. Work to encourage people to COMPROMISE and agree to show up to support anything THEY propose for others to do. (Avoid being only the "conductor of the Good Idea Train" who throws out ideas for OTHERS to carry out, rather than a working participant serving others in the group.)	
5	2	Provide setup over TWO days (in compliance with rules) and optimally provide 8-10 hours of preparation time.	
6.	3	Test every station and antenna THOROUGHLY before the event. (see item above as well)	
7.	4	Revive the IC position and acquire volunteers	
8.	5	Better set up the nutritional supplementation planning and positions.	
9.	6	Work to get everyone on the same page so more people see opportunities for their own growth within the group effort.	
10	7	Go ahead and PLAN for an "extra" station so we can flex better if needed for VHF or more people show up.	
11	8	Have a spare computer working and available in case there is a computer failure such as we had this year.	
12	9	Next year we may be in the NEW EOC with significantly different antenna opportunities and station placement opportunities. Think through how we are going to support multiple stations on a SMALLER CAMPUS.	
13	10	Provide BAND PLANS and CANNED TEXT cheat sheets to operating position.	
14	11	Given the success this year of the Inverted Vee OCFD 40m&Up dipole, consider that as an antenna for deployment for 2027 WFD.	
15	12	Given the success of the "$49 Amazon Vertical" consider that as an alternative for a deployment antenna for 2027 WFD	

	INCIDENT PRE-TRAINING IMPROVEMENT		
16.	#1	Provide additional training sessions throughout the lead-up months to significantly improve and broaden capabilities -- **basic HF receiver operation; basic HF transmitter operation; FLDGI operation; WINLINK** Track who takes training; consider "quizzes" to evaluate success of training. Be certain to go over the "rhythm" of digital contacts and stress the need to "make your signal heard" with longer canned texts Items to consider to include: a) understanding HF noise (ITU data) and power response b) understanding of resonant antennas, bandwidth, SWR, Q c) understanding of non-resonant antennas, tuning possibilities d) understanding of common-mode currents, their impact, and mitigation techniques e) deep understanding ionospheric impact on various bands, day/night and propagation opportunities f) ability to operate a SSB receiver: tuning, demodulation, bandpass, notches, RIT, squelch g) ability to operate a SSB transmitter: tuning, modulation, linearity, power level, over- and under-modulation; selection of modulation inputs h) communication techniques: analog voice; digital keyboard-to-keyboard techniques; FT8 techniques; WINLINK, FLDGI i) electricity: connections, current levels, power, wattage, energy calculations,	
17	2	Individual phone call invitations to get more people to participate -- do this well in advance so we can integrate them into our planning.	
18	3	See if we can get a more solid SATELLITE station built by next year. (Gordon has been working on this in fits and starts.)	

	INCIDENT EXECUTION IMPROVEMENT		
19	1	Make the PSK31 CQ considerably longer (several lines) to potentially attract more attention. (possibility of a "short" and "long" version?)	
20	2	More availability of Incident Commanders. (*Quicker recognition of opportunities and problems, quicker resolution*.)	
21	3	Make more use of the White Board to track our progress and opportunities (something IC can do)	
22	4	Continue goodies for the 911 operators (*Maintain goodwill*.)	Earl Sloan plans on this.
23	5	Significantly increase participation by lesser engaged volunteers	

NETWORKING EXPERTS - MARK MCDOW (FRONT) AND EARL MCDOW (BACK)

APPENDIX B

HOTWASH FULL DOCUMENTATION

WHAT WENT WELL – AND OTHERWISE

	First material from email input from Mike Hasselbeck
1	I operated cw exclusively and made just over 50 QSOs on 80/40m in about 4 hours. Station worked reasonably well and I was able to work just about everybody I heard [emphasis added because of the significance of this observation]
2	I quit when activity dried up as it looked like everyone had gone to sleep by 1 AM. Not a lot of participation, certainly nothing like the activity in summer FD. Having WFD on the same weekend as the CQ 160m contest is certainly going to hurt cw activity on 80 and 40.
3	The N3FJP logging software is really nice for cw and sends perfect code at the push of a button. I heard several ops attempting to use old school bugs, but their code was completely incomprehensible.
4	Kudos to W4JIR for grinding it out on phone, where he was getting much less action than I was. Sorry I couldn't help with setup or teardown but we had other commitments.
5	Gordon: THANK GOODNESS David Huckstep convinced me to work with him to set up the physical stations on Friday -- the 2 hour period for setup of almost all stations on Saturday proved INADEQUATE. Since we often don't have "fixed stations" ahead of time, we need a lot MORE time to set everything up and check it out.
6	Mesh and database systems seemed flawless this year! Kudo's to Earl and Mark McDow!
7	Gordon: Big Issue was we didn't test the antennas prior to the event, related to the difficulty caused by the cable cut. We really needed to have their status well known from the beginning.
8	Gordon: The unexpected bad cable on the 7300 at Station #1 took hours to discover. There were plenty of obvious SIGNS (very weak signals, no one hardly could hear

	me) but lack of familiarity with that station's normal performance [due to cable cut and lack of time on that station] significantly delayed discovery. Noise on 80 meters should be about S7; on 40 meters about S4 on a full size antenna and ICOM level S-meters.
9	Gordon: We had INSUFFICIENT people to do the setup without stress. Need to develop more trained volunteers capable of setup and HF station evaluation.
10	Gordon: We didn't make a good list of what "setting up a station" includes: a) Getting the N3FJP software working with proper callsign, exchange and connected to central database b) Getting the FLDGI software working with proper callsign, correct canned text, and connecting to radio and to N3FJP c) Getting DC power to the radio and tuner d) Getting correct AC power to the computer (alternative origin in this case) e) Station receives properly -- correct signal levels f) Station transmits properly -- SWR, power level correct for situation g) Antenna appears proper h) FLDGI working i) (CW station) N3FJP connecting to WINKEYER and controlling properly
11	Gordon: Somewhat lack of awareness of the IAP by participants
12	Gordon: Lack of training for some participants on advanced skillsets (e.g. Winlink, Morse Code) and unrealistic expectation to just be able to jump into those complicated skills immediately during Disaster Exercise
13	Gordon: I and others missed that Station #1 was GROUNDED by the Yaesu/Heathkit/7300 switch. We incorrectly assumed that was bypassed. This took a couple hours to recognize.
14	Gordon: We have only a very small number of operators who have the basic HF skills of a General Class licensee of the 1970's -- this is an educational and training OPPORTUNITY in areas such as a) understanding HF noise (ITU data) and power response b) understanding of resonant antennas, bandwidth, SWR, Q c) understanding of non-resonant antennas, tuning possibilities d) understanding of common-mode currents, their impact, and mitigation techniques e) deep understanding ionospheric impact on various bands, day/night and propagation opportunities f) ability to operate a SSB receiver: tuning, demodulation, bandpass, notches, RIT, squelch g) ability to operate a SSB transmitter: tuning, modulation, linearity, power level, over- and under-modulation; selection of modulation inputs h) communication techniques: analog voice; digital keyboard-to-keyboard techniques; FT8 techniques; WINLINK, FLDGI i) electricity: connections, current levels, power, wattage, energy calculations,

	batteries, power supplies, protection (possibly much more)
15	Gordon: We used David Huckstep often to help mentor newer people, but this put more stress on him and reduced his effectiveness at making contacts. Need more mentoring BEFOREHAND and additional mentors.
16	David: We didn't CHECK the equipment for actual HF operation – so we didn't know that there was a problem possibly with the antenna – so scrambling with multiple problems simultaneously. MAKE SURE everything is working – check EVERYTHING for actual operation
17	David: Dismantling our EOC – not in favor of that. When we dismantle – things get broken and quit working properly! So avoid dismantling station unless "Armageddon" Money for the Go-box that we assembled came about just so we WOULDN'T have to dismantle the main radio room.
18	David: Couldn't get anybody to agree on anything; folks who threw out ideas were not there to implement them; disappointed with the numbers who showed up. Feels he didn't improve this time from distractions and other things he was trying to work on. Newbies needing mentoring. Good mentoring, but limited ability to be "speedy." Feels like he wasn't as product as he would have expected.
19	Jeff Capehart: Was working with Dave Huckstep to make a few contacts here and there. Big problem with the antenna and coax – did ultimately get it resolved. Part of reason for training conference was to get OTHERS involved. Split focus, the cost of ; "not super competitive" this time.
20	Jeff: Our calling CQ macro for PSK31 – most of the other stations would run a long string of characters going by which made it easier to click on and – ours was very short and that didn't make it easy for everyone to click on. The browsing might clear it all out. CQ CQ CQ WFD WFD WFD – with lots of callsigns – allowed the listener more time to click on their station.
21	Jeff: When you tried to catch one station, another would show up and you could get lost jumping between them.
22	Jeff: Nice that the FLDGI would show up callsigns in RED if you had worked them before.
23	Jeff: Ended up with a lot of food left over. Not sure how many were coming over. He planned for 15 and lots of stuff left over. Left a note so they would know where it came from.
24	Jeff: Thought the training part of the conference was fine; for the ones who showed up, we got some things done – got Angela's radio fixed!
25	Earl McDow: Late additions to the program – were not expecting 4 stations; had to put up and an-

	tenna from scratch – extra 30min to an hour to get that setup. Cut into the teaching part of it. Were not Expecting that. "Deadline" for what we're going to do.
26	Earl: Communications part went well.
27	Earl Sloan KI4OXD: Had some "issues": trailer brake controller issues; having to set up the trailer 3 times was a pain! Note that if we use the grassy field, set up closer to the road and out of the way of the MACK TRUCK if they need to get out. Mark figured out that we needed the IP number instead of the NAME to connect to the network. Made one change to the PSK31 Macro – added in our call.
28	Manish Sahni One of our laptops crashed with blue screen of death – 4 times – didn't have a BACKUP laptop setup so had to stop doing work to set up a Backup Silver HF3 crashed.
29	Manish: PSK Macros were slightly different on each computer – he modified them on the fly to make it easier for him to use. PSK on 20 meters was going GREAT and he was always able to find people and get them to respond On 15 and 10 meters there weren't many people to contact on PSK. Perhaps next time put more CW on the band where there aren't many PSK31.
30	General suggestion: just go ahead and set for an additional station; then you can jump on VHF or whatever as needed.
31	The computer team didn't have a LIST of a comprehensive checkout of the stations (Gordon agrees -- we can do that better!)
32	How do we get more people to participate? Jeff – phone calls work to get people to join in.
33	Suggestion: Whiteboard – last year we had band based multipliers – this time the multipliers were different and disjointed multipliers and didn't use the whit board – (but we had no IC) (Some way to have it show up on the computers???) Adds in TEAM SPIRIT when we track how we are doing –
34	Mike – the idea of cold calling – doesn't sound as appealing – Mike enjoys it and makes the time; avoid "strong arming" folks. Not sure that winter field day (overall) pales in comparison to summer field day. Can't use FT8. HF bands are dominated by FT8. Not as popular a contest.
35	Earl – getting more people out there – there are more techs out there and there should be a way that we can get who is a new tech and send them an email or a radiogram and get them to JOIN US –
36	David – Thinks Jeff would be a good incident commander; very helpful and floats around and keeps track of what is going around. Jeff missing his calling .
37	David: We may be lucky to be in our new location by MARCH. Hope we are in

	there before June 1. Food for thought: Totally different environment – total Fire Administration – 24/7 (2nd floor) EOC on 1st floor. Expect a larger room. We have a larger closet. Not as free as we have been in the past. Might have more problems getting use of the Conference room in the future. (Gordon: on the other hand, we might have room for FIVE STATIONS in the new room!!)
38	What antenna was Mike on – he found people were very MOTIVATED to get contacts done – people gutting it out.
39	Very positive story on the battery == only the computers' battery needed recharging (done with the 900 watt camping generator)

Rather than using the condensed AAR/IP template found on the FEMA preptoolkit for HSEEP (See: https://preptoolkit.fema.gov/web/hseep-resources) this report follows more closely the previous, more all-inclusive version so that the reader can have a fuller understanding of the entire Exercise, its outcome, and improvements suggested for subsequent exercises of its type. This is in keeping with previous AAR/IP's for Alachua County ARES®/North Florida Amateur Radio Club, such as: our 2021 Field Day AAR/IP (https://qsl.net/nf4rc/2021/AlachuaCountyARES2021FIELDDAYAfterActionReport.pdf) and our 2020 Field Day AAR/IP (https://qsl.net/nf4rc/2020/AlachuaCountyARES2020FIELDDAYAfterActionReport.pdf

W4JIR Workstation, Station #2

APPENDIX C

CW CANNED TEXT (REFERENCE)

Note that N3FJP logs whenever you hit ENTER.

	MORSE CODE SUGGESTED CANNED TEXTS YOU MAY WISH TO IMPROVE UPON THEM WITH EXPERIENCE SLOWER OPERATIONS WILL USE DIFFERENT TEXTS FROM FASTER OPERATIONS. These TEXTS are the same whether you are using a WINKEYER or having N3FJP key the 7300 directly. Numbering synchronized with other modes	
FUNCTION KEY	TEXT SENT	How this Function Key is used
F1	CQ WFD NF4AC NF4AC WFD [repeats]	repetitive CQ; station K4AAA answers "K4AAA" You type their callsign into N3FJP so you can use it with the $ in the next step.
F2	$ 4I 4I NFL NFL BK or $ 4I NFL BK if folks are being really succinct (Gordon shortened this to $ 4F NFL BK in the 2023 Field Day with good success)	ANS EXCH (We responded: K4AAA 3I NFL BK) He answers **R 1H GA**
F3	3I 3I NFL NFL	EXCH ONLY -- you can use this just to send the exchange if needed
F4	QSL TU QRZ NF4AC WFD	QSL QRZ? This allows you to confirm to the station you were working and immediately move to a new contact.

HUNT AND POUNCE USEFUL TEXTS		
F5	NF4AC	POUNCE (the other station should reply and send you their exchange)
F6	QSL 4I 4I NFL NFL	QSL EXCH
F7	AGN?	If we need a repeat
F8		
F9		
F10		
F11	DUPE	to notify someone they would be a duplicate

This Table May Be Helpful To Organize the Canned Texts:

CQ ON FREQUENCY		HUNT & POUNCE			
F1	CQ..de NF4AC K	F5	NF4AC	F9	
F2	ANS EXCH $ 3I NFL BK	F6	QSL EXCH	F9	
F3	EXCH ONLY 3I 3I NFL NFL	F7	AGN?	F10	
F4	QSL QRZ	F8			

New Trailer Participant! KI4OXD

PSK31

Canned Text Button Label	What is Sent (numbering synchronized with other modes)	Comment
RUN CQ (F1 on keyboard)	<TX> CQ WFD CQ WFD DE <MYCALL> <MYCALL> CQ WFD <RX>	RUN CQ
ANS (F2 on keyboard)	<TX> <CALL> <CALL> DE <MYCALL> 3I 3I NFL NFL <RX>	use to answer person responding to your run CQ
EXCH (F3 on keyboard)	<TX> 3I 3I NFL NFL <RX>	in case needed to send exchange again
QSL-QRZ (F4 on keyboard)	<TX> QSL QSL TU QRZ WFD <MYCALL> <MYCALL> CQ WFD <RX>	answering an exchange
There is a gap between the first four screen buttons and the second, and a similar gap between the corresponding first four Function keys and the second four.		
Pounce (F5 on keyboard)	<TX> NF4AC NF4AC <RX>	responding to a run CQ'er
Exchange (F6 on keyboard)	<TX> QSL 3I 3I NFL NFL NF4AC <RX>	
LOG CLRL (F8 on keyboard)	<LOG> <CLRLOG>	(logs immediately if required fields are entered)