

Benefits From April 2026 Events

It was a busy April for the Alachua County ARES(R) team -- but all the experiences resulted in multiple benefits for our preparedness:

BENEFITS OBTAINED

1. Improvement in ability to operate multiple HF stations simultaneously at one location -- at FL POTA event we got participants to space out antennas better, and to understand and utilize the Antenna Multiplexer better.
2. Detected split plastic collar on a fiberglass mast, one section fallen inside and mast unable to get very high. Unfortunately the epoxy repair glue job caused another problem: sticking sections! Taking it all apart AGAIN and sanding and sanding fixed it much better and now the mast goes up to full height again.
3. Found software setup problems with one ham's station and corrected.
4. Discovered huge (20dB over S9) noise problems for a ham -- cause determined to be laptop charger! So improve filtering or better supply will allow that ham on the air during disaster.
5. Failed 8-year old generator discovered. Multiple efforts are close to having restoration.



6. Discovered carbon monoxide excessive sensitivity on replacement generator: fixed with a bypass solution. Result: tested and working new generator.
7. Another ham learned how to use digital software, success in making contacts and much better understanding of this part of ham radio.
8. Detection of wind-susceptibility of one antenna support system.
9. A not-yet-licensed ham-to-be gained incredible FT8 capability while being mentored by another new ham at

same technique.

10. I got my first taste of operating innate FT8 on sBitx thanks to mentoring by Manish Sahni. Also detected that outboard soundcard modulation level is inadequate (needs small repair).
11. Detected intermittent SO-239 center pin connection on my primary go-box: replaced connector and rewound the 1:1 choke with RG316 at the same time. Huge improvement!
12. Mentoring of multiple members on voice techniques by Ron Lewis.
13. Demonstration of ham radio to multiple visitors.
14. Tested out an improved horizontal deployment of OCFD antenna between two 30-foot masts for the first time: excellent signal strength as a result!
15. Development of elevated 1/4 wave vertical by Earl Sloan to improve signal strength.



Successful participation in ARRL Open House!



16. First actual testing of the San Felasco CSO building, showing it could be a very workable emergency site.
17. Our organized operation created actual interest by Rangers in having potential permanent station at site.
18. Detection that our "loaner" computers were way behind on updates -- corrected by hours of updating.
19. Tested new organization system for documenting pickup truck loading: much quicker and better organized demobilization resulted.
20. Recognition of low contact rate by voice operators and significant ideas for improvement developed as a result of objective comparisons made possible by the event.
21. Got a previously un-exercised radio on the air so operator could become more familiar.
22. New ham-visitor interested in joining, got chance to get HF experience and begin to become part of group.



Excessive CO-sensor sensitivity fixed.

All of these 22 improvements to our preparedness were the result of just getting out of our comfort zone and trying things in April! I think this was extremely beneficial to our group.