



WCF ARES® Communicator

The PACE Communications Plan

February 2026

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William Miller N1CDO

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Fellow ARES® Members,

[Editor's Note: This month we have a guest author, **Mike Drake, WA1RYQ**, Training Officer, Pinellas County ACS/ARES. For years, we, in ARES®, have lived by the motto, "When All Else Fails. ®" Today's communications systems are much more resilient than decades past. As Communicators, we need to be ready to assist our agencies at many levels. PACE is our model going forward.]

During our everyday lives we take our ability to immediately communicate with family members, friends, and emergency response organizations for granted. Internet and cell phone technologies have enabled us to talk, text, and email, almost instantly, to virtually anyone on the planet and access cloud-based services that can provide us with current news, weather, and information on any topic we choose.

Although these technologies are highly reliable, they are not fool proof. Commercial systems are not designed to withstand extreme weather events, industrial accidents, or acts of terror. In many cases, an event that would cause a regional internet and cell phone outage would also require Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) to activate and emergency response personnel to deploy.

The failure of primary communications systems like the internet or cell phone service must not degrade emergency response and recovery operations. Backup communications capabilities must be clearly defined, understood by all mission personnel, and exercised on a regular basis.

A primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) Communications Plan is a document that defines the order in which an organization will move through available communications systems when trying to establish contact with a desired user or service. It establishes a well-defined process for selecting and implementing a backup communications channel. Its main objective is to establish redundancy so that some means of communication with critical users, organizations, and services, are always available.

Within each plan, the primary communications system is the system used during normal operations. When the primary system fails, users will first attempt to establish communications using the Alternate system, followed by the Contingency system, and finally, the Emergency system. Refer to Figure 1 for the PACE Plan Hierarchy.

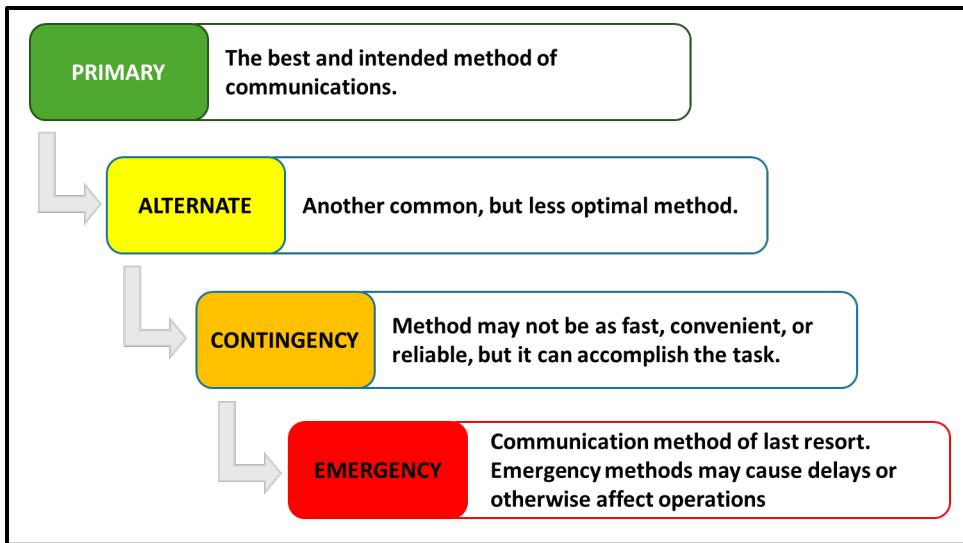


Figure 1. PACE Plan Hierarchy

A separate PACE Communications Plan is created for each unique communications mission that an organization is required to support. Each mission will have a unique user or service that the organization is required to communicate with (e.g., Evacuation shelters, hospitals, Fire Stations, etc.). For each user or service, separate missions will also be created for each type of information exchanged (i.e., Voice or Data). For example, an evacuation shelter may only have two missions: (1) exchange voice and (2) data with a county EOC. While an EOC, due to its extensive communications requirements, may have more than two dozen missions to support.

To build an effective PACE Communications Plan, an organization must first define each mission it needs to support. Once the missions are defined, the communication resources available to both sides of each communications mission (e.g., EOC and evacuation shelter) must be identified. Each communication resource selected for the plan must be separate and distinguishable from the other resources. For example, if the cellular network is inoperative, using text messages as a back-up for voice communications is not a viable back-up option.

Communications resources available to an organization may include but are not limited to the following systems; Plain Old Telephone System (POTS), Wired Internet, Cell Service, Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite, Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (GEO) Satellite, Iridium Satellite services, Public Safety (P25) Radio systems, Amateur radio, SHARES, and Runners.

With the missions and available resources defined, planners then assign resources to each level of the PACE plan and identify the trigger events that would cause an organization to switch from Primary to Alternate, from Alternate to Contingency, and from Contingency to Emergency. A sample PACE Communications plan is displayed in Figure 2. This plan supports the Pinellas Count EOC's mission to maintain voice communications with the State of Florida EOC.

Type	Method	Amplifying Information / Limitations / Dependencies	Trigger Event	Secure Comms
Primary (P)	VoIP Phone / Cell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundant Wired Internet Services • FirstNet® and Commercial Cell Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wired Internet VoIP and/or Cell Service Available at PinCo EOC • VoIP and/or Cell Service Available at SoF EOC 	Yes
Alternate (A)	LEO Satellite (Starlink) • VoIP Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEO Equipment permanently installed at EOC • Unavailable during TS force winds • Cell Limited to Wi-Fi Calling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Wired Internet Service Available at PinCo EOC • No Cellular Service at PinCo EOC • LEO Satellite Service Available at PinCo EOC • VoIP and/or Cell Service Available at SoF EOC 	Yes
Contingency (C)	GEO Satellite (CRD™) • VoIP Phone / Cell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRD™ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Reconfiguration of site IT network interface required for VoIP Phone ◦Unavailable during TS force winds ◦ Cell may be limited to FirstNet® <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SatRunner™ CRD™ - 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No LEO Satellite Service Available at PinCo EOC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Primary LEO Equipment Failure ◦ Backup LEO Equipment Unavailable ◦ LEO Satellite Constellation Failure • GEO Satellite Service Available at PinCo EOC • VoIP and/or Cell Service Available at SoF EOC 	Yes
Emergency (E)	Amateur Radio • UHF SARnet • HF SHARES • ALE – Primary • Net – Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SARnet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Microwave Links must be Operational • Refer to IAP for Freq Assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Cellular Service Available at SoF EOC and • No Internet (VoIP) Service Available at SoF EOC or • No GEO Satellite Service Available at PinCo EOC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ GEO Equipment Unavailable ◦ GEO Equipment Failure ◦ GEO Satellite Constellation Failure 	No
Emergency (EE)	FL SLERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLERS Microwave Link must be Operational • Channel coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No SHARES Connectivity with SoF EOC • No Amateur Radio Connectivity with SoF EOC 	Yes

Figure 2. **Mission:** PinCo EOC to State of Florida EOC – Voice

To be effective, the completed plan must be exercised on a regular basis, users must be trained to deploy and configure back-up communications equipment, and the back-up equipment must be maintained in an operational state.

Amateur radio is only one element of an overarching backup communications plan. ARES® can best serve the organizations we support when we are viewed as volunteer communicators not just amateur radio operators. Whenever possible, we need to become proficient in the deployment, operation, and maintenance of all backup systems identified by a served agency's PACE Communications Plan. By demonstrating our ability to support more than just amateur radio, we become valuable assets that emergency managers can depend on to augment existing communications teams and perform missions that free up EM staff members so that they can be assigned to other critical functions.

The development of a comprehensive PACE Communications plan helps to ensure that the communications channels needed during an emergency activation are operational and available when they are needed most. Our mission, within ARES®, is to expand our areas of expertise beyond just amateur radio to include all the backup communication systems defined in the PACE Communications plan.

WCF ARES In Action:



Figure 1 ARES Logo Block (Courtesy of Russ Delaney, N4RTD)

We have a new logo block this year, courtesy of Russ Delaney, N4RTD.

What we would like to see here is pictures of your ARES/ACS/RACES teams in action. Send me your pictures, include names and call signs, name of photographer, and a brief description of the event. Showcase your team to the section.

Pinellas Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) held a technical workshop during their monthly meeting on January 15th at the Pinellas EOC. Senior service members demonstrated various capabilities including

- Service monitor use
- Nano VNA
- Spectrum Analyzer
- Antenna analyzers
- Coaxial cable crimping



Figure 2 Bob Burke, KC4SXO demonstrates an antenna analyzer (PC EM photo by J. McCracken)

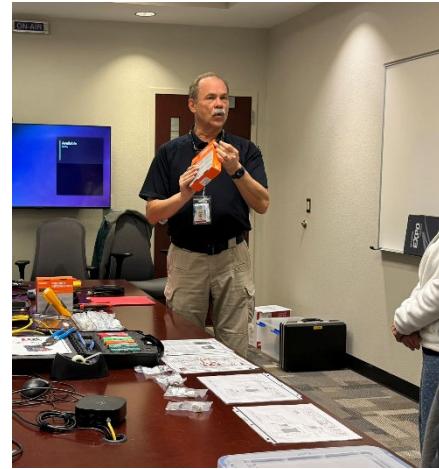


Figure 3 Mike Drake, WA1RYQ, demonstrates crimping connectors. (PC EM photo by J. McCracken)

Upcoming ARES Events:

Dates	Event
Feb. 6-7, 2026	Section-wide Communications Exercise, DARK START .
Feb. 21, 2026, 0900 Eastern	WCF Section ARES Quarterly Meeting, via Zoom.
February 28, 2026, 8:45 AM	WCF 12 th Annual Technical Conference (TECHCON), Hillsborough County Public Safety Complex, 9450 E. Columbus Drive, Tampa FL 33619. (Evening Social, February 27 th 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM. Location (TBD)
May 23, 2026 (Tentative), 1300 Eastern	WCF Section ARES Quarterly Meeting, in-person, venue to be determined (we welcome volunteers to host.)

Call to Action:

This month our Call to Action is to participate in the Section Simulated Emergency Test (SET), **DARK START**, which is a simulated critical infrastructure disruption requiring our 10 counties to invoke (and test) intercounty communications over the West Central Florida Group, Inc., NI4CE analog repeater system. The principal objective of this exercise is to test the ARES-WCFG Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed last year (2025).

Also, we need our ARES team to submit events of interest to all ARES members or specific counties. These could be public service events, community events, or social events. Please submit events at least 60 days prior so we can make sure they are listed in the next published Communicator.

We need pictures and descriptions of ARES events to include in our ARES In Action segment. Show off your ARES team. These can be exercises, drills, or just weekly/monthly meetings. We would really like to see ARES members in action providing COMMs at an event, maintaining equipment, or participating in training. Include member names and call signs, so we can caption the photos correctly and give our members the credit they deserve. Remember

to ask their permission to use the photo. We especially like to see members wearing their logo shirts and/or reflective vests. Try not to look like an antenna farm. Also, give us a short description of the event.

Sincerely,
Dave Rockwell, W4PXE
Section Emergency Coordinator
ARRL® West Central Florida Section
Email: w4pxe@arrl.net





ARES Field Reports

[Logout](#) David Rockwell, W4PXE, WCF SEC

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Form 4 - ARES Monthly SEC Report

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Success! The following information was submitted by David Rockwell, W4PXE, WCF SEC for **West Central Florida, December, 2025**.

Total number of ARES members:	502
Difference in ARES members from previous month:	N/D
Number of DECs/ECs reporting this month:	9
Total number of DECs/ECs in section:	9
Number of ARES net sessions held:	51
Number of ARES net sessions held with NTS liaison:	18
Number of participants in nets:	1,110

	Number	Person-Hrs
Exercises this month:	0	0.00
Training events this month:	12	223.00
Public service events this month:	10	1,200.00
Community service events this month:	2	14.00
Emergency events this month:	0	0.00
SKYWARN events this month:	12	194.00
Meetings this month:	20	104.00
Unclassified events this month:	4	80.00

Call signs of DECs reporting:

W4PXE, W4PXE

Activity Details:

HARDEE COUNTY-----

Conducted three sessions of the Hardee County ARES Net on Monday December 1, 8, and 15. Had a total of 17 checkins and a total net time of 45 minutes. Net was cancelled for Monday December 22 and 29, in observance of Christmas and New Years. Total volunteer time for nets was 1.0 hours. Mike Douglas W4MDD and Darrell Davis KT4WX attended the West Central Florida Section ARES Meeting on Saturday December 13, 2025, held at the Tampa Bay Hamfest. Total volunteer time for meetings was 4 hours.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY-----

Nothing significant to report.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY-----

End of Year

Alternate EOC (AEOC)

Complete Rack build and installed rack containing 2 voice radios and a RMS stack.

Participated in the operational testing of the AEOC

Developed requirements for Voice Antennas to go on the new tower.

New Go Boxes - completed the build on new go boxes for the Special Needs shelters. The new boxes have capability of running off battery if the power fails. They are also capable of doing digital and voice communications without any configuration changes.

conducted 5 licensing and testing classes through the year.

Conducted monthly mentoring classes on subjects like building an antenna, how to fill out ICS forms, and how to use WINLink.

Conducted training on the setup and use of the MARC unit. Upon completion conducted message exercise using public safety and amateur radio, the teams would receive the message on one radio and have to transmit it to the next station on another radio (Band). With the final version sent on WINLink.

Conducted Skywarn training with 51 members.

Bi-Monthly team meeting provided updates on the happening and plans, after which EMCOMM related training was conducted.

Conducted Outreach sessions with TARC and Tampa Bay Hamfest.

Conducted Field Day with HC ARES/RACES using the radio room at the EOC. TARC exercised the MARC Unit and KPARC load tested the new Solar trailers.

MANATEE COUNTY-----

There was no monthly Membership Meeting of the Manatee County Emergency Support Group, Inc. (ARES/RACES) this month.

A monthly EmComm Staff (AEC's, Deputies, and Liaisons) Meeting was held via Zoom on 12/3/2025.

Several members attended the ARRL WCF ARES Meeting in Plant City on 12/13/2025.

The monthly MCESG, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting was held via Zoom on 12/16/2025.

An EOC Training Session was held in the EOC Planning Room on 12/17/2025.

PASCO COUNTY-----

Pasco ACS participated in Christmas Salvation Army food distribution.

PINELLAS COUNTY-----

Three equipment training and maintenance sessions held at the Pinellas County EOC.

POLK COUNTY-----

Nothing significant to report.

SARASOTA COUNTY-----

Among the 88 participants, 25 were Winlink.

DESOTO COUNTY-----

Nothing significant to report.

Official Emergency Stations-----

AD4ZH, Manatee, John Hubbard

Participated in 4 ARES resource nets and 2 Sky warn nets. Being December, activity was very light.

73

W3ATR, Manatee, John Snow

Supported Manatee Co EC's activities.

Currently preparing our first of four Emcomm Drills scheduled for February 28th.

Drill outline/operations completed. Need to assign "actors" for key positions in order to demonstrate competency.

Participating as GMRS Net Control for Sarasota 1/2 marathon.

KM4WXX, Sarasota, Sanford Wyatt
Net Manager for Ares uhf/vhf and Eagle Net 40 hrs.

KR4X, Hillsborough, Larry Gispert
O.E.S. Report for KR4X December 2025
checked in 2 times for 2 hours the CGCWOA CW Net on 14.052 mhz
checked in 1 time for 1 hour the WCF ARES EC/OES Net on 3.940 mhz
checked in 4 times for 4 hours the SFL ARES Net on 3.940 mhz
checked in 1 time for 1 hour the Florida NXDN Net on 442.0875 MHz
total activity 8 hours 0 miles driven

KO4IHP, Sarasota, Tim Gardner
12/1 WCF ARES Net Check-in Received Traffic = 1, Time = 37 mins.
12/3 Checkin to CCFLARES Net
12/4 Check-in to SRQARES net via SAR-1 146.73 MHz & Winlink
12/8 WCF ARES Net Check-in Received Traffic = 1. Time = 36 mins.
12/15 WCF ARES Net Control. Check-ins = 24, Time = 34 mins.

SEC Notes-----

Conducted in-person Section ARES Forum at the Tampa Bay Hamfest on 13 December 2025. There were about 20 attendees. Plans are underway for a Section-wide Simulated Emergency Test on 7 February 2026.

Administrative and Other Comments:

HARDEE COUNTY-----

Reported by Darrell Davis, KT4WX, kt4wx@arrl.net.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY-----

Due to holiday travel for members we did not have our monthly meeting.

Reported by Jeff Bronsing, KJ4NEO, kj4neo@gmail.com

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY-----

During this year Hillsborough ARES/RACES was asked to assume the operational management of the Sheriffs Amateur Radio program. Recruited individuals, whom passed the background check and completed the requisite training. Work with the Sheriffs Radio Shop to update the radios at all locations.

Reported by William Miller, N1CDO, bmiller@hcaresraces.net.

MANATEE COUNTY-----

December 2025 Membership Metrics;

- 1) 56 Active Members
- 2) 41 Qualified (73%) - 17 at Level 1, 18 at Level 2, 6 at Level 3
- 3) Amateur Licensees: 26 Extra, 4 Adv, 14 Gen, 12 Tech

Reported by Stephen Park, W4OEP, spark003@live.com.

PASCO COUNTY-----

Reported by Tim Cunningham, KM4YGV, tdc@earthing.net.

PINELLAS COUNTY-----

Pinellas ACS had a reduced schedule of activities during December due to the holidays, returning to full level of activity in January 2026.

Reported by Will Scott, W7WMS.

POLK COUNTY-----

Unclassified events included GMRS net and Winlink. Reported by Christine Duez, K4KJN, cduez10@yahoo.com.

SARASOTA COUNTY-----

Reports they have filled the final hospital deployment position. Reported by Mike Kearney, KG7KIQ, mbk7@comcast.net.

DESOTO COUNTY-----

Reported by Douglas Christ, KN4YT, kn4yt@yahoo.com.

Send comments or questions about this page to [ARES Support](#).

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