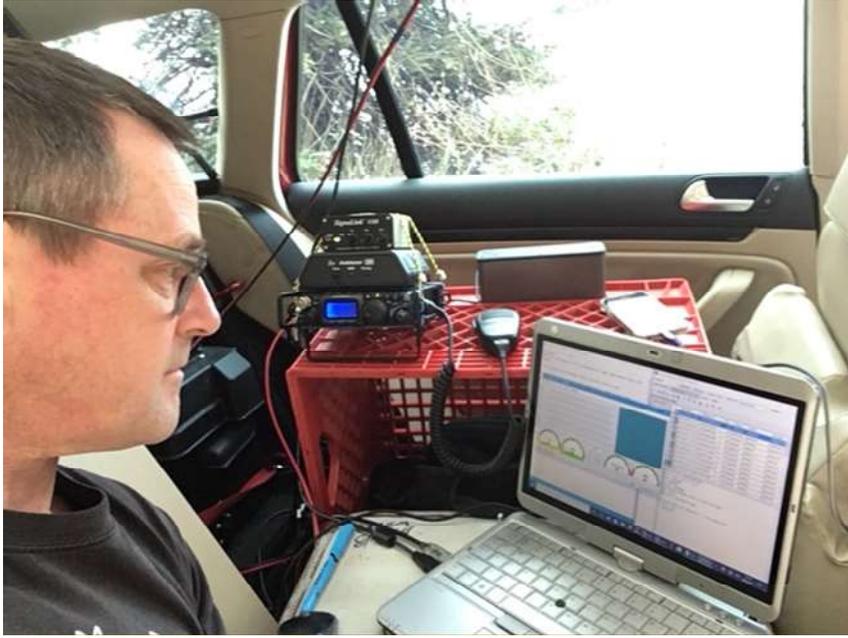# Humboldt Amateur Radio Club (HARC)

## Summer 2021 Winlink Field Exercise
## 9/5/2021

# After Action Report

# Humboldt Amateur Radio Club (HARC) Summer 2021 Winlink Field Exercise After Action Report

## Background

On Sunday morning, 9/5/21, six HARC members travelled to pre-assigned locations in the Humboldt Bay area to set up portable stations, record assigned observations, and transmit reports to Net Control using Winlink Software.

The Summer 2021 Winlink Field Exercise commenced at 0900L and continued until 1230L. "Data Dumps" of observations were sent every hour.

The exercise demonstrated ham radio's ability to work reliably from remote locations and create an independent communications network.

## What went well?

1. Practice, practice, practice. On Friday PM several of the participants practiced passing messages from home, some in their portable configuration. This allowed the group to work out kinks and tweak their systems.

2. Deployment assignments were transmitted via Winlink on Saturday PM. Locations were denoted using Lat/Long and participants were encouraged to not use the internet to decipher it. Members found their spots without issue.

3. Assignments were "interesting" and "real world" to add realism to the activity. Example, KN6CEH was assigned to the Samoa Boat ramp and was to count how many boat operations occurred during each reporting period. "2 launched, 3 landed." WA6NBG was deployed to KEKA/Murray Field. Same assignment. Here is a list of the other deployments. KN6NSK, Trinidad Boat Ramp. KG6LHW, ACV. KN6CEI, Boat Ramp under the Bridge. KK6SYJ, Vista Point off 101 overlooking of the Bay entrance.

4. Deployments were a way to bring the public to the table and ask questions. Ben had a CHP officer take a lot of interest, especially in Winlink, take a card and we look forward to seeing him soon.

5. VHF "links" worked very well early on but then degraded.  Participants were able to use relays to get "data dumps" to Net Control, even using "2 hops" in several cases.

6. As well as data logged for each hour in the operational period, participants completed an ICS 214A form using Winlink's Template.

7. Don Nelson went rouge (in a good way) and demonstrated the use of the ICS 309 "Communications Log" template on Winlink which was very clear and organized. Future use of that form is in the works.

8. Demobilization was orderly. Participants were individually "cleared to strike their station" and then later "cleared to roll." AKA nobody, turned off their rig and disappeared.

9. A lunch/hot wash location was chosen by David Boyd and he relayed its Lat/Long for members. We all found it the restaurant!

**What were the problems?**

1. A last minute change of participants, site security issues, and deployment orders had two members show up at the same assignment but out of visual range until they were both set up. Luckily, Randy was able to roll in less than five minutes and redeploy. The fix, the organizer needs to be more organized and not do the last-minute planning under duress with many balls in the air. Net Control did ask members to confirm by 1100 on Saturday that they would participate, only 1 did so. Using only lat/long instead of plain text added to the confusion but for the purpose getting more members comfortable with that system, it was worth it.

2. Software…. More practice is needed learning how to adjust the levels on the sound card. Also, we learned that Winlink is not a low power mode.

**Items to address in the immediate future**

1. Research how to adjust soundcard levels.

2. Confirm the latest version of Winlink, Windows, VARA, are on board.

3. Schedule the next event! We will be having this type of event at least 4 times a year. The Fall event will be hosted by Don Nelson. Sept 25th and 26th are on the table.

4. As a club, set up a step-by-step process to get more members playing with Winlink.