San Joaquin Operational Area

Healthcare HAM Radio Communications Drills

December 24, 2013

San Joaquin County Emergency Medical Services Agency
P.O. Box 220, French Camp, California 95231

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I. Introduction and Background

In order to maintain interoperable communications and information sharing capabilities in San Joaquin County, amateur or "Ham" radio is used as a backup when normal modes of communications fail due to natural or man-made disasters. To exercise and practice this capability, the San Joaquin Operational Area Healthcare Ham Radio Communications Drills take place at 1300 hours on the fourth Thursday of odd months, and have been conducted since 2006.

II. Authority

Drills are sponsored by and are being conducted under the authority of the San Joaquin County Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC), in accordance with California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Article 4, Sections 1797.153. Furthermore, drills will be conducted in accordance with applicable Federal Communications Commission regulations and under the exception granted by Title 47 Code of Federal Regulation, Chapter I, Subchapter D, Part 97, Section 113 (a)(3)(i).

113(a)(3)(i) A station licensee or control station operator may participate on behalf of an employer in an emergency preparedness or disaster readiness test or drill, limited to the duration and scope of such test or drill, and operational testing immediately prior to such test or drill. Tests or drills that are not government-sponsored are limited to a total time of one hour per week; except that no more than twice in any calendar year, they may be conducted for a period not to exceed 72 hours.

III. Purpose

The purpose of the drills are to practice and improve interoperable communications and information sharing, through the use of amateur radio, between participating healthcare providers, public agencies and the San Joaquin County Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC).

The MHOAC is responsible for maintaining a common operating picture of the medical/health system in the county by gathering, collating, consolidating, and disseminating incident information to all appropriate parties. Achieving a common operating picture allows the on-scene and off-scene personnel, such as those at the Incident Command Post, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Department Operations Centers (DOC) or within a Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group to have the same information about the incident, including the availability and location of resources and the status of assistance requests. It helps to ensure consistency for all policy makers, emergency management, and response personnel.

IV. Scope

Drills are open to all licensed amateur radio operators; however operators (employees or volunteers) from San Joaquin Operational Area Healthcare

Coalition member agencies and organizations are the primary exercise participants. Healthcare providers and public agencies from outside San Joaquin are also welcome to participate. Drills will be conducted in a no-fault, low-stress environment that encourages learning and welcomes new or inexperienced radio operators to participate.

The San Joaquin County Healthcare Facility Status Report System forms will be used to document all simulated incident information for the drills. Copies of these forms are available at
http://sjgov.org/ems/emergencyPreparedness.htm#HospitalStatus .

V. Preparation and Participation

Preparation:

1. Obtain the exercise scenario from the San Joaquin County Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC) prior to the drill. The scenario will provide participants with details on the simulated disaster and which data elements, from the Healthcare Facility Status Report Forms, will need to be collected during exercise play.

2. Complete the appropriate Healthcare Status Report Form for your type of facility for the exercise scenario. Answers should reflect the healthcare facility's anticipated capabilities during the simulated disaster.

3. Provide a copy of your completed Healthcare Status Report Form to the radio operator(s) participating in the drill. Facilities are encouraged to have multiple operators participate.

4. Turn on your Ham radio and select Channel 22 on your pre-programmed radio. It is labeled "SJC2" on the radio's display or sometimes the frequency is displayed numerically as 146.655.

5. Perform a per-exercise operational check to ensure that your radio is functioning properly before the drill begins. The Net Control station (K6EMS) will be on air and monitoring two hours prior to the start of the drill to assist participants with operational checks.

Participation:

1. Check-in with the Net Control station, K6EMS (Kilo-Six-Echo-Mike-Sierra) when requested during roll call. Please respond when your facility is called, giving your call sign slowly and phonetically, followed by your first name and the number of operators at your station participating in this drill. See Figure 1 for the International Telecommunications Union Standard Phonetic Alphabet.

Phonetic Alphabet

A – alpha	N – november
B – bravo	O – oscar
C – Charlie	P – papa
D – delta	Q – quebec
E – echo	R – romeo
F – foxtrot	S – sierra
G – golf	T – tango
H – hotel	U – uniform
I – india	V – victor
J – juliet	W – wiskey
K – kilo	X – x-ray
L – lima	Y – yankee
M – mike	Z – zulu

(Figure 1)

2. Following the check-in process Net Control will provide the exercise scenario and participating healthcare facilities will be asked to provide their Status Report information.

3. Transmit your Status Report information by providing the data element number followed by the answer. <u>Do not read the data element question out loud on the air.</u>

Examples:

Facility and Incident Overview		
1. **Event Type:** ❏ Real World ✓ Exercise		
2. **Name of Hospital:** ABC General Hospital		
3. **Date:** September 17, 2013	**4.** **Time** (24-Hr. Clock): 1117	
5. **Report Type:** ✓ Initial ❏ Revised ❏ Final		
6. **Incident Type:** ✓ Communications / IT Failure ❏ Patient Surge		
❏ Fire / Explosion ❏ Security Threat		
❏ Hazardous Materials ❏ Severe Weather		
❏ Labor Disruption ❏ Utility Failure		
❏ Other, specify:		
7. **Prognosis:** ✓ Worsening		
❏ No Change		
❏ Improving		

Sample Hospital Status report excerpt

#1 – Exercise

#2 – ABC General Hospital

#3 – September 17, 2013

#4 – 1117

#5 – Initial

#6 – Communications / IT Failure

#7 – Worsening

Transmit multiple answer data elements in the following manner:

Bed Availability			
	a. Currently Available	**b. Estimated in 8 Hours**	**c. Estimated in 24 Hours**
20. **Emergency Dept.**	**4**	**4**	**8**
21. **Adult ICU**	**2**	**4**	**10**

Sample Hospital Status report excerpt

#20 a – 4

#20 b – 4

#20 c – 8

#21 a – 2

#21 b – 4

#21 c – 10

Repeat open ended question data elements to ensure Net Control copied the information correctly.

Impacts
41.   Impact on Services:

- Electronic admissions system and medical records are not available. Implementing backup systems and paper records.

- EMSystem computer is down, please use "Blast Phone" for ED bed polling.

- Med Net radio is down. Ambulances are requested to call the ED via land line 209-555-5555 prior to arrival.

Sample Hospital Status report excerpt

#41
- Electronic admissions system and medical records are not available. Implementing backup systems and paper records.
- EMSystem computer is down, please use "Blast Phone" for ED bed polling.
- Med Net radio is down. Ambulances are requested to call the ED via land line 209-555-5555 prior to arrival.

"Repeat"

#41
- Electronic admissions system and medical records are not available. Implementing backup systems and paper records.
- EMSystem computer is down, please use "Blast Phone" for ED bed polling.
- Med Net radio is down. Ambulances are requested to call the ED via land line 209-555-5555 prior to arrival.

4. When your report is completed, announce "End of report" and give your call sign to complete your transmission.

VI. Helpful Hints and Information

1. Take a Break

   a. Take a break every five data elements by saying "Break", then release your microphone button and listen for Net Control to tell you to continue. If Net Control needs you to repeat a data element they will ask you at this time.

2. Proper Reading Speed

   a. Please remember that we are copying the information you transmit by hand. Think of how long it would take you to copy the item back onto the paper form and pace yourself accordingly.

   b. It is easier for us to tell you to read faster than to ask for repeats data elements when we miss something.

   c. A online demonstration video highlighting the proper message passing technique and reading speed is available at
      http://youtu.be/Pq2cHKmynDQ

3. Identify Yourself

   a. You are required to identify using your FCC call sign every 10 minutes and at the end of communications. The easiest way to meet this

requirement is to say your call sign at the end of each series of transmissions, such as when you have completed giving your report.

b. Use your facility organization name (San Joaquin General, Dameron, Sutter Tracy, etc.) as your tactical call sign. However, you are still required to identify using your FCC call sign as described above.

4. Which Frequency?

a. Start on Channel 22 (SJC2). Drills and emergencies start on memory Channel 22, labeled "SJC2" on the radio's display. If that channel is unavailable or down for some reason, look for Net Control (K6EMS) on Channel 24 "SJC4" or any other memory channel between 21 and 30 (SJC1-10). Tune among the channels, stopping briefly on each, until you find us.

b. If you have trouble call Net Control at (209) 468-7052 or 468-7494.

5. Licensed Operators

a. To participate in these exercises, a licensed amateur radio operator must be present and his or her amateur radio call sign must be used. However, any number of non-licensed persons may participate using that call sign. Anyone with an amateur radio license should use his or her own call sign and not someone else's call sign.

b. In an emergency situation where lives or property are threatened and no other communications method is available, anyone may operate the amateur radio equipment until a licensed operator is available. In this event, identify using your facility name.

6. Contact Information

a. Phillip Cook (KI6OAG) pcook@sjgov.org or (209) 468-7494

b. David Coursey (N5FDL) david@coursey.com or (209) 740-7515

c. Net Control telephone numbers: (209) 468-7052 or (209) 468-7494

d. Net Control Station: K6EMS (Kilo-Six-Echo-Mike-Sierra)

e. Primary Repeater: (SJC2) 146.655 (-) 100

f. Secondary Repeater: (SJC4) 147.090 (+) 114.8

VII.   Appendix

Appendix A – Sample Net Control Script

Preamble

Attention all radio amateurs…This is the San Joaquin Operational Area Healthcare Ham Radio Communications Drill…held bi-monthly to test emergency communications between the Emergency Medical Services Agency and healthcare facilities, and other public agencies in San Joaquin County.

Is there any emergency or priority traffic on frequency at this time?   If so please come now.

Hearing done we will continue with the net.

This exercise is sponsored by and is being conducted under the authority of the San Joaquin County Emergency Medical Services Agency and the Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator, in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Sections 1797.153. Furthermore, this drill is being conducted under the exception granted by Title 47 Code of Federal Regulation, Chapter I, Subchapter D, Part 97, Section 113 (a)(3)(i), which specifically addresses emergency preparedness drills.

This is a directed net. All transmission should be directed to Net Control.

The Net Control station is K-6-E-M-S, Kilo-Six-Echo-Mike-Sierra, located at the EMS Agency, and located on the campus of San Joaquin General Hospital. All amateurs are invited to check into the net.

We will begin with a roll call of healthcare facilities and public agencies…followed by general check-ins from anyone interested in participating in this net.

Following check-ins, we will pass message traffic between the healthcare facilities and Net Control. The purpose of this traffic is to allow healthcare facilities to practice providing a status report to the Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC), which uses this information to assess the condition of the healthcare delivery system in San Joaquin County during disasters. This information is also shared with other local agencies and the state, as needed.

Following the formal portion of the net, we will have a time for questions, answers, comments, and announcements.

I will now begin the roll call of healthcare facilities. Please respond when your facility is called, giving your call sign slowly and phonetically, followed by your first name and the number of operators at your station participating in this drill.

I will recognize each facility before moving to the next. Let's begin:

Hospitals:

- Dameron

- Doctor's Manteca

- Kaiser Manteca

- Lodi Memorial

- St. Joseph's

- San Joaquin General

- Sutter Tracy

- Other Hospitals from outside San Joaquin County

Clinics:

- Community Medical Centers – Channel Street

- Community Medical Centers – Murray Drive

- Kaiser Stockton

- Other Clinics

Behavioral Health:

- San Joaquin County Health Behavioral Services

- St. Joseph's Behavioral Health

- Others

Long Term Care:

- Others

Public & First Responder Agencies:

- San Joaquin County Public Health Services

- San Joaquin Operational Area Emergency Operations Center

- Ripon Fire District Ambulance

- American Medical Response

- Other Agencies

Healthcare facilities please do not leave this net without permission form Net Control.

With the healthcare facilities checked-in, I will take check-ins from anyone interested in participating. When checking-in please provide the following: Your call sign (phonetically), first name, and location.

Individuals wanting to check-in please come now.

(Take check-ins)

Thank you for checking-in. Individual stations may leave the net at any time and do not need to contact Net Control before doing so.

Are there any late of missed check-ins? If so please come now.

Today's Scenario (7/25/13)

Healthcare facilities and providers throughout San Joaquin County have experienced an increase in the numbers of patients with mild to severe gastrointestinal illness (diarrhea, vomiting and nausea) beginning on Friday July 19, 2013. To date 35 patients have required hospitalization and two fatalities have been reported. The surge in G.I. patients has steadily increased for the past three days.

As part of their medical examination, stool specimens were collected for culture and sent to the hospital laboratories. Upon testing, the labs identified suspected *E. coli* in all of the stool samples, and the samples were subsequently sent to the San Joaquin County Public Health lab for confirmation. The Public Health lab identified the organism in all samples as *E. coli* 0157 and sent the samples to the State lab for subtyping.

Hospitals are asked to provide data elements #1, 2, 5-9, 20-29, and 38-43 from their Hospital Status Report Form.

Clinics are asked to provide data elements #1, 2, 5-10, and 30-35, from their Clinic Status Report Form.

Behavioral Health Facilities are asked to provide data elements # 1, 2, 8-12, and 25-30, from their Behavioral Health Status Report Form.

Long Term Care Facilities are asked to provide data elements # 1, 2, 9-12, 23-37, from their Long Term Care Facilities Status Report Form

<u>Public and First Responder Agencies</u> are encouraged asked to provide a brief situation update

We will now pass our training message traffic. I will call upon each facility and will accept one message from each. We will run through the list as many times as we need to in order for each operator to pass a message to Net Control.

(Run through hospitals, clinics, agencies, and others)

Conclusion

With all messages passed…I will now close the formal portion of the net.

This concludes the San Joaquin County Healthcare Ham Radio Communications Drill and Training Net. Thank you to everyone who participated, and a special thank you to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for the use of the W6OA and AB6CR repeaters. The next drill is scheduled for September 26, 2013 @ 1300 hours. This repeater is now returned to normal operations

Healthcare facilities and agencies may shut down their stations or remain here for a brief question and answer period.

(Net Control leads Q & A session until everyone is finished).