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From: MDCWINLINK-1

To: AA3WS; AB3NA; AB3WG; AB3XJ; AC3CU; AC3EW; AC3JM; AD3F; AK3B; K3JJB;  
K3JSJ; K3MMM; K3XIT; K4LIZ; KA2JAI; KB2SKP; KB3CS; KB3WRY; KC3QVF;  
KC3TAT; KD2QAR; KB3EOF; KB3FKH; KB3KWT; KB3LZV; KB3MXM; KB3N; KB3SPH;  
KB3SWS; KB3ZUM; KC3DSO; KC3IEI; KC3MSE; KC3NZY; KC3QVG; KC3SDA; KC3RWE;  
KC3TLO; KC3VAF; KC3VJS; KC3WUT; KD3JA; KF3AK; KF7AWC; KG4K; KG4USN;  
KN3U; KN4TSA; N1DEC; N2OMC; N3ADF; N3AE; N3AK; N3AWP; N3COB; N3FQC;  
N3GE; N3GJB; N3HU; N3HUG; N3LSB; N3PH; N3PPH; N3QYJ; N3RDR; N3RQV;  
N3WOF; N3WYG; N3YRZ; N3YQ; N4RAF; NS3X; NW3K; W2LNX; W2ILT; W3AAC;  
W3ETC; W3DK; W3MAM; W3MEO; W3NI; W3NRN; W3OBX; W3ONE; W9WNH; WA3YTK;  
WB2ALJ; WB2DCF; WB2U; WB3IGW; WB3KAS; WI3J; WI3N; WJ3K; WJ4K; WX2DX;  
WX3F

Source: N3XL

Downloaded-from: Telnet:cms.winlink.org

Location: 38.992280N, 76.752922W (GPS)

Subject: ANNOUNCEMENT: MDC Section EMCOMM Challenge, 5-11 March 2023

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\*\* This reminder may be forwarded to anyone interested in getting on the MDC Winlink message distribution list and participation in MDC EMCOMM emergency communications training activities, which encompass Winlink, VarAC, and Fldigi messaging. Interested parties should send a Winlink message request to MDCWINLINK-1 and they will be added to the distribution list. The information that you will need to participate in the monthly Winlink Check-ins and MDC EMCOMM Challenges will be sent out via Winlink messages. \*\*

#### PURPOSE:

In the March Challenge you will simulate participation in an ARES mutual assistance team (ARESMAT) event and provide Health and Welfare (H&W) status messages from a simulated tornado disaster zone. In this Challenge, participants will gain familiarity with the Winlink and Fldigi Radiogram Forms and practice Winlink, VarAC, and Fldigi peer-to-peer (P2P) messaging and EMCOMM Poat Office deliveries. Since different ARESMAT teams use differing messaging software, it is important to gain familiarity with all of them, to be fully prepared to make use of your communications capabilities. It is only with trial and error and repeated practice that operator proficiency can be maintained.

#### SCENARIO:

A simulated EF4 Tornado has devastated communities from Berkely Springs to Cumberland, MD, along the I-68 corridor. First responders are on scene and ARESMAT assistance from Pennsylvania and Maryland has been requested. MDC Section Winlink, VarAC, and Fldigi Target Stations will be providing H&W message relays of message traffic from the disaster zone.

#### PLANNING:

In Task P, you will simulate ARESMAT coordination and request a Target Station List to use for Tasks 1, 2, and 3. Task P is a prerequisite to participation in Tasks 1, 2, and/or 3, but does not require participation in Tasks 1, 2, or 3 for Challenge credit.

For Tasks 1,2, and 3, the following modes of transmission will be

supported by Target Stations:

1. Winlink messaging: Packet P2P, Vara FM P2P, Vara HF P2P, and the WX3F Post Office.
2. VarAC messaging VarAC HF and VarAC FM.
3. Fldigi messaging: Fldigi HF MT63-500S

Carefully review ESTABLISHING FLDIGI MT63-500S CONNECTIONS and TASK 3 (see below). Fldigi Target Station will be operating in an attended mode and, consequently, their time on the air will be limited. Plan ahead to make a Homerun (see below) and get special recognition.

Winlink Packet P2P and Vara FM P2P users should consider the use of digipeating to extend their range beyond VHF line-of-sight. A Vara license is required to digipeat using Winlink Vara FM or VarAC FM.

Update your Winlink, VarAC, and Vara HF, Vara FM, and Fldigi software and check it out before the Challenge.

VARA - <https://rosmodem.wordpress.com>

VarAC - <https://www.varac-hamradio.com>

Winlink - <https://www.winlink.org/WinlinkExpress>

Fldigi - <https://sourceforge.net/projects/fldigi/files/>

Pay close attention to Target Station Op Schedules to plan your contacts.

#### EXECUTION:

INCIDENT: MDC MARCH CHALLENGE

DATE: 5-11 March, 2024

#### Task P: ARESMAT Preparations:

1. Participants will submit a Winlink Check-in form. Address the Check-in form to tactical address MDCWINLINK-1. The Comments section should contain the following: Subject: TARGET STATION LIST REQUEST and state if the participant is able, or unable, to deploy with ARESMAT.
2. The Check-in must be sent during the period TUE 5 MAR through THU 7 MAR and Challenge Target Station Lists will be provided. (Tardiness will be excused with a good excuse - hihi).
3. The internet is available for this task. Telnet or any standard RMS Channel session type should be used.

Task 1: Winlink Messaging: You are simulating an ARESMAT operator deployed to a Tornado disaster zone. Use the RADIOGRAM & RRI Forms template of your choice and create a H&W status report message from a person in the disaster zone. Your creativity on the particulars of your status report is welcome. Address the form (see ADDRESS INFO below) and send it as a Winlink P2P message to a Target Station for relay. Identify the message as an EXERCISE MESSAGE in the Op Note(s).

Task 2: VarAC Messaging: You are simulating an ARESMAT operator deployed to a Tornado disaster zone. Compose a VMail containing a H&W status report message from a person in the disaster zone. Your creativity on the particulars of your status report is welcome. Address the VMail to N3XL and park it at a VarAC Target Station for relay (see PARK VMAIL FOR RELAY below). A short message length (<500 characters) is required for VMail. Identify the message as an EXERCISE MESSAGE and include the ADDRESS INFO below in the message text. Put the participant Location in Challenge Tornado Zone in the message..

ADDRESS INFO:

To: Bill Smith, Bowie, MD 20715  
N3XL@ARRL.NET

\* SAMPLE VMAIL MESSAGE TEXT

\*\*\* EXERCISE MESSAGE\*\*\*

Everyone safe here. Please don't worry. (ARL ONE)  
Property damage very severe in this area. (ARL SIXTEEN)  
Will contact you as soon as possible. (ARL SIX)  
Participant Name Joe Ham  
Participant Location in Challenge Tornado Zone.

Task 3: Fldigi - Messaging: You are simulating an ARESMAT operator deployed to a Tornado disaster zone Use the RADIOGRAM Form found in FLMSG and create a H&W status report message from a person in the disaster zone (example below/see attachment). Your creativity on the particulars of your status report is welcome. Address the form (see ADDRESS INFO above) and send it to a Fldigi Target Station for relay. Identify the message as an EXERCISE MESSAGE in the OP NOTES. When prepared, 1. Click on AutoSend at the top. 2. Wait for message acknowledgment. Notes: 1. Comp check-box should not be checked; it increases the file size of a short message. 2. ARL MSG button may, optionally, be used to create the message. 3. The Standard Format check-box may, optionally be used. For NTS format, check it. For standard punctuation, uncheck it. 3. The Hx box should be left blank for this exercise. 4. Click on red ck button when TXT is completed.

\* ESTABLISHING FLDIGI MT63-500S CONNECTIONS (P = Participant. TS = Target Station)

P ? Tune radio to TS dial frequency.

TS ? QSY QSY de N3HU N3HU, QSY QSY de N3HU N3HU (call periodically, QSY=calling all stations).

P ? Precisely align cursor to TS signal, to obtain good copy. The display center frequency should be at, or near, 1500..

P - Once good copy is established, respond N3HU N3HU de KB3XYZ KB3XYZ I have H&W traffic.

TS ? RR KB3XYZ good copy, pls send your traffic.

\* PARK VMAIL FOR RELAY:

1. Before making a VarAC connection with a Target Station, it is recommended to prepare the message for relay (SEND VMAIL button). Address the message to the ultimate destination callsign and enter desired text. Once prepared, post the VMail to your Outbox. Connect to a Target/Relay Station, once connected go to your Outbox, right click on the message, and select "Relay now through connected station".

2. For short messages that require no preparation ahead of time (or if you have text copied and ready insert), connect to a Target Station, address the message to the ultimate destination callsign enter the message text, click on the SEND VMAIL button. The system will ask if you want to "Relay now through connected station".

RECOGNITION:

N3XL will provide message acknowledgements to participants for messages that have been successfully relayed by Target Stations. Participants are encouraged to complete all tasks in the March Challenge, but do what you can. Participation, including preparation (Task P) and successful relays, will be documented in the MDC Section Winlink/VarAC

Challenge Report and in the ARRL MDC Section Newsletter. \* HIT A HOMERUN: Everyone completing all 4 tasks will be recognized for hitting a homerun.

NOTES:

\* If interested in saving \$11 off the \$70 VARA licensing fee through a group buy, notify MDCWINLINK-1. We now have more than 10 commitments, so the group buy will proceed on or about 31 March 2024. The Prince George's County Emergency Radio Association ( <https://www.pgcera.org> ) donate button is now available for your \$59 payment. Be sure to identify your callsign and email address on your commitment email to MDCWINLINK-1. The deadline for payment is 30 March 2024.

\* We are in need of VHF and/or HF Target Stations in the DC area, and Northeastern (Baltimore) Maryland areas. The main requirement is the capability to provide some manner of service for Winlink, VarAC, and/or Fldigi HF. Modest stations are welcome. Winlink Target Stations using VHF can serve strictly peer-to-peer, if no digipeater is available. Target Station Instructions are issued with each Challenge and we will have a Zoom training session to help any new Target Stations get going. If interested, or if you have any questions, please let me know.

\* A VarAC alert\_tags.conf file is attached. Copy and paste this file into your VarAC program directory to receive MDC Bulletins and Target Station alerts.

Tip Sheets on Winlink, VarAC, ?Brevity in Emergency Communications? are available on Google Drive:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qU3Yj9wuxuxIRzHk9MVRqQZbiptVqADA?usp=sharing>

If you have any ideas for the content of future Challenges, or suggestions for improvements, let me know.

73 and GL in the Challenge,  
Bill N3XL, MDCWINLINK-1  
?Learn by doing.?