

2025 Cyberstorm

Exercise Plan
April 12, 2025

The Exercise Plan (ExPlan) gives senior leaders, observers, media personnel, and players from participating organizations information they need to observe or participate in the exercise. It includes an exercise overview, objectives and aligned capabilities, roles and responsibilities, logistics, schedule, and communications plan. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, controllers, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the ExPlan.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	2025 Cyberstorm
Exercise Dates	Saturday April 12, 2025 (0900 ET/0800 CT until 1200 EDT/1100 CT)
Scope	<p>This exercise is a deployment, full scale exercise, planned for 3 hours at multiple locations throughout Florida and including participants throughout the southeastern United States.</p> <p>Exercise play is open to various volunteer and agency communications teams including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARES Volunteer Teams & Individual Participants • AUXCOMM Volunteer Teams & Individual Participants • CISA SHARES personnel (federal, state, local, or volunteer) • National Traffic System Volunteers • RACES Volunteer Teams • Radio Relay International Volunteers • State of Florida Division of Emergency Management • State of Florida county Departments of Emergency Management • Any additional licensed amateur radio operator¹
Focus Area(s)	Response
Capabilities	Operational Communications Mass Care Services
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to activate communication resources without traditional methods such as phone, text, or email 2. Ability to communicate with state and other agency Departments of Emergency Management using only amateur or SHARES radio 3. Ability to send structured messages by one or more techniques <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ability to correctly utilize ICS forms for official messaging b. Ability to provide health and welfare messaging to public 4. Ability to gather and transmit situational utility reports from both agencies and individuals 5. Ability to withstand loss of commercial electricity 6. Interoperability 7. Ability to withstand damages to radio assets such as antennas
Threat/Hazard	A series of severe thunderstorms spawn tornadoes throughout the state damaging or destroying primary communications infrastructure.

¹ This exercise will include opportunities for individual participation. A resource net will be available for individual participants. Pre-registration is not required for individual participants.

Exercise Name	2025 Cyberstorm
Scenario	A series of tornados unpredictably impacts many regions within Florida, leaving infrastructure damaged and communities in need of emergency response. To heighten the challenge, cyber attackers from hostile nation-states launch a coordinated attack, crippling the state's internet infrastructure and further complicating rescue and recovery operations. This exercise will test participants' ability to coordinate cross-agency responses, communicate under severe operational constraints, and deploy emergency communication strategies effectively without traditional digital networks. See appendix E for full scenario details.
Sponsor	State of Florida and various Florida county Departments/Divisions of Emergency Management
Participating Organizations	Participating organizations as of February 1, 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Division of Emergency Management • ARES Teams • Municipality Emergency Management • Traffic Nets
Point of Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arc J. Thames FDEM AUXCOMM Regions 1 & 2 Coordinator arc.thames@srcares.org (850) 889-3767 • Assistant Exercise Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exercise Objectives and Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to capabilities, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve the specific mission area(s). The objectives and aligned capabilities are guided by senior leaders and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

We are writing this exercise in a manner that you can participate on a small or a large scale. For example, if you don't have the resources or availability of operating from a shelter, you don't have to attempt that portion of the exercise. This exercise provides your team the ability to practice on whatever level you would like to for your team. All participants are welcome on whatever level you can.

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Capabilities

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
<p>1. Activate communications resources without traditional methods such as phone, text, or email</p> <p>Each applicable team’s ability to notify their volunteer or staff resources that their services are needed without using a phone, text, or email message. No method that relies on internet or telephone access may be used.</p> <p>GOAL: To have at least 50% of your badged communications resources or 25% of your volunteer roster check-in via a voice or digital method by the end of the exercise.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>
<p>2. Communicate with the state and other agency Departments of Emergency Management using amateur or SHARES radio only.</p> <p>Each applicable team’s ability to communicate with the state of Florida’s communications team and partner agencies using only amateur or SHARES radio equipment and frequencies.</p> <p>GOAL: Successfully communicate with the State EOC and one regional communications asset (MARC) with a confirmed communication either via voice or data.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
<p>3. Send structured messages by one or more techniques</p> <p>3A. Correctly utilize ICS forms for official messaging</p> <p>Each participating team’s ability to correctly prepare and transmit official messaging with requests for resources.</p> <p>GOAL: Send at least 1 properly formatted ICS form either by voice or data to the State EOC.</p> <p>3B. Provide health and welfare messaging to the public</p> <p>Each participating team’s ability to correctly prepare and transmit health and welfare messaging for public citizens.</p> <p>GOAL: Send at least 4 simulated health and welfare messages via voice or data.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p> <p>Mass Care</p>
<p>4. Gather and report situational utility reports from both agencies and individuals</p> <p>Each applicable team and individual participants submitting situation reports using Winlink or over a voice net.</p> <p>GOAL: Transmit via voice or data at least 2 situational reports.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>
<p>5. Withstand the loss of commercial electricity</p> <p>Ability to continue to operate necessary radio and computer equipment to transmit information via data or voice with no commercial power</p> <p>GOAL: Successfully communicate via voice or data while not operating on commercial power to the State or other county EOC.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>
<p>6. Interoperability</p> <p>Ability to communicate with various served and volunteer organizations throughout the state of Florida.</p> <p>GOAL: Complete at least 3 successful voice or data communications with a partner or neighboring agency.²</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>

² This list will be updated once other partner agencies have committed to participate

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
<p>7. Withstand damages to radio assets such as antennas</p> <p>Ability to communicate via alternate radio assets in case of damage to primary. The use of an alternate HF relay station should also be considered as a viable solution to this problem.</p> <p>GOAL: Ability to transmit at least 1 formal message using alternative equipment.</p>	<p>Operational Communications</p>

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Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

- **Players.** Players are personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
- **Controllers.** Controllers plan and manage exercise play, set up and operate the exercise site, and act in the roles of organizations or individuals that are not playing in the exercise. Controllers direct the pace of the exercise, provide key data to players, and may prompt or initiate certain player actions to ensure exercise continuity. In addition, they issue exercise material to players as required, monitor the exercise timeline, and supervise the safety of all exercise participants.
- **Simulators.** Simulators are control staff personnel who deliver scenario messages representing actions, activities, and conversations of an individual, agency, or organization that is not participating in the exercise. They most often operate out of the Simulation Cell (SimCell), but they may occasionally have face-to-face contact with players. Simulators function semi-independently under the supervision of SimCell controllers, enacting roles (e.g., media reporters or next of kin) in accordance with instructions provided in the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL). All simulators are ultimately accountable to the Exercise Director and Senior Controller.
- **Evaluators.** Evaluators evaluate and provide feedback on a designated functional area of the exercise. Evaluators observe and document performance against established capability targets and critical tasks, in accordance with the Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs).
- **Observers.** Observers visit or view selected segments of the exercise. Observers do not play in the exercise, nor do they perform any control or evaluation functions. Observers view the exercise from a designated observation area and must remain within the observation area during the exercise. Very Important Persons (VIPs) are also observers, but they frequently are grouped separately.
- **Media Personnel.** Some media personnel may be present as observers, pending approval by the sponsor organization and the Exercise Planning Team.
- **Support Staff.** The exercise support staff includes individuals who perform administrative and logistical support tasks during the exercise (e.g., registration, catering).

Exercise Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted and/or account for logistical limitations. Exercise participants should accept that assumptions and artificialities are inherent in any exercise and should not allow these considerations to negatively impact their participation.

Assumptions

Assumptions constitute the implied factual foundation for the exercise and, as such, are assumed to be present before the exercise starts. The following assumptions apply to the exercise:

- The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated.
- The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
- Exercise simulation contains sufficient detail to allow players to react to information and situations as they are presented as if the simulated incident were real.
- Participating agencies may need to balance exercise play with real-world emergencies. Real-world emergencies take priority. Should a real-world situation occur day-of or week(s) leading up to this exercise, the exercise may be rescheduled.

Artificialities

During this exercise, the following artificialities apply:

- Exercise communication and coordination is limited to participating exercise organizations, venues, and the Control Cell.
- Simulation of failures is permitted. For example, if your location has a backup generator but you are unable to utilize the generator for testing, you may simulate loss of power by unplugging your commercial power source and utilizing batteries.
- Only communication methods listed in the Communications Directory are available for players to use during the exercise. The assumption is that traditional communications methods such as landline, cellular, social media, internet, and email have been made unavailable by a cyber-attack. You may simulate your loss of these capabilities by utilizing airplane mode on your cellular device and disabling local network connections on your computer systems.

EXERCISE LOGISTICS

Safety

Exercise participant safety takes priority over exercise events. The following general requirements apply to the exercise:

- A Safety Controller is responsible for ensuring the exercise is conducted in a safe environment; any safety concerns must be immediately reported to the Safety Controller. The Safety Controller and Exercise Director will determine if a real-world emergency warrants a pause in exercise play and when exercise play can be resumed.
- For an emergency that requires assistance, use the phrase **“real-world emergency.”** The following procedures should be used in case of a real emergency during the exercise:
 - Anyone who observes a participant who is seriously ill or injured will immediately notify emergency services by calling 911 and the closest controller, and, within reason and training, render aid.
 - The controller aware of a real emergency will initiate the **“real-world emergency”** broadcast and provide the Safety Controller, Lead Controller, and Exercise Director with the location of the emergency and resources needed, if any. The Lead Controller will notify the Control Cell as soon as possible if a real emergency occurs.

Fire Safety

Standard fire and safety regulations relevant to your local jurisdiction will be followed during the exercise. Participants are asked to maintain due care related to emergency power sources and related to installing emergency antennas. No such antennas will be installed near any power lines.

Emergency Medical Services

Dial 911

Electrical and Generating Device Hazards

All applicable electrical and generating device safety requirements should be documented prior to the start of the exercise. Each participant is asked to follow prudent safety procedures related to batteries and generators and any other alternative power systems.

Weapons Policy

Weapons are generally not permitted by non-agency personnel inside governmental facilities. Weapons are not a part of this exercise.

Site Access

Security

If entry control is required for the exercise venue(s), the sponsor organization is responsible for arranging appropriate security measures. To prevent interruption of the exercise, access to exercise sites is limited to exercise participants. Players should advise their venue's controller or evaluator of any unauthorized persons.

Media/Observer Coordination

Organizations with media personnel and/or observers attending the event should coordinate with their local organization for access to the exercise site. Media/Observers are escorted to designated areas and always accompanied by an exercise controller. Identify a designated location for the media prior to the start of the exercise. Sponsor organization representatives and/or the observer controller may be present to explain exercise conduct and answer questions. Exercise participants should be advised of media and/or observer presence. Please advise the Exercise Director as well of any media related activities.

Exercise Identification

Exercise staff may be identified by badges, hats, and/or vests to clearly display exercise roles; additionally, uniform clothing may be worn to show agency affiliation. Table 2 describes these identification items.

Group	Color
Evaluators	Red
Players	Lime Green (where applicable) Agency ID card Professional attire
Observer	Gray
Media	Purple or proper media ID

Table 2. Exercise Identification

POST-EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

Debriefings

Post-exercise debriefings aim to collect sufficient relevant data to support effective evaluation and improvement planning.

Hotwash

At the conclusion of exercise play, a controller or evaluator will lead a Hot Wash to allow players to discuss strengths and areas for improvement, and evaluators to seek clarification regarding player actions and decision-making processes. All participants may attend; however, observers are not encouraged to attend the meeting. The information gathered during a hotwash contributes to the AAR/IP and any exercise suggestions can improve future exercises.

Immediately following the exercise, all participants are invited to join a Zoom call for a brief hotwash session. Please register for the Zoom call using this link and join immediately following the exercise.

A full hotwash session will be conducted on Saturday May 17 at 1100A ET/1000A CT via Zoom. Please use this link to register.

Participant Feedback Forms

Participant Feedback Forms provide players with the opportunity to comment candidly on exercise activities and exercise design, and to share their observed strengths and areas for improvement. Participant Feedback Forms may be filled out online via this link.

Following the return of the participant feedback forms, an online Zoom meeting will be held for the final official hotwash of the exercise.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Exercise Rules

The following general rules govern exercise play:

- Real-world emergency actions take priority over exercise actions.
- Exercise players will comply with real-world emergency procedures, unless otherwise directed by the control staff.
- **All communications** (including written, radio, telephone, and e-mail) during the exercise will begin and end with the statement **“This is an exercise.”**

Players Instructions

Players should follow certain guidelines before, during, and after the exercise to ensure a safe and effective exercise.

Before the Exercise

- Review appropriate organizational plans, procedures, and exercise support documents.
- Be at the appropriate site at least 30 minutes before the exercise starts. Wear the appropriate uniform and/or identification item(s).
- Sign in when you arrive.
- If you gain knowledge of the scenario before the exercise, notify a controller so that appropriate actions can be taken to ensure a valid evaluation.
- Read your Exercise Information Handout located at floridaemergency.net
- As internet access is technically “not available” during this exercise, please have a locally downloaded or printed copy of any relevant exercise documents.
- Leadership for each participating group should provide the Controllers (arc.thames@srcare.org) with information on proposed frequency assignments or corrections to suggested ICS-205 entries. (Please carefully study Appendix A, Exercise Schedule)

During the Exercise

- Respond to exercise events and information as if the emergency were real, unless otherwise directed by an exercise controller.
- Controllers will give you only information they are specifically directed to disseminate. You are expected to obtain other necessary information through existing emergency information channels.
- Do not engage in personal conversations with controllers, evaluators, observers, or media personnel. If you are asked an exercise-related question, give a short, concise answer. If you are busy and cannot immediately respond, indicate that, but report back with an answer as soon as possible.

- If you do not understand the scope of the exercise, or if you are uncertain about an organization's participation in an exercise, ask a controller.
- Parts of the scenario may seem implausible. Recognize that the exercise has objectives to satisfy and may require incorporation of unrealistic aspects. Every effort has been made by the exercise's trusted agents to balance realism with safety and to create an effective learning and evaluation environment.
- **All exercise communications will begin and end with the statement "This is an exercise."** This precaution is taken so that anyone who overhears the conversation will not mistake exercise play for a real-world emergency.
- Speak when you take an action. This procedure will ensure that evaluators are aware of critical actions as they occur.
- **Maintain a log of your activities** using an ICS-214 form for your team. Many times, this log may include documentation of activities that were missed by a controller or evaluator.
- **Maintain a log of all official messages sent or received** using an ICS-309 form.

After the Exercise

- Participate in the formal Hotwash at your venue with controllers and evaluators.
- Complete the Participant Feedback Form. This form allows you to comment candidly on emergency response activities and exercise effectiveness. Provide the completed form to a controller or evaluator.
- Provide any notes or materials generated from the exercise to your controller or evaluator for review and inclusion in the AAR.
- Leadership, please provide a digital copy of your AAR and ICS forms to the Exercise Director.

Simulation Guidelines

Because the exercise is of limited duration and scope, certain details will be simulated. The physical description of what would fully occur at the incident sites and surrounding areas will be relayed to players by simulators or controllers. A SimCell may be used to simulate the roles and interactions of nonparticipating organizations or individuals.

APPENDIX A: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Leadership/Controller Directory

Name	Agency	Phone	Email
Arc Thames	AUXCOMM	850-889-3767	arc.thames@srcares.org
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Evaluator Directory – TBD as of 2/1/25

Name	Agency	Location	Phone	Email
Robert Little	State of FL DEM	Tallahassee, FL		

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations
Federal
CISA SHARES
State
Florida Division of Emergency Management
County

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APPENDIX C: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

Note: Because this information is updated throughout the exercise planning process, appendices may be developed as stand-alone documents rather than part of the ExPlan.

Now	Personnel	Activity	Location
By March 31, 2025	Team Leaders	Register your communications team for the exercise.	Online
By April 1, 2025	Team Leaders	Each participant organized group (SHARES, FDEM, ARES® including county EC or other leadership, section NFL, etc) should plan their -frequency -advertisement -invitation -activation procedures Any local group deployments to shelter or county assets should be discussed, with your Emergency Manager if required. Be sure you and your team have reviewed the prerequisite activities on floridaemergency.net/exercise	Locally
By April 4, 2025	Team Leaders	Develop an IAP for your local team. Overall exercise injects will be provided to team leaders and sample injects for deployment locations will be made available.	Locally

April 12, 2025	Personnel	Activity	Location
0900 ET/0800 CT	MARC & AUXC	Setup regional communications hubs	TBD
0900 ET/0800 CT	All participants	Check in to the FL Statewide Emergency Net	On the air
0900 ET/0800CT	AUXC	FDEM begins monitoring SARNET/HF/Winlink	FDEM
0900 ET/0805 CT	All teams	Participate in the State EOC net	On the air (SARNET)

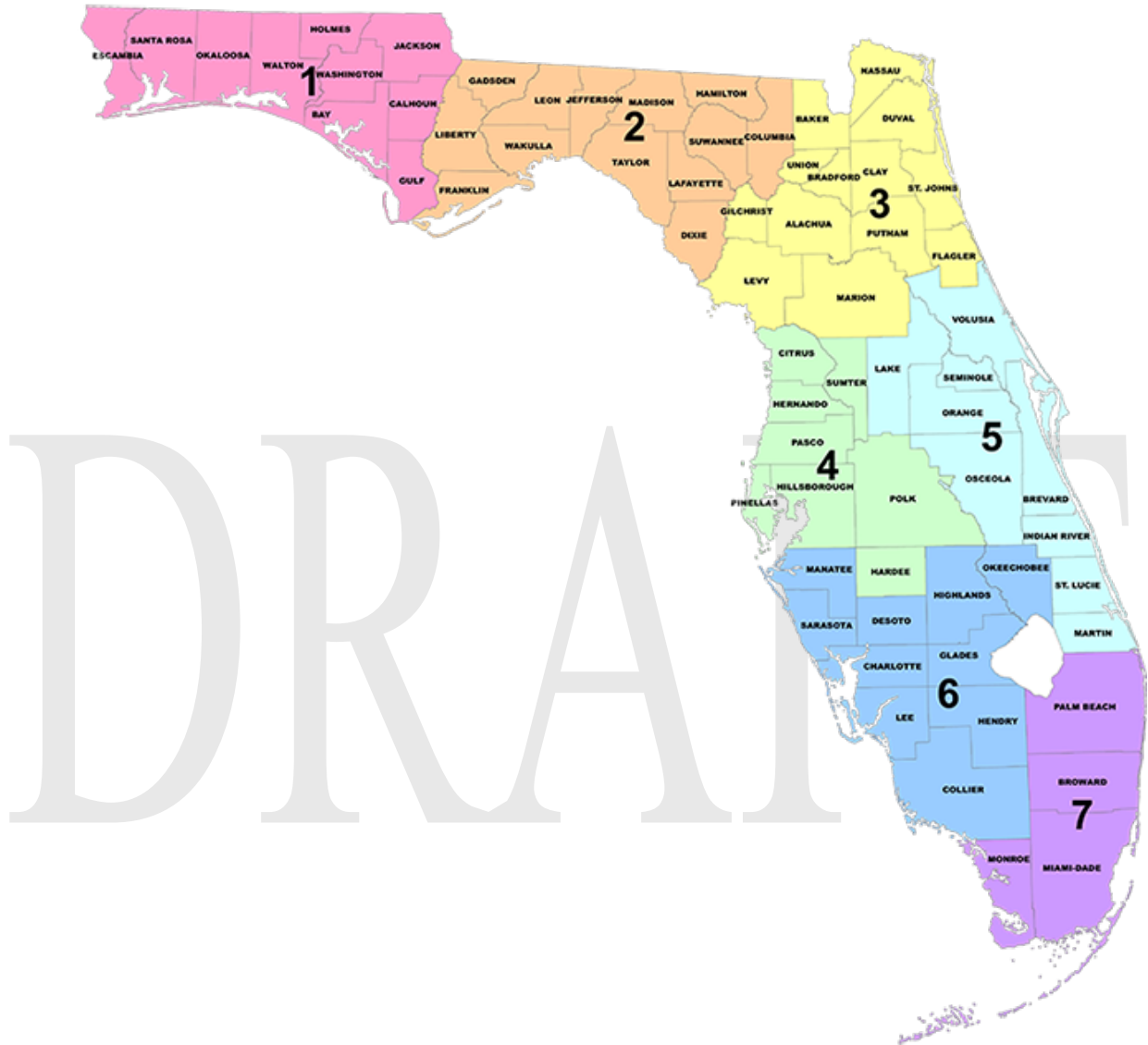
April 12, 2025	Personnel	Activity	Location
0905 ET/0805 CT	Team leaders	Initiate your team activation procedures. Use traditional and non-traditional communications methods as the internet, telephone lines, text messaging, and the internet may be unavailable.	Local municipality
0915 ET/0815 CT	Team leaders	Open EOC inject 01	Locally
0920 ET/0815 CT	Team leaders Deployed participants	Verify communications with your team members at shelters, hospitals, etc. if applicable.	Locally
0930 ET/0830 CT	MARC	Regional assets check-in with State EOC	On the air (SARNET)
0930 ET/0830 CT	FDEM	Activate command, resource, and traffic nets. Frequency of nets announced on SARNET.	On the air
0935 ET/0835 CT	Team leaders	Open inject 02	Locally
0945 ET/0845 CT	Team leaders	Open inject 03	Locally
1000 ET/0900 CT	Exercise Director	Announces an inject on the command and SARNET	On the air
1000 ET/0900 CT	Team leaders	Open inject 04	Locally
1015 ET/0915 CT	Team leaders	Open inject 05	Locally
1030 ET/0930 CT	Net controls	Request that any monitoring amateur provide a situation report of the status of their power, cellular, internet, landline, and power utilities via the resource net or Winlink	On the air (Resource net)
1045 ET/0945 CT	Team leaders	Open inject 06	Locally

April 12, 2025	Personnel	Activity	Location
1100 ET/1000 CT	All Teams	Obtain “information bulletin Alpha” from a SHARES net control. This can be done directly on the SHARES net by SHARES capable stations, requesting the information from another station that does have SHARES, or using the SHARES interoperability channel.	On the air
1115A ET/1015 CT	All Teams	Make contact with regional communications resources (MARC units)	On the air
1200 ET/1100 CT	Controllers	End of exercise. Please join the hotwash Zoom session.	Please use this link to register for the meeting link.

Post Activities	Exercise	Personnel	Activity	Location
By 05/01/2025		Team Leaders	Provide AAR, ICS-204, and ICS-309 forms digitally to Exercise Director.	arc.thames@srcares.org
05/17/2025 1100 ET/1000 CT		All Participants	Full hotwash/review	Please use this link to register for the meeting link.

APPENDIX D: EXERCISE SITE MAPS

Figure D.1: State of Florida



APPENDIX E: EXERCISE SCENARIO

Cyberstorm

Tensions have continued to rise between the United States and nation states with adversarial relationships toward the U.S. In recent months, Florida has experienced an uptick in cyber-based probing attacks targeting key telecommunications infrastructure and essential services. While these intrusions have caused only minor disruptions to date, cybersecurity experts have warned that they could be reconnaissance efforts for a larger, coordinated assault.

Weather

Simulated severe thunderstorms will occur throughout the day during this exercise, with conditions favorable for the development of tornadoes. Participants should be prepared to address the impacts of these simulated weather conditions, including tornado touchdowns, as part of the scenario.

Major Events

On April 12, 2025, at approximately 0900 ET/0800 CT, an unexpected outbreak of severe thunderstorms begins to sweep across Florida, bringing intense lightning, heavy rain, and strong winds. As the storms intensify, multiple tornadoes rapidly form and touch down in various regions of the state, causing widespread destruction. These tornadoes result in significant damage to critical infrastructure, including power lines, cell towers, transportation networks, and residential areas.

While emergency services scramble to respond to the storm-related destruction and the aftermath of the tornadoes, the situation escalates. Following the severe weather activity, Florida experiences a catastrophic cyber-attack. Internet services statewide are abruptly disabled, and within minutes, the outages spread to cellular networks, disrupting traditional voice communications as well. The timing suggests a deliberate, coordinated assault designed to exploit the chaos caused by the severe weather and tornado outbreaks.

Panic ensues as residents attempt to reach loved ones, contact emergency services, and secure supplies. Gridlocked roads develop around major urban centers as people rush to purchase fuel, food, and emergency goods. Banks become overwhelmed with customers attempting to withdraw cash, fearing the failure of digital payment systems.

County and State Emergency Managers initiate Level 1 activation protocols, opening emergency shelters for displaced individuals and those without access to basic necessities. Amateur radio operators, SHARES, and AUXCOMM volunteers are mobilized to provide emergency communication support at shelters, hospitals, and Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) due to the widespread failure of traditional communications systems.

Citizens seek to send messages out of state are directed to these operators where capacity allows.

The Governor declares a state of emergency, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) issues an urgent broadcast over amateur radio frequencies. They request situation reports from operators throughout Florida, utilizing both voice communication and the Winlink messaging system. Statewide communication nets are established to facilitate coordination between county EOCs and the State EOC.

Due to the widespread communications impacts, Florida MARC units are directed to establish communications hubs regionally throughout the state. AUXCOMM volunteers are directed to assist State personnel in the setup and operations of these communications resources. They will relay communications as well work to establish communications with county and State Emergency Operations Centers.

Partner organizations such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) offer support to FDEM, deploying specialized communication teams to assist with re-establishing critical links.

Participants in **Cyberstorm** will face the dual challenge of responding to both natural and cyber-induced disasters, including tornado outbreaks and cyber-attacks. This exercise will test their ability to adapt, communicate, and coordinate effectively in a complex, rapidly evolving crisis.

APPENDIX F: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
ExPlan	Exercise Plan
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
SME	Subject Matter Expert
ICS	Incident Command System

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APPENDIX G: REVISION HISTORY

Version #	Date Changed	Change Summary
1.0	02/01/2025	Initial version

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