

NET-EX 2026.1

Exercise Plan
Saturday, February 28th, 2026
Revised 02/21/2026

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

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|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exercise Name | NET-EX 2026 |
| Exercise Dates | Saturday, February 28 th , 2026 |
| Scope | This exercise is a Functional Exercise, planned for one hour in Kane County and surrounding areas. Exercise play is limited to participating organizations, participating agencies, and licensed amateur and GMRS radio operators. |
| Focus Area(s) | Response |
| Capabilities | Operational Communications |
| Objectives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a simulated directed severe weather net utilizing Kane County ARES and ARRL procedures. 2. Utilize proper net control procedures including holding individual transmissions until directed or appropriate and correctly prioritizing emergency/priority traffic 3. Accurately record weather reports from spotters |
| Threat/Hazard | Severe thunderstorm including damaging winds, large hail, flooding, and tornados |
| Scenario | The exercise will simulate a SKYWARN radio net during a severe thunderstorm watch that is upgraded to a tornado warning. |
| Sponsor | Kane County Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), Kane County Office of Emergency Management |
| Participating Organizations | <p>Kane County ARES</p> <p>Kane County Office of Emergency Management Communications Unit and AUXCOMM</p> <p>Local licensed amateur radio operators and licensed GMRS operators</p> <p>Other regional ARES organizations</p> <p>Other organizations with amateur radio operators</p> |
| Point of Contact | Terrence Pogge, Kane County ARES Emergency Coordinator admin@kanecountyares.org |

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.

| Exercise Objective | Core Capability |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Conduct a simulated directed severe weather net utilizing Kane County ARES and ARRL procedures. | Operational Communications |
| Utilize proper net control procedures including holding individual transmissions until directed or appropriate and correctly prioritizing emergency/priority traffic. | Operational Communications |
| Accurately record weather reports from mobile spotters | Operational Communications |
| Relay significant weather reports from spotters to a Slack page simulating NWS Chat, as well as to Emergency Management partners. | Situational Assessment |
| | |

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Capabilities

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).
- **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.

Artificialities

During this exercise, the following artificialities apply:

- Exercise communication and coordination is limited to participating exercise organizations, venues, and the SimCell.
- Only communication methods listed in the Communications Directory are available for players to use during the exercise.

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 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 SimCell as soon as possible if a real emergency occurs.

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 via Zoom 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. The information gathered during a hotwash contributes to the AAR/IP and any exercise suggestions can improve future exercises.

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 should be collected at the conclusion of the Hot Wash.

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.”**
- Exercise players who place telephone calls or initiate radio communication with the SimCell must identify the organization or individual with whom they wish to speak.

Players Instructions

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

Before the Exercise

- Review net procedures and any scripted details that you have been provided.
- Be on the air on the appropriate repeater frequency prior to the beginning of the exercise
- 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 if provided.

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.
- When you communicate with the SimCell, identify the organization or individual with whom you wish to speak.
- 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. Many times, this log may include documentation of activities that were missed by a controller or evaluator.

After the Exercise

- Participate in the Hotwash via Zoom with controllers and evaluators.
- Complete the Participant Feedback Form (available on the Kane County ARES website, www.kanecountyares.org, beginning on the day of the exercise).
- Provide any notes or materials generated from the exercise to your controller or evaluator for review and inclusion in the AAR.

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 will simulate the roles and interactions of nonparticipating organizations or individuals. Some participants will be provided with simulated emergency and /or priority traffic in advance of the exercise to contribute, as well as the approximate times to contribute such traffic. There may be additional injects to simulate conditions that may occur during actual severe weather incidents.

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

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|---------------------------------------------------|
| Participating Organizations |
| Federal |
| NA |
| State |
| NA |
| Kane County ARES Members |
| TBD |
| Kane County OEM Members |
| TBD |
| Amateur Radio/ GMRS Participants |
| TBD |
| Other Participating Organizations/Agencies |
| TBD |

APPENDIX C: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

| 02/28/2026 | Personnel | Activity | Location |
|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 | Controllers, evaluators | Controller and Evaluator Briefing | Kane County Sheriff/OEM MUB |
| 09:45 | Mobile Spotter Participants | Be at spotting locations | Determined by Mobile Spotter Participants |
| 10:00 | ALL | EXERCISE BEGINS Simulated Severe Thunderstorm WATCH and Tornado WATCH in effect, STANDBY NET active | ALL |
| 10:15 | ALL | Simulated watches are upgraded to a simulated SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING | ALL |
| | | | |
| 10:50 | ALL | Simulated WARNINGS will expire, net will stand down, and Net Control will take check outs. | ALL |
| 11:15 | ALL | HOTWASH via ZOOM | ZOOM link TBA |

APPENDIX D: EXERCISE SCENARIO

Weather

Simulated severe weather conditions

Major Events

Kane County

- Exercise begins with a simulated Severe Thunderstorm WATCH and simulated Tornado WATCH.
- A Net Control Operator will announce the simulated conditions, begin a standby net, and take check-ins from radio operators and mobile weather spotters. Net control will periodically remind participants that emergency and/or priority traffic should take priority over all other communications. Mobile weather spotters will report their locations.
- The simulated watches will be upgraded to a simulated Severe Thunderstorm WARNING, followed by a simulated Tornado WARNING.
- Net Control will ask for actual local condition reports from participants (estimated wind speed, temperature, etc.).
- Some participants may have scripted emergency or priority traffic to report, such as simulated weather conditions (funnel clouds, large hail, significant wind gusts, etc.). These reports should be reported as either PRIORITY or EMERGENCY traffic.
- Net Control will advise mobile spotters of simulated weather risks near their locations.
- Net Control will relay appropriate information and reports to a simulated NWS Chat group via Slack and to Emergency Management partners as appropriate.
- The simulated weather will pass, and the simulated WARNINGS will be allowed to expire. Net Control will request and take reports of simulated damage.
- The net will conclude with a check-out.

