

## **1. Amateur Radio involvement in February 18~22 DOD/MARS COMEX 22-1**

### **2. Feb 17 DOD NETCOM/MARS AUXCOM Webinar**

The DOD & MARS will be holding a communication exercise February 18-21.

A component of this exercise will be reaching out to the general Amateur Radio community to gather information.

On Feb. 17 there will be a webinar open to all amateur operators to provide more information on the relationship between MARS and Amateur Radio

**The following two emails provide an overview of the COMEX, the relationship between MARS and Amateur Radio, and how YOU can participate.**

**From:** Pete Newell, KC2WI NNY Section Emergency Coordinator

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022, 01:47:35 PM EST

**Subject:** Re: ARES/ Amateur Radio involvement in February 18~22 -DOD/MARS COMEX 22-1 & MARS AUXCOM Webinar

MARS is the Military Auxiliary Radio System. It is a civilian auxiliary just like Civil Air Patrol and the Coast Guard Aux.

Until about 15 years ago, the primary function of MARS was to handle HF morale messages ("MARSgrams" and phone patches) to and from deployed servicepersons. That mission went away when Internet and cell phones became commonplace.

The current MARS mission is providing backup and contingency communications for the DOD, FEMA, and other federal agencies in case of large scale disaster/emergency situations. MARS operates on government frequencies. But all MARS operators are also licensed Amateur Radio operators. Therefore they can also communicate with other Amateur Radio operators on Amateur Radio frequencies using their Amateur Radio call signs.

In an emergency situation when regular communications are inoperative (think Carrington event or cyberattack, etc.) the DOD and other federal agencies involved in the response need to know the status of critical infrastructure in the affected areas. Is the power on? Are the roads open? Is the local airport operational? Is there local telephone or Internet service? What is the weather situation? etc.

Many Amateur Radio operators will likely be able to communicate even though there is no power, telephone, or Internet service, and hams will have or be able to get information about their local area..They may already be involved in local emergency communications.

MARS will be tasked with contacting the broader Amateur Radio community to gather this information, format it in a specific manner, and relay it up to the command centers.

The DOD conducts quarterly communications exercise and MARS is a major player. The first 2022 exercise is Feb 18-21. Gathering and reporting information is usually a primary tasking in these exercises.

We are not told beforehand exactly what information will be required, when the requests for information will be made, or what the latest time of value of the information will be. When a request is made, then MARS operators will get on the ham bands and try to gather the information if they don't personally know it.

MARS operators will make general calls or check in to local and regional nets on VHF/UHF or on HF. In particular, you may hear MARS operators on the 60 Meter interoperability channels looking to gather information. They may be using either their MARS call signs or their Amateur call signs.

They may also check in to other established nets, for example ECARS, or the New York State Phone Traffic and Emergency Net. There are no plans at this time to have special COMEX nets.

In the case of NNY section, I am the only Air Force MARS member in the section. There might be one or two Army MARS members in or near the section but I don't know. The point is that there are not many, if any, MARS people who can just hop on the local repeaters or simplex, so HF is critical.

*The time to establish the connections is now, rather than NNY being a huge void of information if the SHTF.*

US Army NETCOM will present a webinar on the subject February 17. See this announcement by ARRL.

<https://www.arrl.org/news/webinar-set-to-discuss-amateur-radio-and-auxcom-support-to-department-of-defense>

I urge all ECs or anyone interested in emergency communications to attend.

My feeling as SEC is that every ARES group ought to take seriously this plan by the federal government to utilize Amateur Radio in an emergency and should figure out how be be in contact with MARS operators by radio.

*To be clear, participation in the COMEX is not limited to ARES, RACES, or any other group. No 'activation' by the county or any other 'authority' is needed.*

NOTE:

One component of these COMEXes may be broadcast of instructions on WWV and WWVH, particularly during the first 10 minutes of the hour. You may wish to periodically monitor WWV.

ECs: Please forward this information on to your ARES and local club members.

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Pete Newell NNY Section Emergency Coordinator

**To:** NNY ECs

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022, 12:52:32 AM EST

**Subject:** ARES/ Amateur Radio involvement in February 18~22 -DOD/MARS COMEX 22-1 & MARS AUXCOM Webinar

One of the primary functions of the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS) is collecting and reporting status information in the event of a major natural or man-made disaster, homeland security, or other emergency situation where federal resources such as the DOD or FEMA would be involved.

While there are MARS operators scattered throughout the US, they are only a fraction of the total population of Amateur Radio operators. The federal government recognizes Amateur Radio as a communications resource, and accordingly has tasked MARS operators to

interface with hams to collect and report information on critical infrastructure in such emergency situations when regular communication systems fail.

“When all else fails, Amateur Radio works” is not just a slogan, it is something that the DOD and FEMA believe in and have incorporated in to disaster planning.

A significant point to note is that the MARS-Amateur Radio relationship does not depend on whether or not your local emergency manager actively supports your emergency communications group or not. It actually does not even depend on organized groups such as ARES or RACES, although obviously organized hams trained in emergency communications should be the most effective. If there is a significant large scale event where federal resources are involved, it is likely that MARS will be asked to communicate with the general Amateur Radio community to gather and possibly disseminate information.

Chief Army MARS Paul English will be presenting a Zoom webinar on the subject on Thursday February 17 at 8PM EST. This webinar is open to all. You and all your members are invited to attend.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83781154615?pwd=L0NOY0hEV0tBdmNDWVNNeWRaVXJ>

**COMEX 22-1** will take place February 18-21.

One specific item in the COMEX OPOD is to “*conduct outreach to the AUXCOM community to source information.*” AUXCOM in this context means Amateur Radio, as well as any of the citizens radio services such as GMRS, MURS, CB.

Please make an extra effort to monitor for such requests. Note that I am not asking you to organize a specific net or similar activity, but rather to make your members aware of this COMEX and suggest that they all make an effort to get on the radio and listen for activity. Because there are no MARS members in most of NNY section, you may not hear anyone on the local repeaters.

MARS operators may be on 60 Meters, and/or on other HF bands. The best ‘place’ to find them would be on established nets on 75M or 40M. I do not have a specific operating schedule at this time. I may be on the Carrier Net 3935 @ 9AM) or pre-net, or on NYSPTEN 3925 @6PM. Sunday morning 8AM North Country Group 3958.

***Please note that if asked for status information, for example whether or not power is on or roads are open, actual conditions should be reported. Do not make up simulated damage reports.***

**PLEASE PASS THIS INFORMATION ON TO ALL YOUR ARES MEMBERS.**