Oxford County ARES/CERT Comm
October 2026
Newsletter

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September 16, 2026 Statewide Drill

To be honest, the amateur radio part of the drill from Oxford County was…disappointing. I would like to blame it on 'operator malfunction'. There weren't even crickets chirping on the digital frequencies – probably the quietest I have ever seen 40m at the frequencies we were supposed to send digital traffic. Up and down 5kc there were conversations going on digitally but not related to the drill. About 14:30 N1EP came on to start the net on 3940khz and that was the first communication we had. I had responded to a call on DMR VHF around 13:50 but there appeared to be no response back.

Hot Rods For Grads

We had a good but quiet event at the Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School fund raiser for the Project Graduation. Bob N1 WJO and Wayne N1YIS had the ARES/CERT comm trailer on display for the event. Food and weather were great!

September/October 2026 Technician's Class

Update October 13, 2026:
Five members of the class have passed their Technician's Exam!



The Technician's License class had 7 students from Oxford County. We have covered some of the basic electronics and some of the FCC regulations in our first two classes.
The class has met in Mexico ME at the Med-Care Training room and the South Paris EMA conference room for the past 5 Tuesdays. The Exam is October 13 at the Med-Care Training room in Mexico ME at 19:00 (7:00 pm)

Thank you to Cory KU1U, Mark KE1M and the WM7X exam test for administering the test!

Wayne N1YIS is looking at starting a General Class this winter starting in January. If you know of someone who is interested please let him know. Four people have acquired books already. The goal is to have people ready for the exam at the Western Maine Hamfest March 13, 2027 or if they are ready in February at the BOAT Anchor Hamfest at the Calumet Club in Augusta.

Maine Simulated Emergency Test (SET)

The SET was October 24th from 8:00 am to noon. Due to unforeseen circumstances the EMA was not staffed. I need to thank Andrew Knightly N1MRE for keeping the ball rolling. He had made some contacts within the state. From home, I was able to contact MECN on 3945 and 3040 on the hour and run the Oxford County ARES/CERT Comm VHF net from home on the half hour. We had a few stations check in on the county net.
This years objectives for the drill were:

1. Contact Net Control on MECN on frequencies near 3940 and 7262 kHz.
2. Conduct Oxford ARES/CERTnet (on the half hour) with mobile and ISS stations (Hams)
3. Transmit ICS-213 Msg Message form from OXEMA to MEMA using Winlink/FlDigi
4. Relay simulated requests for support to MEMA and/or adjacent county EOCs
5. **Activate**/Participate in a DMR test net on a local repeater at **9:15-9:25 am**
6. **Activate**/Participate in a Fusion test net on a local repeater at **9:45-9:55 am**
7. **Activate**/Participate in a DStar test net on a local repeater at **10:15-10:25am**
8. **Activate**/Participate in a GMRS test net on a local repeater at **10:45-10:55 am**

The accomplished objectives for the drill were number 1 & 2. Objectives 3 through 8 will need to be tested later this year.

A brief hotwash will follow immediately after the drill

Western Maine Hamfest in West Paris March 13, 2027
8:00 am to Noon
Admission $10.00
Tables available No Charge

POTA

Andy Knightly N1MRE has been busy over the last few months. In addition to setting up the computers at the EMA for WinLink and VARA and diagnosing various glitches in our equipment, he has been out in the field. Literally out in the field. I have received this email from him that I need to share.

“Hi Wayne,



About a week ago I setup a POTA at Basin Pond, Evans Notch. Pulled an all-nighter with the Porta POTA shack. First time out with a 155 ft Endfed with 95 ft counterpoise setup in dipole fashion using three tripod/mast supports. Worked a lot of 160 and 80m. 275 contacts made in a 14 hour period. No sleep.
The antenna seemed to be working good. Flat SWR 160-6m. Worked 160-17m FT8/FT4. In the morning near the end I was conserving the last few % battery SOC and making contacts on 160m using 20 watts TX. The band was very open. No solar charging at night.



Today was a Mackworth Island State Park activation with the daytime delta loop.”

For those of you that either visited or were with us at Field Day 2025, Andy had the portable delta loop setup out on the front lawn of the EMA and operating digital modes.



SETTING UP A NETWORK FOR EMCOMM In Oxford County

Mark Beedy KE1M has proposed we look at a network for Oxford County using the radios that were placed in Fire Departments and Health facilities. Most of these radios are either the Kenwood TM710 or the Kenwood 71’s. We will need to add a computer and an interface

between the computer and the radio. Research into what kind of computer is to be done over the next few months.
If you haven't seen the article in QST July 2026 on pages 30 to 32, let me know and I will forward them to you. Here is a brief description of their system in Nassau County Florida.
The system " to pass emergency traffic across the entire county, logging messages that don't rely on the power grid, the internet, antennas, or repeaters. To conserve power and be inclusive to most people, we made the minimum equipment requirement a VHF/UHF hand-held radio and a laptop." ..... "Creating the System
We initially evaluated five different systems to meet our goals: FM simplex, near vertical incidence skywave, digital mobile radio simplex, Automatic Packet
Reporting System, and Meshtastic. I started testing VarAC, which is a real-time chat system for HF, VHF, and UHF that relies on VARA high-speed weak-signal
digital modem software.
This was the glue that we needed to build a countywide simplex network.....
Dave and I set up a demonstration using AnyTone AT-D878UVIIs and Digirig digital interfaces and laptops to show what can be done using low-power and
minimal equipment. The presentation was a success, and more than 25 people signed up for a class that followed. With the help of Dave, Buddy, and Doug
Evans, N4AFV, we got them started.
VarAC offered us the following features:
• Station beacons
• Ability for any station to be a relay station, and the relay is transparent to the relay station operator
• Group messaging/chat (with or without alert colors/ sounds)
• One-on-one chatsV-mail with store and forward with relay notifications and
multiple recipients
• External email gateway with store and forward and multiple recipients
• Relay (up to two hops) through any station
• Pathfinder, which shows relay station paths to an unseen station
• Incident Command System (ICS) form capability
• File and photo compressed transfers
• Canned messages
• All events, chats, and broadcast messages are logged
• Operation of HF, VHF, and UHF sessions simultaneously with a shared mailbox
• A special emergency mode, which offers automatic polling of stations on the air to replace check-ins

We like using Digirigs as the digital interface component of our VarAC stations. Although the SignaLink interface works well, Digirig is less expensive and
smaller, and offers a huge variety of radio connection cables. Most of us use Digirig Mobile (logic level),which offers an audio port and a serial CAT port, so it
can be switched to HF transceivers, if needed. There is also Digirig Lite, which is less expensive and offers audio for only handheld transceivers and VHF/UHF
mobiles."
from QST July 2026

This from the ARRL

Will RADE Be the Next SSB?

09/25/2026

It's been a half century since single sideband (SSB) supplanted amplitude modulation (AM) as the most popular voice mode on HF, due largely to its spectrum efficiency, occupying roughly half the bandwidth of an AM signal. Now, there's a new digital voice mode from FreeDV called Radio Autoencoder, or RADE, that occupies half the bandwidth of an SSB signal and reportedly provides more natural-sounding speech. According to Amateur Radio Digital Communications (ARDC), which funded research that advanced RADE's development, "FreeDV RADE combines machine learning with classical digital signal processing (DSP) and can operate at signal-to-noise ratios (SNRs) as low as -2 dB. Its design also addresses spectrum use, speech quality, and power efficiency, all important considerations for voice communications over HF."

Most significantly, ARDC reports that manufacturers are beginning to integrate the mode directly into their radios, starting with a module that can be downloaded and installed on certain FlexRadio models. Users of other transceivers may run the mode through computers connected to their radios. More details are available from FreeDV and on the ARDC website.

FCC and HHS Initiate New Proceedings on RF Exposure
09/25/2026

ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio® is following two new federal proceedings concerning radio frequency (RF) exposure. On September 17, 2026, the FCC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) initiated parallel comment periods on RF safety issues. *Neither inquiry changes the current FCC RF exposure rules that apply to all radio amateurs but could lead to changes in later proceedings if the current rules are found to be deficient*.

The FCC's Public Notice is narrowly focused on specific RF exposure issues remanded to the Commission in 2021 by the U.S. Court of Appeals. The Commission emphasizes that it will give particular weight to submissions reflecting specialized expertise in health and safety matters. The HHS Request for Information (see also HHS press release) broadly seeks evidence and information concerning the potential health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs), RF radiation, and wireless technologies.

Comments on the HHS inquiry are due October 21, with comments on the FCC issues due by October 22.

The current rules governing RF exposure took effect on May 3, 2021, and are discussed in the September 2021 and May 2023 issues of *QST*. The ARRL website features additional information, including an RF exposure calculator, the RF Safety section from the 100th Edition of *The ARRL Handbook for Radio Communications*, an explanatory video, FAQs, and more. ARRL has made these resources available to everyone in the amateur radio community without regard to membership. ARRL urges all licensees to stay compliant and safe.

Trainings at MEMA

Communications Unit Technician (COMT) Training

14-18 December 2026

Maine Emergency Management Agency
45 Commerce Drive, Suite 2
Augusta, ME 04330

The Communications Unit Technician (COMT) course introduces public safety professionals and support staff to various communications concepts and technologies including interoperable communications solutions, LMR communications, satellite, telephone, data, and computer technologies used in incident response and planned events. It is designed for state/territory, tribal, urban, and local emergency response professionals and support personnel in all disciplines who have a technical communications background.
Participants develop the essential core competencies required for performing the duties of the COMT in an all-hazards incident, including responsibilities while operating in a local, regional, or state-level Incident Management Team.
Description
The course is instructor-led and supports learning through discussion, lecture, and hands-on exercises to explain processes used for establishment and operation of the technical communications resources for an incident or planned event. The course provides a realistic, hands-on approach to mastering the tasks and skills of a COMT. This class is taught by instructors who have both practitioner and Communications Unit experience. Each attendee receives a Position Task Book.
This course is five days long and is limited to 16 students.

Class Prerequisites

To attend this course, applicants must have the following prerequisites:

- **A public safety background with experience in field operations**
- **A technical communications background**
- **Awareness of fundamental public safety communications technology**
- **Basic knowledge of applicable communications plans**
- **Completion of the following FEMA training courses:**
  - **IS-100, Introduction to the ICS**
  - **IS-200, ICS for Single Resources and Initial Incidents**
  - **IS-700, National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction**

o IS-800, National Response Framework (NRF), an Introduction

Course Dates and Location
This COMT course is offered Mon-Fri, December 14-18, 2026 at Maine Emergency Management Agency, 45 Commerce Drive, Suite 2, Augusta, ME. There is no charge for this training, and course materials will be provided by MEMA. All travel/per-diem costs are the responsibility of the individual student or the student's agency.
Registration
Applicants should apply for the course by emailing Garrett Buzzell, SWIC, garrett.buzzell@maine.gov with the following information:
• Name
• Agency and applicant's title/role
• Email
• Phone #
• Brief description of pertinent knowledge and experience that supports eligibility to take the
course
• Scanned copies of all prerequisite Certificates of Completion for IS/ICS prerequisite courses:
o IS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100
o IS-200, Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200
o IS-700, An Introduction to the National Incident Management System
o IS-800, National Response Framework, An Introduction

Registration is not complete until all documentation has been received and verified by MEMA and the applicant has received confirmation of their admittance to the course. Admittance is limited to 16 qualified applicants.

Communications Unit Leader (COML) Training

7-10 December 2026

Maine Emergency Management Agency
45 Commerce Drive, Suite 2
Augusta, Maine 04330

The Communications Unit Leader (COML) course trains emergency responders to serve as radio communications unit leaders during all-hazards emergency operations. COML responsibilities include developing plans to effectively use incident communications equipment and facilities, managing distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel, and coordinating the

installation and testing of communications equipment. Since 2008, the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (DHS CISA) has conducted COML courses across the nation and trained more than 4,800 public safety responders in this course.

Description

This course is designed for all Federal, State/Territory, tribal, regional, and local emergency response professionals and support personnel who have an emergency communications background.

It is designed to familiarize them with the role and responsibilities of a COML under the National Incident Management System Incident Command System (NIMS ICS). CISA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute have integrated the COML curriculum to jointly offer a standardized All Hazards COML course.

This course provides DHS-approved and NIMS-compliant instruction with a goal of ensuring Federal agencies and State/Territory organizations have trained personnel capable of coordinating on-scene emergency communications during a multi-jurisdictional response or a planned event.

Instructors are approved by DHS and have extensive experience both as emergency responders and as COMLs. The course is presented with facilitated lecture using the WebEx Training platform, hands-on activities, and extensive interactive discussions. Instructors work through the discussions and activities to explain the processes used to achieve communication operability, interoperability, and how to incorporate additional communications solutions. This course is four days long and is limited to 30 students.

Class Prerequisites

To attend this course, applicants must have the following prerequisites:

- A public safety communications background with exposure to field operations; this experience should be validated by the authority who supervises the applicant.
- **Basic knowledge of local communications and communications systems; frequencies and spectrum; technologies; local topography; system site locations including knowledge of state, regional, and local communication plans; and communications and resource contacts.**
- **Completion of the following FEMA training courses:**
  - **IS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100**
  - **IS-200, Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200**
  - **ICS-300, Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents**
  - **IS-700, An Introduction to the National Incident Management System**
  - **IS-800, National Response Framework, An Introduction**

In addition, ICS-400, Advanced ICS, Command and General Staff-Complex Incidents, is recommended.

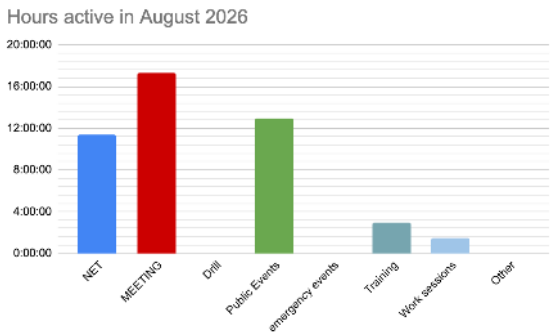
Course Dates and Location
This COML course is offered Mon-Fri, December 7-10, 2026 at Maine Emergency Management, 45 Commerce Drive, Suite 2, Augusta, Maine. There is no charge for this training. All travel/per-diem costs are the responsibility of the individual student or student's agency.
Registration
Applicants should apply for the course by emailing Garrett Buzzell, SWIC, garrett.buzzell@maine.gov with the following information:

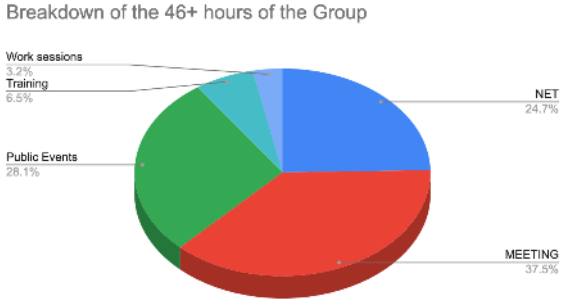
- Name
- Agency and applicant's title/role
- Email
- Phone #
- Brief description of pertinent knowledge and experience that supports eligibility to take the course
- **Scanned copies of all prerequisite Certificates of Completion for IS/ICS prerequisite courses:**
  - **IS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100**
  - **IS-200, Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200**
  - **ICS-300, Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents**
  - **IS-700, An Introduction to the National Incident Management System**
  - **IS-800, National Response Framework, An Introduction**

  - **(optional/recommended: ICS-400, Advanced ICS, Command and General Staff-Complex Incidents)**

Registration is not complete until all documentation has been received and verified by MEMA and the applicant has received confirmation of their admittance to the course. Admittance is limited to 30 qualified applicants.

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