

## Alachua County EOC Technician Class Scores Big!

By Gordon Gibby KX4Z NCS521

When Alachua County Asst. Emergency Manager Jeff Bielling invited our ARES group to hold a Technician Class, we jumped on the chance, picked a date and got the ball rolling toward a two-Saturday, marathon-style training. As usual, our goal included not just going over the Technician question pool, but outfitting the class with actual radios, and immersing them in amateur radio.

Since we're an emergency services group, it was natural to use the ICS-201 to lay out the planning details all in one place – where, when, who, what type stuff – of how we would set up the course. (<http://www.qsl.net/nf4rc/2018/TechnicianCourseICS201--.pdf>) We had to apportion the time between 6 different instructors taking on the various Technician sub-elements, to make it all *click*. Jeff Capehart W4UFL alerted us to excellent ARRL resources – we used their PowerPoint slides that go over every question of the latest Tech pool. Free Libre Office software allowed us to doctor up the basic slide set by **bolding** and **enlarging** correct answers on the “solution” slides, add many, many photos to illustrate items and concepts, and additionally add slides to explain two great local clubs and their goals and accomplishments. For some of our instructors, using office automation software in itself, was a new learning experience!

On top of the slides, we brought in enough radios, props and gear to cover 20 feet of tables! Fishing line zinged through trees to support a “V” style off-center-fed dipole using one of the 4:1 center baluns recently built in our LunchNLabs. Every participant got a Baofeng transceiver pre-programmed with over 80 frequencies, including many Federal interoperability systems and resources (with transmission disabled).

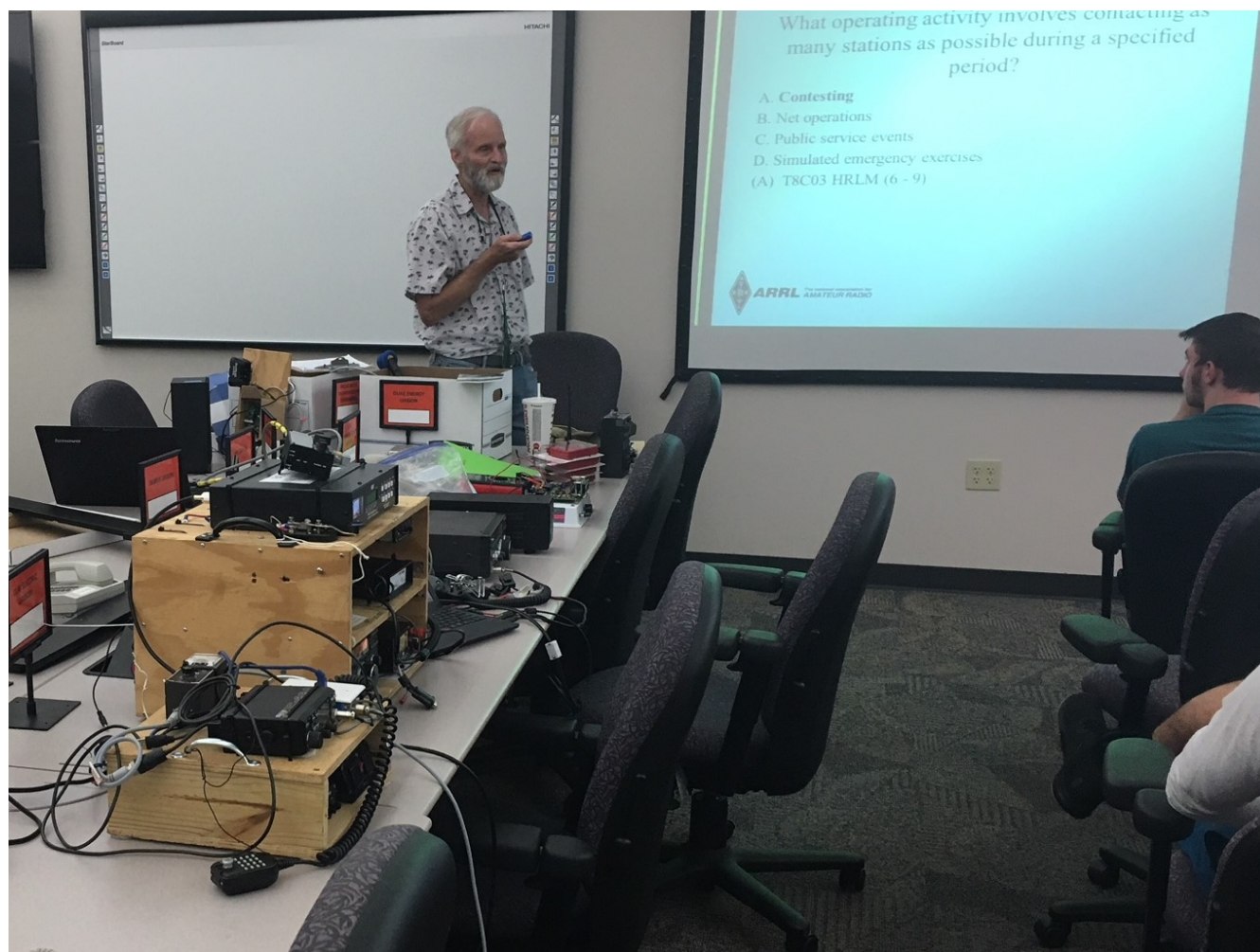
*The results were phenomenal.* Not only did multiple members of the State Region 3 MARC (mutual assistance radio communications) team attend, but also the Asst. EM, and the 2nd-in-command of the Sheriff, who wanted to get back the ham license he held so many years ago. New-at-this instructors and Logistics Chief found their footing over the course of 16 hours of live action. There were zillions of demonstrations and hands-on activities, along with frequent breaks and 2 memorable lunches (actually DONATED by the Logistics Chief!). Sounds of digital, voice, and CW filled the air whenever a free moment occurred. Leveraging VHF WINLINK, we sent emails right to participants' cell phones, which always impresses people! For the EM crew, we made a digital HF SHARES connection right to the State EOC Gateway, using NVIS. A mini field-trip outside to see our HF antenna was followed by actual construction of inexpensive and somewhat EMP-hardened slim-jim antennas, which we use to further introduce them to coax, SWR, antenna analyzers, and real soldering. No appliance operators here! All of this built much stronger bonds between our volunteer group and the local emergency management and Sheriff professionals, who were quite vocal in their appreciation of the training we conducted. “When is your General class?” was the question.

The local volunteer examiner team, led by Allan West WA4JD, graciously held an exam session immediately after the course, and we will have 7 new Technicians and one new General (the MARC unit leader came prepared to upgrade). About that same number joined ARES and the Gainesville Amateur Radio Society on the spot. A fabulous success, and a few more will pass at the regular August testing session.

Our hard-working instructors included Rosemary Jones KI4QBZ, Jeff Capehart W4UFL, Susan Halbert KG4VWI, Gordon Gibby KX4Z, John Troupe KM4JTE, Leland Gallup AA3YB and Shannon Boal K4GLM, along with XYL Debra Boal KI4CVS. Thanks to all their help, we were able to have 16 hours of live instruction for the first time, with no need for internet videos to rest our voices!



*Class participants with the antennas they built themselves.*

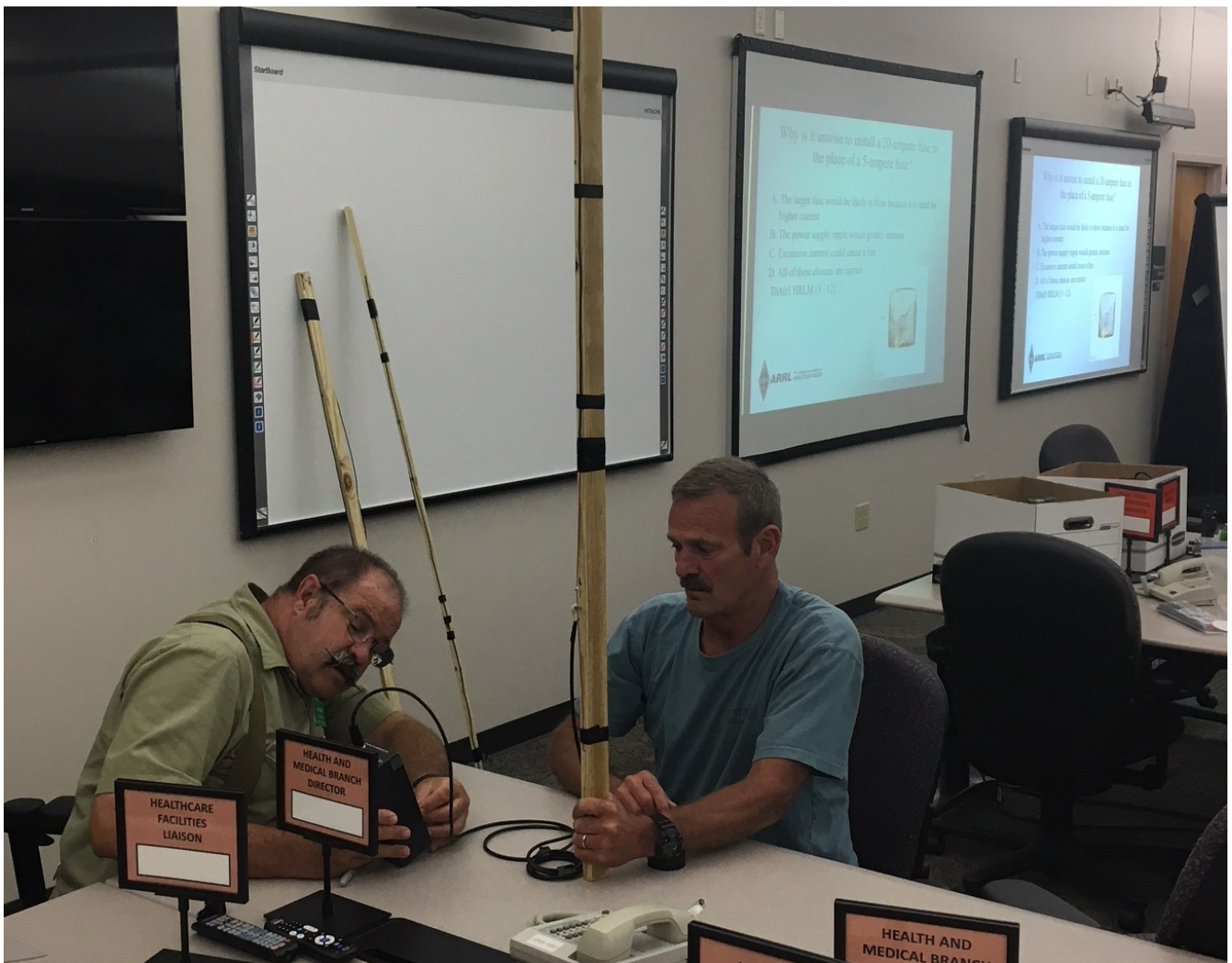


*Retired ophthalmologist John Troupe KM4JTE explains “modes” with a plethora of ham radio gear available*





*The Emergency Operations Center allowed us to use their main conference room*



*Shannon Boal K4GLM assists a participant tuning the matching stub.*