

Indiana Department of Homeland Security

July 2009 Statewide Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Test

Coordinator's Notes:

First, I would like to thank the county EMA Directors, Staff and local Amateur Radio Operators for participating in this Semiannual Statewide Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Test. The efforts shown during the test and the enthusiasm after the test awaiting the results is appreciated.

During this test, we utilized the W9WIN linked repeater system. The potential of this system is tremendous for ECOMM throughout the state. The W9WIN system is proving to be an extremely valuable asset for Emergency VHF/UHF Communications. The amateurs maintaining the system continue to add features, coverage and capabilities to this system.

One year ago, the 2-meter Simplex radio was located at the Indianapolis Training Center in Indianapolis; it was found that there was a receiving problem with that radio. The transceiver is now working well as we had established 15 contacts on 2M simplex.

While the High Frequency Bands (40 meters and 80 meters) are normally less useful in the summer, they were especially poor on the day of the test. Despite this, we still had 39 counties check in on 80 meters, reflecting an overall increase of 4 participating stations this July vs. last July. This is further borne out by some of the statistics below.

Summary:

- Counties that participated in the test: **58** (*44 in Jul 08*)
- Total number of amateur radio operators that participating in the test statewide: **429** (*246 in Jul 08, 106 in July 2007 – WOW!*)
- **10** IDHS Ham Team personnel monitored all Amateur bands, and frequencies required for the test.
- Local nets by counties were done on 2 meter and 70cm.
- No stations outside Indiana checked in
- Band propagation was in **Very Poor** condition for HF and VHF.
- Counties were helpful in relaying for other counties to ensure information was passed.
- Echo link and IRLP was monitored by off-site station .
- There were **6** phone check-ins. This is up from 3 in 2008 and we still have no answer for that shortfall as there should have been a call from all 92 counties.
- There were **97** persons involved in check-in, and taking check ins during the test.

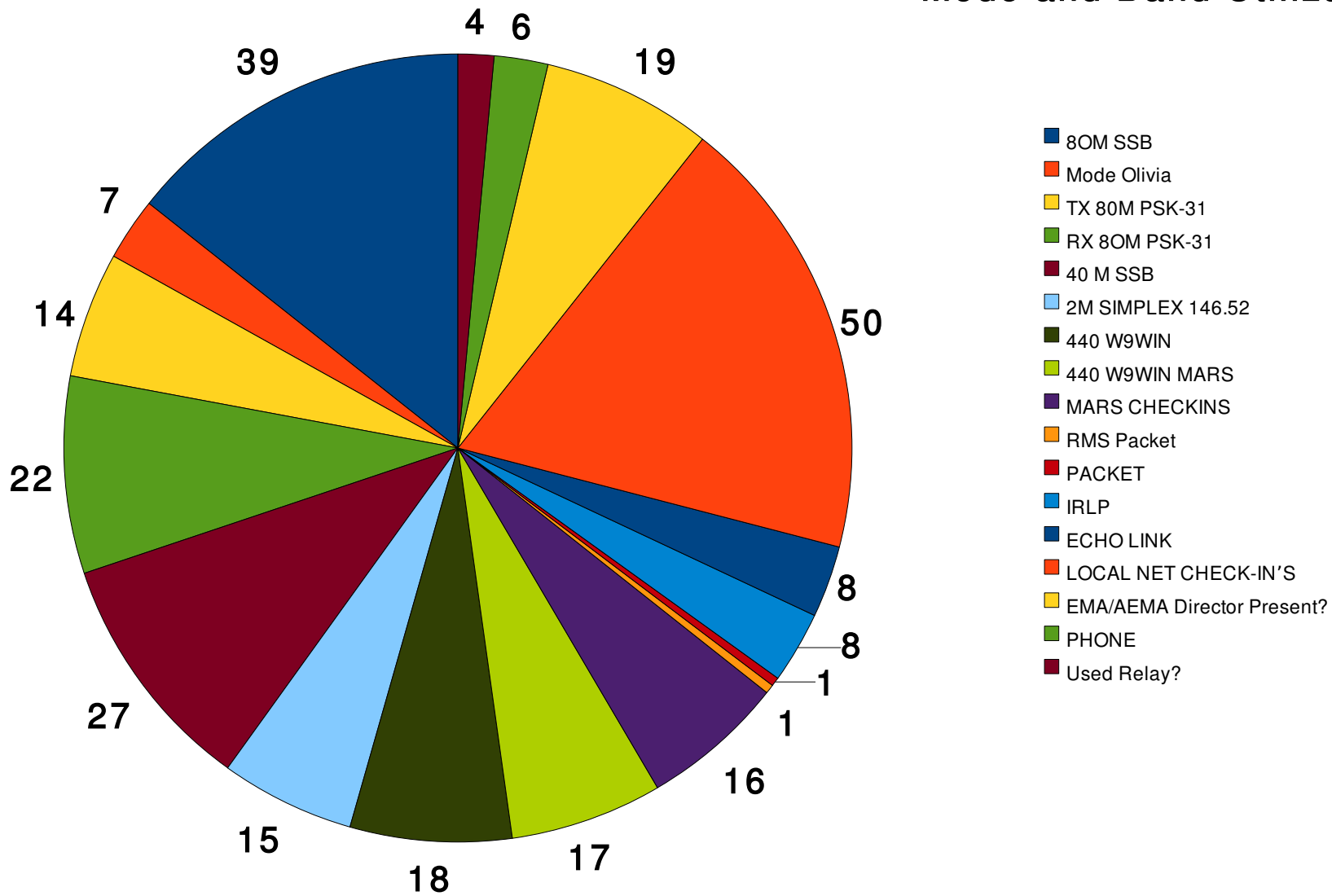
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IRLP/EchoLink Combo – It is important to note that this was the first time the test has utilized the IRLP/EchoLink Combo. IRLP and EchoLink stations checked in using the new EchoLink *IN-DHS* conference/IRLP reflector 9735. A total of 16 counties checked in using this method, bringing with them 183 local net check-ins. The net functioned essentially flawlessly, with only two repeaters not quite set up for linking (repeater hang time, tones and IDs sent to the net) but those systems were easily muted individually to ease the problems caused. This net was conducted on the radio (443.425 MHz) from an off-site location, for the convenience of the operator, but could have been done from the EOC just as easily. There are five other Indianapolis repeaters on 3 bands (146, 220, and 440) upon which the net could have been run.

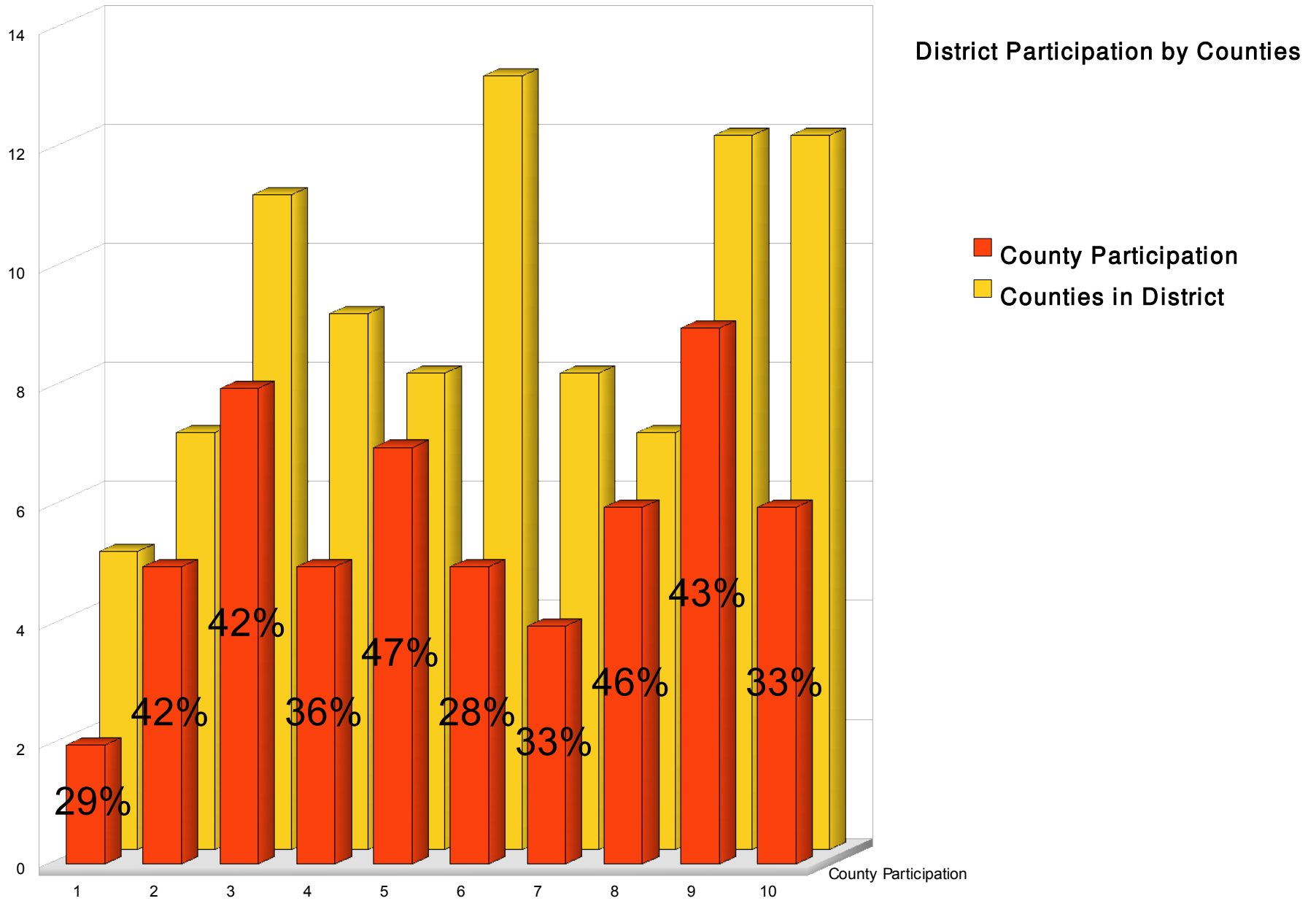
Counties participating included Porter, Starke, Marshall, Allen, Miami, Huntington, Adams, Marion, Howard, Jay, Madison, Monroe, Bartholomew, Lawrence, Dearborn, and Clark.

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Mode and Band Utilization



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Conclusion:

Although we had very good results there is still room for improvement. State and County officials have been working together to gain the proper equipment and expertise to ensure all Counties have the necessary equipment and skills. These skills will prove that if a disaster, either local or multi-county occurs, the different groups are capable of communicating on several levels to supply the critical information to the higher levels of government in order to save lives and property.

There are still areas of concern and all groups need to look at this report, and the January 2009 report to see the growth of personnel statewide and the communications systems used. Packet Radio results show not much usage but a separate test in July 2008 at the State EOC showed Packet is an excellent mode to provide a much-needed digital means of communications between State and county agencies via Amateur Radio. If the county EOC's do not have packet, we encourage them to consider either conventional Packet or RMS Packet it in the future.

As Coordinator for this test, I observe that Indiana has come along way in building its network of communication via Amateur Radio. There is still much to do. With the support of the Amateur Radio Community, we believe County EMA Directors can expand their communications resources.

All counties are encouraged to utilize the January or July RACES Test as an opportunity to practice their emergency response plans.

Hope to see the BEST Turn out ever in the January 2009 State Test.

73,

Respectfully Submitted by

Scott Gilmore, KC9OCL
Indiana State RACES Communications Test Manager