

# Southwestern REACTer

FEBRUARY 2026



Are You Ready?



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*Southwestern REACT, Inc. is  
an affiliate of REACT  
International*

### OFFICERS

**President:** Roger McCollough  
SWR 098

**Vice-President:** John Wright  
SWR 042

**Secretary:** Mike Bailey,  
SWR 092

**Treasurer:** June McCollough  
SWR 054

**Director-At-Large:**  
Larry Bierma, SWR 084

SWR's mission is to prepare for communications during emergencies and disasters. This preparation is accomplished through working community events such as: The Lakeside Western Days, and North Park Toyland parades, the Midnight Madness Bicycle Ride and Fiesta Island Time Trials, the Silver Strand Half-Marathon, the San Diego International Triathlon and the Descanso Endurance Horse Ride

The Southwestern REACT board meeting is held the first Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM at the Alvarado Road Denny's Restaurant. Any member is welcome to attend. Contact us for the address.

The Southwestern REACT General Meeting is held the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM on the Zoom application. Contact us for the meeting link.

### REACT Team Net

See the website for net information.

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## Thanks For The Memories Pt 2

Roger McCollough, SWR, 098

### I Wish You Knew Our Past

#### Prologue

Decade = 10 years. Five of these decades have passed into the history of our REACT team. I have seen so much of it happen and wish I could share that with you, so that you can realize the work we have done.. So let's again see what we have, when you come with me down the memory lane of our Yellow Brick Road

#### A Brief Recap: How It Started

I was not yet a member when the team was formed in the real SOUTHWESTERN Southwest of the U.S. of Imperial Beach, later to a church near 30th and El Cajon, when I joined the team. Much of the team background can be found on our website and brochure Our events have ranged in size from simple to, well, really big. I think now would be a good time to get a taste of some of the bigger challenges we took on.

#### Thunderboats: Growth For Simple To A Major Event.

When I joined SWR, they were already active as a part of the Communications Committee with the simple job of caring for the rented handheld radios that were set to work on the Marine Band. At some point it was determined that the use was not within FCC. Marine Band guidelines so communications was transferred to CB on our radios. Because it was difficult to maintain a clear CB channel to coordinate the three locations we were operating, and we had added GMRS to our "toolbox", it was used to connect the three sites and CB for local site traffic. When we added the Lyons repeater, it made communications very reliable.

With the change in GMRS rules, we lost our San Diego coverage. The team president (Richard "Skip: Westery), a ham, campaigned to get the team amateur qualified. This allowed reliable

communication.

At this point, SWR was a separate committee, answering only to the Thunderboat Board. Over the years, we added or controlled a number of event activities. They included:

- Creation and operation of the medical Helo-spot on Vacation Isle (VI)
- Operate Race Control and SWR control from the Control Tower
- Acting as the Emergency Response Team for the VI land and on the water
- Acting as Race Committee agents, NOT dealers, for Ice sales and delivery on all three locations.
- Entry access control support at gates, certain perimeter sites, and the "Hot Pits" (including Fuel Requests)
- And the list goes on..

On average, this three day event required five days or more, with set-up and tear-down plus before and after committee meetings. On average the event required 70 or more members and volunteers to support our activities, with an assist from Sea Coast React on the Crown Point location

#### In Closing

It ended when the TB Board decided we would be an Ice dealer (a business not allowed as a non-profit organization) and pay for our parking on each of our sites, among other changes. Our Board decided to not continue to support the Thunderboat operation, ending a great association. It was a very sad end of a great event.

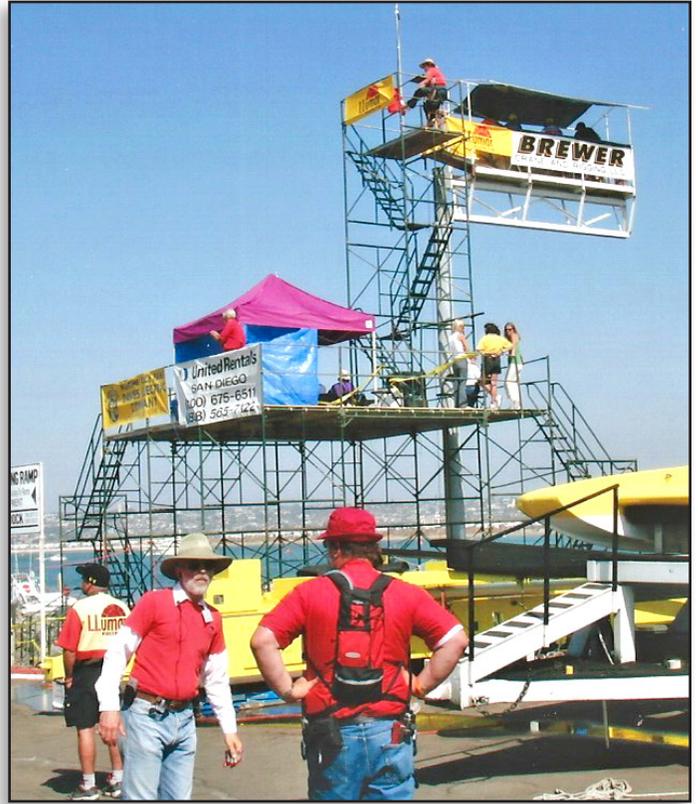
"Nuf said..."

Future Live General Meetings:

March 19, 2026

Thursday, June 18, 2026 ⚡

**"Thunderboats? Did Someone Say Thunderboats?"**  
**Images From The Archives**



## Are We Prepared?

The ARES Letter, January 23, 2026

### Thoughts to ponder

During the “Basic Voice Communications Procedures” class conducted by Radio Relay International, we ask students to engage in a simple exercise. While traveling out of town, check into an ARES® or similar local EmComm net. Transmit your call sign slowly and carefully, using the standard ITU phonetic alphabet. Then wait to see if the NCS gets it right!

During 25 years of business travel, I conducted this experiment many times. In 95 percent or more cases, the typical NCS couldn't transcribe my call sign correctly despite two or three attempts. In many cases, the net sounded like a well-oiled machine, with stations checking in and being acknowledged without error - until a strange call sign appeared.

Now imagine that same NCS during an ARES® net operating under the stress of emergency conditions in which important messages are being conveyed on behalf of a served agency. Perhaps a request for medical supplies is being transmitted or someone is reporting the release of a hazardous chemical. If an ARES operator can't copy an unfamiliar call sign, will he or she be able to accurately transcribe and deliver a message containing a term such as “acute subdural hematoma” or “ethylene oxide?”

The example of the volunteer fire company applies well here. When you dial 9-1-1 to report a fire, you have a reasonable expectation that the firefighters arriving on scene have been trained. They should know how to ventilate the structure, attack the fire, operate the apparatus, or extricate victims, even if they are unpaid volunteers. Likewise, when radio amateurs offer their “emergency communications” services to an agency, the agency has a similar expectation that those assisting have been trained in basic communications procedures and protocols.

Learning to convey tactical or record message traffic is an essential skill. It is NOT enough to simply establish connectivity. One must be able to communicate accurately and efficiently, keep a concise radio log, transcribe information without error, and perform the basic administrative functions required of a message center or EOC.

This is why participation in traffic nets is so important. Traffic nets are the only place where one can check into

a net any day of the week at your convenience and practice sending and receiving messages using standard prowords, proper ITU phonetic alphabet, and concise procedures. Some dismiss traffic handling because they see the content of routine messages as “unimportant,” but they are missing the point. The real value proposition is in the practice of transmitting variable message content. Every address is different. Network management data varies from message to message. One must transmit the message at a pace that allows transcription by the receiving operator. Likewise, the receiving operator must be able to understand exactly what is being transmitted. These same skills are also essential to an efficient emergency communications process, whether the content being conveyed is tactical in nature or served agency messages intended for delivery to an emergency services official.

Let's be honest! Many EmComm volunteers are not prepared to handle important agency traffic. They have little training in the mechanics of message handling and too few participate in traffic nets. For the first time in many years, we are beginning to see real cooperation between NTS and ARES. This cooperation isn't just “nice,” it's essential. Every EmComm volunteer should practice handling traffic because establishing connectivity is only a small piece of the overall communications process. The time has come to bridge the gap between traffic operations and local EmComm. Let's work together to the benefit of the Amateur Radio Service and our communities.

*James Wades, WB8SIW, Board Chairman and Emergency Management Director of RRI. This piece is reprinted from the January 2026 issue of The NTS Letter, published by ARRL*

## Are We Prepared?

John Wright, SWR 042

### Not From Where I Sit...

If you haven't read the preceding article with the same title, please go back and do so before reading this one.

This topic is related to my recent e-mail inquiry regarding whether members participate in nets other than the twice-monthly REACT net, an inquiry to which I didn't get much response; a total of seven answers out of 24 members.

Being prepared is an ongoing theme in this publication, whether it be preparation for an upcoming event or a major emergency, such as has been experienced in the East this winter.

I'd like to think that our members are well prepared for anything that might come along, but then I see and hear things that lead me to believe otherwise. I see members whose radios cut out in the middle of a net; I hear operators that have trouble copying the simplest of call signs; I see poor attendance at meetings (and it doesn't seem to be dependent on whether it's a Zoom meeting or one of our quarterly in-person meetings,) I see positions at events going uncovered; I receive little or no response to simple e-mail requests for information from team members, (and a number of times, it's been extremely negative and sometimes hostile,) and I hear REACT nets where we have more visitors check in than members.

Operating skills are perishable. They go away if they are not used. Periodic practice is required to keep operating skills at proficient levels. A good analogy is sports teams, such as a NFL team that has a game each week during the season. What do they do between games? Sit in their recliners watching TV? No, they practice. They keep their playing skills at top level in preparation for their next game..

I know this is not what team members what to hear, but I believe the greater percentage of our members are not prepared to step in if it becomes necessary in an emergency. Which leads me back to my original question: "How many members participate in nets other than our twice-monthly REACT net?" This doesn't have to be an emergency type net; it can be anything. Just about every amateur radio club in the section has a weekly net and most, if not all welcome non-member visitor check-ins. These can be found by looking at the club's website.

There are also several ARES or other emergency-type nets during the week There is the weekly ARES net that follows our own on Thursday evenings, a Sunday morning North County ARES net and even a Sunday morning Imperial County ARES net. This is just a small sampling of what's available.

Here's my suggestion: Find a net (and I can help) that fits into your schedule. You don't have to start checking in right away. Sit back and listen for one or two nets and practice doing things like taking down call signs to get copying practice. When you feel confident enough, try to check in when the net control operator opens the net for visitors. It might be difficult at first because there's a lot of doubling, but you'll get the hang of it after a while. And you'll also find operating at our regularly scheduled events will become easier.

While I'm here, another question: How many of you regularly operate in a simplex mode? Do you know what steps should be taken to optimize the possibility of getting through? These are skills that can be rapidly lost if not done periodically.

I'd like to see all team members participating in nets and radio exercises outside of our regularly scheduled events. There is a county-wide hospital drill coming up in April and I'm sure our local ARES organization would welcome our members if they were interested in participating.

As Roger would say "Nuf said." I hope to hear you out there on something other than the regular REACT net. ✎

# 2026 Southwestern Division Convention

## Yuma Hamfest

Yuma, Arizona

Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Yuma County Fairgrounds  
2520 East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, Yuma, Arizona



[www.yumahamfest.com](http://www.yumahamfest.com)

<b>Thursday</b> <u>Early Camping Setup</u> 2pm - 6pm	<b>Friday</b> <u>Vendor/Tailgate Setup</u> 7am - Noon <u>Event</u> Noon - 5pm	<b>Saturday</b> <u>Event</u> 8am - 5pm <u>BBQ Dinner</u> 6pm - 8pm <u>Grand Prize Drawing</u> After BBQ Dinner
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*Check the Website for Additional Information*

- Vendors & Exhibitors ~ Tailgating (Swap Meet)
- Full Seminar Schedule ~ License Testing
- DXCC Card Checking ~ **\$15,000+ in Grand Prizes**
- Hourly Door Prizes ~ Admission Prizes
- RV Camping ~ Emergency Preparedness
- Hamfest Dinner ~ Hospitality Area
- ARRL Speakers ~ Near Space Balloon Launch
- Transmitter Hunt Antenna Clinic & T-hunt
- Admission \$15.00

Email Contact: [info@yumahamfest.org](mailto:info@yumahamfest.org)

## Upcoming Events 2026

Event	Date	Status	Coordinator
Fiesta Island Time Trials	02/15/26	Approved	MIKE, SWR 092
Touch-A-Truck	03/01/26	Approved	TBA
<b>IN-PERSON MEETING</b>	<b>03/19/26</b>		
Fiesta Island Time Trials	03/29/26	Approved	TBA
Campagnolo San Diego Gran Fondo	04/19/26	Approved	TBA
Lakeside Western Days Parade	04/25/26	Approved	TBA
Giro De San Diego	06/06/26	Approved	TBA
<b>IN-PERSON MEETING</b>	<b>06/18/26</b>		
San Diego International Triathlon	06/28/26	Approved	TBA
San Diego Triathlon Classic	09/12/26	Approved	TBA
<b>IN-PERSON MEETING</b>	<b>09/17/26</b>		
Fiesta Island Time Trials	09/27/26	Approved	TBA
Silver Strand Half Marathon	11/08/26	Approved	TBA
Fiesta Island Time Trials	11/15/26	Approved	TBA
<b>IN-PERSON MEETING</b>	<b>12/17/26</b>		

### Event Notes

This is the schedule as it stand at time of publication. We are in need of Coordinators to cover upcoming events. If you are interested in Coordinating one of these events, please contact me.

Anyone wishing to man a station at an event can sign up using the website. Go to [www.swreact.com/events](http://www.swreact.com/events) and click on the event(s) you'd like to help with. You'll see a description of the event and a green sign-up button.

In the last several months, we have picked up six new members and I'd like to welcome them to the team. That puts us in the position of needing more experienced members to step forward to acts a mentors for the new members during their training periods. If there is anyone wishing to take on this role, please contact either myself or Mike Bailey.

See you at one of our events!