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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **LeeARES and FMARC Sign a Memorandum of Understanding**

Fort Myers, FL 5/15/24

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Lee County ARES® and the Fort Myers Amateur Radio Club (FMARC) was approved at the FMARC May Board of Directors meeting on 5/14/24. The agreement, which was drafted and presented by the Lee County ARES® organization (LeeARES), was developed to permit seamless support of LeeARES by FMARC in the event of a deployment request from ARES-served agencies.

LeeARES Emergency Coordinator and FMARC member Rich Schnieders said the MOU is a critical part of the local ARES organization. “It is important that our served agencies, primarily Lee County Emergency Management, see that we have formal agreements to utilize certain amateur radio assets in the event of an emergency,” he said. Rich stressed that the use of FMARC repeaters has never been an issue in the past, but “LeeARES and Emergency Management felt it was prudent to take what had been a ‘handshake agreement’ and formalize it into an MOU”.

In the event of a local emergency, LeeARES will not have to formally request permission to use any of the FMARC repeaters. That permission is granted in the MOU.

“It is also important to realize that some of the linked repeaters will be unlinked for the duration of the emergency”, Rich said. During Hurricane Ian in 2022, the linked repeaters were set to stand alone so the various local nets could utilize them.

In addition to FMARC-owned and supported repeaters, LeeARES utilizes amateur radio repeaters owned by Lee County. All the various assets may be utilized during an activation.

Rich concluded his comments by thanking the FMARC Board of Directors for agreeing to the MOU. “We have a great relationship with FMARC and frankly the vast majority of the members of LeeARES are also FMARC members.”

Cont’d.

**ARES®** (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) is a national program of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the national association for Amateur Radio™. ARES® in Lee County Florida is also known as **LeeARES Inc.**, a voluntary organization committed to providing emergency communications and communications support for events when requested by the Lee County Office of Emergency Management. LeeARES Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is a tax-exempt entity in the United States dedicated to activities that serve the public interest or common good.

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