Introduction

This year's International ShakeOut Day was October 15, when millions of people worldwide were encouraged to participate in earthquake drills at home, work or school at 10:15 AM local time.

Amateur radio plays a unique role in earthquake preparation and response. The ARES team of the LA Northeast District (LAXNORTHEAST), the EmComm Training Organization (ETO) combined for a joint week-long Winlink exercise, centered around ShakeOut Day (Oct 15) to promote earthquake awareness, preparation and response.

By The Numbers

The response has been huge. At the time of writing (Monday, October 19, 2026, 12:30 PM PDT), we've received 1409 total Winlink messages, 1191 unique (non-duplicated and non-superceded) messages from 615 participants. By contrast, here at ETO we typically receive about 250 messages for our weekly exercises.

DYFI

We had 550 participants who sent a Did You Feel It (DYFI) message. We provided specific instructions on how to respond to specific questions on the form as follows:

Field	Expected Value	% Correct	% Incorrect
Exercise vs Real Event	Exercise	100%	0%
Exercise ID	ShakeOut	80%	20%
Date	10/15/2026	90%	10%
Time	10:15	**62%**	**38%**
Did You Feel It?	Yes	92%	8%
Lat/Long valid?	Yes	99%	1%
Intensity >= 5?	Yes	70%	30%
Comments Present	Yes	74%	26%

Everyone marked their message as an exercise and almost everybody sent a valid latitude/longitude, so their responses could be plotted. On the other hand, this exercise was not an exercise in "creative writing", but an exercise in following the instructions and supplying the expected values. Specifically, we instructed folks to respond to a simulated earthquake at 10:15 AM local time on ShakeOut day, October 15, 2026.

By the way, it doesn't take a lot to get onto the "top 10" list of affiliated groups. You and two buddies would make the list, as shown below. Note that the "other" group is the catch-all for groups of only 1! I turned it off, so as not to clutter the screen.

My takeaway is we (ETO and LAXNORTHEAST) need to do a better job for future exercises in explaining how to successfully complete the exercise. Of course, it would help enormously if folks would read and follow the exercise scenario too.

Quiz

We had 295 participants who completed the quiz and attached their quiz results to a Winlink message. The quiz mechanics were interesting:

- We provided “educational materials” that contains all the answers
- Folks could see the correct answer before submitting their results.
- Folks could change their answers before submitting their results.

Here are the results.

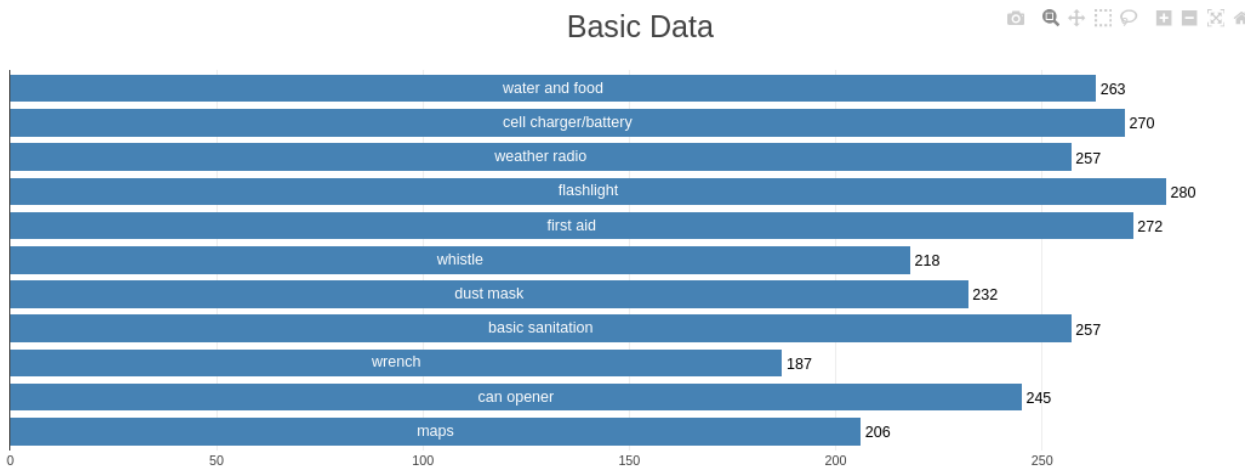
Question	Answer	% Correct	% Incorrect
Most crucial survival resource?	People, Not Kits	99%	1%
What scale is used to describe observable damage and shaking at a specific location?	Modified Mercalli Intensity	93%	7%
What percentage of the world's largest earthquakes occur along the 'Ring of Fire'?	81 %	94%	6%
Which of the Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety dictates your physical reaction when shaking starts?	Drop, Cover, Hold On	96%	4%

How long should your 'Stay-at-Home Kit' supplies ideally last?	At least two weeks	**86%**	**14%**
What specific item is highlighted for the 'Bed-Kit' to protect feet from broken glass?	Sturdy shoes	96%	4%
How much water per person and pet per day is recommended for at least three days in your Stay-at-Home Kit?	One gallon	91%	9%
If you are indoors when the shaking starts, what should you explicitly **NOT** do?	Run outside	98%	2%
If you are in bed when an earthquake starts, what should you do?	Stay, lie face down, cover head	95%	5%
If an earthquake is reported with a depth of 0 km or a negative number, what does this mean?	Measurements taken relative to sea level or a local reference point	95%	5%
What key advantage do USGS 'Did You Feel It?' (DYFI) reports provide over physical seismometers?	Provide superior spatial resolution (density over instrumentation) in populated area	98%	2%
Which computer-calculated scale does DYFI use to convert human observations into an equivalent of the Modified Mercalli Intensity (MMI) scale?	Community Decimal Intensity (CDI) scale	86%	16%

My big surprise in the responses was on Question 5 (how long should your “Stay At Home” supplies ideally last?) **Best advise has changed many years ago**. Two weeks is now the **recommended minimum value**, but you might want to adjust that upward, based on your situation.

Survey

We had 297 folks who completed the survey and attached their survey results to a Winlink message. Here’s a summary



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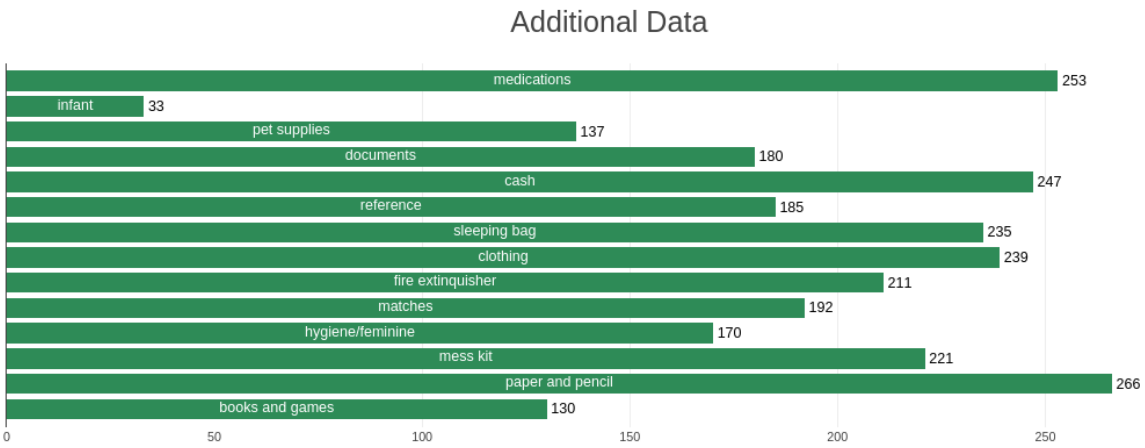

My takeaways:

- Our participants are much more prepared than the general (non-ham) population that I meet at my local community outreach events
- There is no "one size, fits all" for supplies. Some of us don't have infants or pets. Some of us don't live in regions served by natural gas and thus not needing a non-sparking wrench. All of us need to evaluate what we need based on our **personal** situations.

Next Steps

If this is your first experience with ETO, you should know that we continue to run weekly Winlink Thursday exercises. On the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Thursdays of each month, we offer a computer-generated exercise based on the most often used Winlink forms (ICS-213, ICS-213-RR, ICS-205 and the Field Situation Report with more report types coming soon). On the 3rd Thursday, we offer custom, human-written exercises that expose other features of the Winlink ecosystem, such as the mapping and GIS features, image processing, importing and exporting messages, tactical addressing, etc. We also provide computer-generated feedback on all of our exercises to help you improve your ability to efficiently and accurately use the Winlink system. All hams and SHARES licensees are welcome to participate.

Thank you

A big thank you to the hundreds of you who took the time participate in our ShakeOut exercise. We realize that it's not easy or even possible for you all to practice "Drop, cover and hold on", especially at 10:15 AM on a work day. You all still managed to send hundreds of Winlink DYFI, quiz and survey responses. We hope we've raised your awareness and preparedness a bit too.

Finally, special thanks to the volunteers who helped organize this year's exercise, in particular, Oliver, K6OLI, the leader of the LAXNORTHEAST effort. Oliver did at least 90% of the organizing, planning, writing, international coordination, translations and so on. He is a true asset to the entire amateur radio community. Thanks, Oliver!