

What IS SARNET?

- SARNET is a radio communications network that covers the state of Florida using amateur radio equipment that is networked together over the FDOT statewide ITS microwave system.
- SARNET consists of 35 active radio sites and approximately 8 planned sites that touch every FDOT district and the Turnpike.
- SARNET was started as a public-government partnership to help FDOT experiment with and learn how to design, implement, and maintain Radio-over-digital network (IP) technologies for use with the existing FDOT voice radio system. This allowed FDOT to avoid using their own voice radio network for research while it is used by FDOT personnel as they safely do their jobs.
- The public side of the partnership is the amateur radio community that donates ALL of the radio equipment for SARNET and also provides the amateur radio users that exercise the network, creating the test signals that allowed the FDOT to experiment and learn about radio over IP.
- The majority of FDOT personnel and contractors who work in telecommunications and support SARNET are also licensed amateur radio operators who can legally operate the SARNET radio equipment.
- Today amateur radio users provide continuous feedback to the FDOT about any issues with SARNET. This in affect provides a “canary in a coal mine” monitoring service that the FDOT uses to help them quickly identify network issues and problems. No other application on the FDOT statewide ITS network can do this and neither can the new, stare-of-the-art FDOT network management system, Telenium.
- The amateur radio user community on SARNET include a significant number of FDOT public safety partners.
- The Florida Division of Emergency Management emergency operations center relies on SARNET to communicate with county emergency operation centers during disasters and practices this skill every Wednesday afternoon on SARNET.
- The National Hurricane Center uses SARNET during severe weather events in Florida to communicate with impacted areas and advise them of imminent weather threats.
- During Hurricane Michael in October 2018, SARNET was the only available communication tool for at least one county EOC (Jackson County) to relay requests for medical supplies to the state emergency operations center.
- FDOT incurs only minimal costs to build and operate SARNET. The network interface units that connect SARNET radio equipment to the FDOT statewide network are owned and supported by FDOT. Each interface unit costs less than \$1000 to procure. The operational effort required by FDOT engineers and technicians involves occasional network configuration adjustments and responding to reports of issues that occur infrequently and that are often an indication of a larger FDOT ITS statewide network problem.
- There is NO COST for public safety partners and emergency operation centers to use this valuable communications asset. They only need an amateur radio and licensed amateur radio operator on their team.