

Local Ham radio operators gearing up for Field Day

Written by Betsy Blevins

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June 16, 2011 - Local HAMS will join with thousands of Amateur Radio operators who will be showing off their emergency capabilities June 25. Over the past year, the news has been full of reports of ham radio operators providing critical communications during unexpected emergencies in towns across America including the California wildfires, winter storms, tornadoes and other events worldwide.

During Hurricane Katrina, Amateur Radio - often called "Ham Radio" - was often the only way people could communicate, and hundreds of volunteer hams traveled south to save lives and property. When trouble is brewing, Amateur Radio's people are often the first to provide rescuers with critical information and communications. On the weekend of June 26 - 27, the public will have a chance to meet and talk with Bonham ham radio operators and see for themselves what the Amateur Radio Service is about. Showing the newest digital and satellite capabilities, voice communications and even historical Morse code, hams from across the USA will be holding public demonstrations of emergency communications abilities.

This annual event, called "Field Day" is the climax of the week long "Amateur Radio Week" sponsored by the ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio. Using only emergency power supplies, ham operators will construct emergency stations in parks, shopping malls, schools and backyards around the country. Their slogan, "When All Else Fails, Ham Radio Works" is more than just words to the hams as they prove they can send messages in many forms without the use of phone systems, internet or any other infrastructure that can be compromised in a crisis. More than 35,000 amateur radio operators across the country participated in last year's event.

"We hope that people will come and see for themselves, this is not your grandfather's radio anymore," said David Reeder from Fannin County Amateur Radio Club. "The communications that ham radio people can quickly create have saved many lives when other systems failed or were overloaded. And besides that - "it's fun!"

In the Bonham area, the Fannin County Amateur Radio Club will be demonstrating Amateur Radio at 725 County Road 4200 (old Fannin County Jail) off Highway 121 on June 25. They invite the public to come and see ham radio's new capabilities and learn how to get their own FCC radio license before the next disaster strikes.

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There are over 650,000 Amateur Radio licensees in the US, and more than 2.5 million around the world.

Through the ARRL's Amateur Radio Emergency Services program, ham volunteers provide emergency communications for thousands of state and local emergency response agencies, all for free.

To learn more about Amateur Radio, go to www.emergency-radio.org. The public is most cordially invited to come, meet and talk with the hams. See what modern Amateur Radio can do. They can even help you get on the air!