



CENTRALIA AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAM

January 2020

Amateur Radio is a hobby ... Amateur Radio Emergency Service is a commitment!

Winter Field Day 2020



Cheryl, NW7Z - Photo by Diane, W7DWD

Winter Field Day 2020 was well attended this year. For the second year, Centralia Amateur Radio Emergency Service team members joined Lewis County ARES and Chehalis Valley Amateur Radio Society team members for a joint Field Day exercise. While our June Field Day exercises are held in Fort Borst Park, Winter Field Day requires more of a “heated space” plan. As was done last year, participants were able to use the Fire District 6, station 63 site on Logan Hill Road near Chehalis.



Don, K17ZNG

Using the station’s ready room with its recliners, kitchen and bathrooms only a few feet away was wonderful. Several antennas were erected and tested and the first contact of the day came in from Hawaii. No field day would be complete without plenty of food on hand and the Winter Field Day is no exception. After years of practice, team members are getting better at stepping away from the radios and giving priority to food, with the understanding that those field day contacts will still be there later. Good job to the Lewis County ARES team for planning and setting up a great Winter Field Day 2020.

Monthly Field Communication Exercise Tests



Ken, KK6YUQ

For some time now, usually on the third Wednesday of the month, the Centralia ARES team has conducted its field communications tests. These three hour exercises allow us to accomplish several activities at once and are just plain fun. We are able to get our two communications vans out into the field where we can put the entire communications system through its paces. Team members can practice driving the vans and learn different locations in our response area where communications are strong as well as those areas that might require relays.

Teams regularly check into the 60 meter FEMA net, a request of our emergency management teams. The exercise also lets us test comms all the way from a simple HT under powerlines in the rain (see photo) through VHF, UHF simplex and repeaters on up to the various HF bands. Everyone involved learns something on these days. This month we tested comms from two different volunteer fire stations - new locations to most of the volunteers.

Long term, these training exercises allow us to work toward creating a knowledge base depicting just how well communications will work in each area. Can we depend on using our hand held radios (HT) in the Galvin area if we were asked to help with evacuations door to door? Are there communication dead spots downtown between buildings during annual parades? Most of all, the vans allow us to train in all kinds of weather. Amateur radio can be fun even on a cold wet rainy day in January. Ken looks like he is having fun in the photo doesn't he?

ICS Incident Action Plan Training

January's second training session was presented by Riverside Fire Chief Mike Kytta, KG7GQT.

During the December Lighted Tractor Parade, it was noted that Chief Kytta's Incident Action Plan covering the event was comprehensive, complete and an amazing piece of work which resulted in several ARES team members asking for the Chief's views on creating such a document. Chief Kytta discussed the Incident Command System, incident planning that included comprehensive plans of communications, tactics, resources, support, weather, evacuation routes and safety.

What could possibly go wrong during a parade with nearly 100 large vehicles, in the dark, when nearly 10,000 people are packed into a downtown parade route? How would first responders access a possible fire in the downtown area? How do you control the crowd if a child is accidentally struck by a parade float? Where do you place your medical aid response teams and what is the responsibility for communication volunteers when any of these occur? This training forced us to take a hard look at the contents of an incident action plan and we appreciate an evening of training with Chief Kytta. Thanks, Chief.



RFA Chief Mike Kytta

The CW Code Class Practices In The Communications Vans



Diane, W7DWD and Don, KI7ZNG working CW

Our CW Code Team started meeting each Thursday evening back in the first week of November, using the Gordon West 0-5 WPM code practice CDs. Over the weeks, we have lost a few people for various reasons but we've managed to keep a core group willing to meet every week to learn those dits and dahs.

Much of this continued enthusiasm stems from watching our visiting CW guru, Merle Olmsted, AA4QE as he worked his magic during our annual field day event. Watching him effortlessly work CW was something to behold. Most of our CW team decided CW was for them after watching Merle.

Learning the Morse Code can be a long and bumpy road. Learning 26 letters, 10 numbers and multiple punctuation can be difficult if you're older than say... 10 years old! As time went by, the team completed Gordo's CD and started practicing on sending and receiving names, cities, call signs, automobile types and actual QSO's. Christmas brought brand new keys to several of the members of our team.

Recently, we've moved into our two communications vans for more advanced practicing. Since we have two vans, we've placed them a ways apart in a parking lot and began sending and receiving messages back and forth. We use simplex VHF frequencies to communicate between the vans if necessary. Doing CW live on the ham bands was exciting. Several of our CW team don't currently have an HF radio at home to practice or even listen to so throwing Morse Code back and forth between vans has been very valuable. While we're not quite up to what we might consider high speed code, the team just keeps getting better each and every week. More importantly, we're having fun!

Upcoming Training Dates

February 3rd: Scott Dakers, W7SGD, WA. SEOC Comms

February 29th: Fifth Saturday Exercise

March 7th: Mike & Key Electronics Swapmeet, Puyallup

April 25-26th: Seattle Communications Academy

Update on Comm Van #5 and #6

Just an update on our team's Communication Van #5 & #6 projects (seen below when purchased). The projects have been completed with an external antenna added to #5 (lower left) and interior shower and bathroom facilities added to #6 (below right). Thanks to all of you who helped make this dream come true!

