

National Amateur Radio "Field Day" this SAT in Navarre

Jun 22, 2018



The Emerald Coast Amateur Radio Association (ECARA) will be participating in the national Amateur Radio "Field Day" exercise on **Saturday, June 23 from 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Navarre Beach, next to the Marine Science Center.** This is our 10th consecutive year participating in this nation-wide event. We are partnering with Santa Rosa County Emergency Management, Santa Rosa County ARES, and Navarre CERT. **It is open to the public and all ages are encouraged to visit.**

Field Day demonstrates and tests the ability of Amateur Radio operators – often called hams – to provide reliable radio communications under simulated emergency conditions from any location. During Hurricane Maria's destructive path through Puerto Rico last year, ham radio provided the ONLY means of communications during and, for several days, after the hurricane.

"It's easy for anyone to pick up a computer or smartphone, connect to the Internet and communicate, with no knowledge of how the devices function or connect to each other," said Steve VanDenAkker, Field Day Coordinator for ECARA. "But if there's an interruption of service or you're out of range of a cell tower, you have no way to communicate. Ham radio functions completely independent of the Internet or cell phone infrastructure. It can interface with tablets or smartphones, and can be set up almost anywhere in minutes. That's the beauty of Amateur Radio during a communications outage."

"Hams can literally throw a wire in a tree for an antenna, connect it to a battery-powered transmitter and communicate halfway around the world," VanDenAkker added. "In today's electronic do-it-yourself (DIY) environment, ham radio remains one of the best ways for people to learn about electronics, physics, meteorology, and numerous other scientific disciplines. It is a huge asset to any community during disasters if the normal communication infrastructure goes down." This was demonstrated locally when Hurricane Ivan struck Navarre in 2004 and south Santa Rosa County was cutoff from all communications for several days. Amateur Radio was able to immediately establish communications with County Emergency Management until normal communications services were restored. Anyone may become a licensed Amateur Radio operator. There are over 725,000 licensed hams in the United States, as young as 5 and as old as 100. With clubs such as the Emerald Coast Amateur Radio Association, it's easy for anybody to get involved right here in Navarre.