



# KEY KLIX

Amateur Radio Club of Savannah

July 2008

Volume 4

Issue 7

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## Editor's Note

*Normally, the July issue would be focused on Field Day. While this issue will certainly cover Field Day, I thought it more appropriate that it should lead off with coverage of the severe weather on June 19, 2008. I apologize for the late publication of this issue, but I wanted to make sure that a Field Day and photos made it in.*

Mac

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## ARES Appoints New EC for Chatham County

Georgia Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) has appointed Guy McDonald, K4GTM as the new Emergency Coordinator (EC) for Chatham County. Chatham County ARES plans to become more active in emergency communications support preparation. To do this, ARES volunteers are needed, so please consider joining ARES and participating in ARES training and activities. To join ARES, volunteer for activities, or simply get more info, you can contact Guy at [k4gtm@arri.net](mailto:k4gtm@arri.net) or at 912-604-8353.

## Tornado and Downburst Strikes on June 19, 2008

Mac McCormick, KF4LMT: [kf4lmt@comcast.net](mailto:kf4lmt@comcast.net)  
Photos Courtesy of Guy McDonald, K4GTM

On the afternoon of June 19, 2008, I was enjoying some quality monitoring time on my day off. The return of the VMFA-312 "Checks" to the air and some JSTARS activity nearby was making for an interesting monitoring day. Shortly after 1400 local I began hearing thunder to the north, so I checked the weather radar; a storm was brewing up around the Georgia/South Carolina border near the Port Wentworth area. Even though the storm didn't seem to have much motion on the radar, I went ahead and disconnected my gear to prevent lightning damage. No worries, I sat down with the latest issue of Road and Track magazine (there were two wonderful Sam Posey articles in that issue) to wait for the delivery of the AT-897 tuner and MFJ 1764 antenna I ordered earlier in the week.

When UPS delivered the package around 1500, I noticed that the skies here in east Savannah were darkening and a few minutes later it began sprinkling. It was almost time to go to Rincon to pick up my nephew from his father's house, so I began getting ready to go. As we left the house, the tornado warning sirens began going off so we checked 162.400, the local NOAA weather radio station, and heard the first Tornado Warning going off. As we drove out of town, I locked the 2-meter radio in my father's truck on the 146.970 repeater, reporting hail we encountered at I-516 and the Southwest Bypass over the repeater and via cell phone to the National Weather Service in Charleston. It was raining so hard while I was reporting the hail that I couldn't understand much of what the NWS were saying on the other end!

As we drove west out of Savannah, the weather cleared and improved but it rapidly became apparent from traffic we were monitoring on our scanners and from what other amateurs were reporting on the repeater that the areas around Sandfly, Whitfield Avenue, and Ferguson Avenue

had taken a hard hit from the storm, possibly even from a tornado. Kurt, N4CVF, was reporting numerous trees down and road blockage on Ferguson as he tried to make his way home; Southside Fire's Montgomery Division radio traffic supported Kurt's observations. They were working a multitude of downed trees, power lines, and vehicle crashes. Guy, K4GTM, reported traffic backups, trees down, and serious damage as he approached his home in the Sandfly area. Luckily, Guy's home avoided serious damage but his neighbor was not so lucky. Falling trees comprehensively damaged their house. Traffic from Southside Fire and Isle of Hope Fire further indicated more damage along Whitfield and farther along Skidaway towards Isle of Hope. Likewise, Thunderbolt Fire was also busy handling calls of trees and power lines down in their city. I later began hearing radio traffic that the county water system on Isle of Hope was out. In the following days, NWS Charleston would report that one EF1 tornado and at least five strong downbursts caused the damage.



We made it back home from Rincon to find the power out. After clearing out debris from the roads in front and alongside the house and from the yard I drove over to Guy's neighborhood to see if I could lend a hand. By the time I got there, the neighborhood had put out an all hands effort to clear the roads and was working to remove a tree from the neighbor's house with a John Deere tractor and chainsaws. The Red Cross was en route with food, water, and other assistance, so at that point there was not much I could do. I spoke with Guy and Bill, K4WP, for a few minutes, offering any assistance that they might need; I then returned home so that I and the car wouldn't be in the way of equipment that would be needed to remove all of the debris.

By this time, ARES and Red Cross volunteers had begun using the 146.970 repeater for assessment, relief, and recovery operations. K3SRC, the Red Cross ham station along with K4SDJ, Steve, W4SWJ, Susanne, and others were on the air coordinating the response. On my way home, I reported some traffic bottlenecks on Skidaway to K3SRC and let them know that one of their units was almost to their staging area at the Piggly Wiggly on Skidaway Rd. After checking in with work to make sure I wasn't needed, I monitored the 146.970 and began to hear about some of the damage. In addition to what I had witnessed in Guy's neighborhood, there were also heavily damaged mobile homes in some of the mobile home parks in the Whitfield Ave. area. Luckily, I heard no reports of injuries from any of the damaged homes. Hopefully that was the case across the affected area.

Throughout the entire time I was monitoring, I was proud to hear how hams were reacting to the aftermath of the storm. I can't remember all of those I heard offering assistance but N4RVM and WD8LUL were two that immediately jump to mind. There were offers to help clear the trees, offers to help the neighbors, and offers of batteries and other equipment to help keep Guy on the air.

It is impossible to include a comprehensive list of what I all I was listening to during the afternoon, because often I wasn't looking at the radio display. I was paying more attention to the weather and to the amateur radio traffic. That said, here is a certainly incomplete listing of active talkgroups. As was mentioned earlier this year in the article about the tornados in Effingham County, it paid off to be able to monitor the public safety agencies; it provided valuable information that helped maintain situational awareness. It also enabled me to keep up with what they knew about already and what they did not yet know about, preventing redundant calls to 911 that could have tied up their lines. You'll quickly note that I was mostly monitoring the fire departments to keep up with tree/power situations.

Fort Stewart/Hunter AAF TRS  
TG 3504 - Hunter AAF Crash/Fire

Chatham/Effingham TRS  
TG 3568 - Metro Fire Dispatch (and associated Tac TGs)  
TG 3824 - Southside Fire Dispatch (and associated Division TGs)  
TG 4880 - Thunderbolt FD  
TG 5040 - Garden City FD  
TG 5424 - Pooler FD  
TG 5456 - Pooler FD  
TG 6224 - CEMA 1  
TG 6640 - ANG/Savannah IAP Crash/Fire  
TG 7760 - Isle of Hope FD  
TG 36880 - Savannah Fire Dispatch (and associated Fireground TGs)  
TG 36912 - Savannah Fire Admin

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## **Field Day 2008**

Mac McCormick, KF4LMT  
Photos by Author

The 2008 ARCS Field Day was held at the Georgia Air National Guard Pavilion off of GA 307 near Savannah International Airport on June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Antenna set up began at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> and on air operations began at 2:00 P.M. Operating as a 3A Field Day, that is 3 stations working off of battery power, we covered the 80, 40, 20, 15, 10, 6, and 2 meter bands.

Four band specific stations were set up with only 3 stations in use at any given time to adhere to the 3A status. A variety of antennas were raised. Dipoles were used for the longer wavelength HF bands: a tape-reel dipole for 80 meters and a wire dipole for 40 meters. A trap dipole was used for the 10, 15, and 20 meter bands. For VHF, there was a 6 meter quarterwave groundplane antenna and a dual band 6/2 meter dipole. Inside, there was an 80 meter station, a 40 meter station, a 10/15/20 meter station, and a VHF station for 6 meters and 2 meters. In addition to those stations there was an Echolink Node provided by Dan, KF4MND and a 2 meter talk-in station.



Left: Dan, KF4MND setting up the Echolink Node. Right: The Field Day antennas

HF conditions didn't seem to be very cooperative this year. 40 meters seemed to be particularly uncooperative. At one point, the only thing I could find on 40 meters was a single shortwave broadcast station and a huge pileup for a Hawaiian station (which I tried unsuccessfully to contact for 45 minutes!). One bright spot was the 6 meter E-skip opening on Sunday morning. Our first contact was with a Canadian maritime station around 8:30 AM, after which we made well over 100 6 meter contacts to the northeastern US, western US, and Canada.



Left: Stacy, WA4IDS and sons on 80 meters. Right: Andy, WD4AFY on 40 meters.



Left: Mac, KF4LMT on 20 meters. Right: Ken, VE2HFK/W4 on 6 meters.

As usual, there was no shortage of food! Thanks to Doug, KF4EFP for cooking the delicious fried turkey (this is becoming a much looked forward to tradition!) again this year and to the membership for bringing covered dishes for the sides. Sandwich lunches for the set up and take down crews on Saturday and Sunday afternoons were provided by Beth Ann, KI4ZDN and Irene, KF4RFF. For those who stayed through the night, Beth Ann also made a wonderful breakfast casserole on Sunday morning.

Overall, attendance at this year's Field Day may be been down, but we had a quality Field Day. Unlike last year, there was more of an effort to keep the radios going through the night. Except during the storm that cut short operations on Sunday afternoon, the radios were kept going despite the uncooperative HF conditions.

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## **Announcements**

### **ARCS Thursday Night Net**

Thursday Nights at 9:00 PM, 146.970- repeater

### **Effingham ARES/Skywarn Net**

Tuesday Nights at 9:00 PM, 146.745- (CTCSS 97.4)

First/Third Tuesdays are Skywarn Nets

Second/Fourth Tuesdays are ARES Nets

When Fifth Tuesdays occur, they will be ARES Nets

For further information on Effingham ARES or Skywarn contact NT6H at [nt6h@arrl.net](mailto:nt6h@arrl.net)

## **AMATEUR RADIO CLUB OF SAVANNAH**

The Amateur Radio Club of Savannah, was founded in 1938, and is a non-profit 501(c)(3)(a) organization dedicated to:

- . (a) Recognition and enhancement of the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communication service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications.
- . (b) Continuation and extension of the amateur's proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art.
- . (c) Encouragement and improvement of the amateur service through rules which provide for advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art.
- . (d) Expansion of the existing reservoir within the amateur radio service of trained operators, technicians, and electronics experts.
- . (e) Continuation and extension of the amateur's unique ability to enhance international goodwill.

