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Wellington Honors Amateur Radio Week

By [Town-Crier Editor](#) at June 21, 2013 | 12:03 am | [Print](#)

Because the Internet, cell phones, e-mail and modern communications all require wire, towers, fiber-optic cable or countless small batteries, communication is threatened when disaster strikes. But not radio amateurs. They use just the airwaves.

When infrastructure fails or is overloaded, the one consistent service that has never failed is amateur radio. That's why Wellington has recognized the third week in June as "Amateur Radio Week."

On June 22-23, volunteers from the Wellington Radio Club will take to the airwaves to join tens of thousands of other amateur radio operators in practicing emergency communications skills and testing their equipment. The weekend is called Field Day, and it is when a national emergency preparedness exercise unfolds.

The Wellington Radio Club will set up temporary generators, shortwave radio stations and antennas to connect with thousands of other emergency-powered sites throughout North America.

Club members 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. The location is Village Park Pavilion 3, located at 11700 Pierson Road, Wellington.

To learn more about amateur radio, visit the Wellington Radio Club web site at www.qsl.net/k4wrc or www.emergency-radio.org.

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HAM radio still part of hurricane center arsenal

By [Ken Kaye](#), Staff writer

4:02 PM EDT, June 15, 2013

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Amid the high-tech computers, satellite dishes and sophisticated equipment at the National Hurricane Center is a HAM radio operator station, somewhat hidden in a back office.

It might seem like it's akin to placing a teletype on a space shuttle. But when hurricanes form, the amateur radio station cranks up and receives weather information from HAM operators in the affected areas. Their observations help the forecasters in Miami-Dade County better judge a storm's strength or position and issue more precise warnings.

"The goal of our station basically is to help save lives," said Julio Ripoll, assistant coordinator of the hurricane center's Amateur Radio Station. "We give hurricane forecasters eyewitness reports and data they probably wouldn't otherwise have."

For instance, in November 2001, as Hurricane Michelle was approaching the Bahamas, the hurricane center thought the system was weakening. But a HAM operator on a sailboat in the Bahamas reported the storm was still generating winds up to 110 mph.

"It was just in time," Ripoll said. "The Bahamas were about to lower their hurricane warnings, and it was still technically a hurricane."

The station, known in the HAM operator world as WX4NHC, is staffed by 30 volunteers who swing into action whenever a storm is about 300 miles from hitting the U.S. coast or land in the Caribbean. They have worked more than a 100 hurricanes in the past three decades.

They'll work in three-hour shifts around the clock, receiving real-time weather observations from other HAM operators, who might be thousands of miles away or down the block.

James Franklin, the hurricane center's top hurricane specialist, said HAM operator observations help sharpen short-term predictions.

"We sample so little of the storm's circulation, so any additional observation helps our analysis of what's going on now," he said.

In September 1998, when Hurricane Georges was aiming toward eastern Cuba, hurricane center forecasters were unsure of the exact location of the eye – because the Cuban government wouldn't allow U.S. hurricane hunter aircraft to fly into its airspace.

Hurricane specialist Lixion Avila asked the center's HAM station to reach out to Cuban radio operators. Ripoll found a HAM operator on the eastern most point of the island.

"The HAM operator was yelling over the microphone, and you could hear his excitement and the wind in the background," Ripoll said. "He explained that he was standing on this chair with about 2 feet of water in his house."

Ultimately, the operator gave Ripoll the direction of the wind, which helped Avila determine the location of the eye, a critical piece of information needed to develop an accurate track forecast.

Ripoll, a Miami architect, set up the HAM radio station at the hurricane center 33 years ago, when it was located in Coral Gables. He was asked to do so by former center director Neil Frank, who wanted a backup way to alert the Caribbean.

Ripoll, then head of the University of Miami amateur radio club, carted over his own personal radio in a cardboard box, full of wires. Today, the station has six permanent radios worth about \$20,000, all donated by corporations.

John McHugh, coordinator of the hurricane center's station, said amateur radio can provide communications even when electricity is out because operators are trained to use generators and batteries to keep their radios on.

He said the hurricane center station operates with HF, or high frequency waves, for long-distance communications, and with VHF and UHF to communicate with local emergency managers and other government officials.

HAM operators have provided critical communications in the aftermath of storms, directing recovery agencies, such as the Salvation Army, where to distribute food and emergency supplies. Hurricane center HAMS also helped victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti receive supplies.

Larry Lazar, president of the [Wellington](#) Radio Club, said hundreds of HAM operators in South Florida are ready to help out if a storm hits this region. They helped get hot meals to people left homeless after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. They also helped residents without power in the aftermath of Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, which hit the Treasure Coast in 2004.

"It's exactly what we do," he said. "We practice for it."

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Amateur radio operations open to public June 22

By [Mitra Malek](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WELLINGTON — Amateur radio operators in Wellington will work around the clock from June 22 to 23 to set up field radio communication stations, get on the air and contact thousands of other operators in the U.S. and Canada as part of a national preparedness exercise called Field Day. The exercise is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League to help ensure that “when all else fails, ham radio works” to fill critical emergency communications gaps after a disaster, according to a press release from the group. Wellington’s Field Day operations will be at Pavilion 3, Village Park, starting at 2 p.m. June 22 and running through 2 p.m. June 23. For information, contact Larry Lazar, 561-385-2986, or go to www.qsl.net/k4wrc. The public is invited to attend and meet and talk with the operators.

MITRA MALEK

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June, 2013 – Western Community Hams Gear Up for Hurricane Season

Posted By [admin](#) On June 10, 2013 @ 7:07 pm In [Press Releases](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

[Western Community Hams gear up for a very active Hurricane Season by participating in a national emergency communications exercise](#)

(WELLINGTON, FL June 9, 2013) —Amateur Radio operators in Wellington will work 'round the clock to set up field radio communication stations, get on the air, and contact thousands of other operators in the US and Canada as part of a national preparedness exercise called Field Day. It's sponsored by the American Radio Relay League, ARRL to help ensure that "*when all else fails, ham radio works*" to fill critical emergency communications gaps after a disaster.

According to Jim Gerlach, Field Day Manager, this is the annual "shakedown run" for the Wellington Radio Club. "Field Day is a way for hams to get outdoors and have fun under some difficult conditions," Gerlach says. "But it's also a chance to fine-tune emergency communication skills. We use generators and battery power, and we set up antennas in the field. The idea is to put together a self-sufficient, working station quickly and begin sending and receiving simulated emergency messages."

The ARRL reported that over 1,400,000 messages were transmitted in 2012's exercise... each described the emergency powered site's location and its transmitting stations. The exercise is partly a competition to stimulate sending as many messages, to as many different parts of North America, as possible.

Radio Amateurs have been effective in establishing emergency communications nets during floods, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes and other major disasters. Many of those emergency communicators are among the 37,000 or so hams that yearly get their training during Field Day.

Wellington's Field Day operations will be at Pavilion 3, VillagePark, 11700 Pierson Rd. in Wellington. The exercise begins at **2pm Saturday, June 22nd** and runs through 2pm Sunday, the 23rd.

For more information, contact Larry Lazar, 385-2986 or go to the Wellington Radio Club's website: www.qsl.net/k4wrc ^[1]. To learn more about Amateur Radio, go to www.emergency-radio.org ^[2]. 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!

SUMMARY: Wellington Radio Club volunteers to contact hams throughout North America in the nation's largest ham radio on-air preparedness event.

WHO: Licensed Amateur Radio Operators in Western Communities.

WHAT: Hams will set up and operate field radio stations to contact other hams throughout the US and Canada over 24 hours.

WHERE: Pavilion 3, VillagePark, 11700 Pierson Rd., Wellington, FL 33414

WHEN: 2pm Saturday, June 22nd and runs through 2pm Sunday, the 23rd.

WHY: Amateur Radio operators practice communication skills under primitive conditions, with generator and battery-powered equipment and portable antennas. Field Day is a "trial run" for emergency communication skills used during disaster situations and is also a competition. Special awards are given for "alternative" power sources such as solar, wind and methane.

Photo opportunities, interviews, activities of local participants in important national Amateur Radio event.

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[2] www.emergency-radio.org: <http://www.emergency-radio.org/>

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