

### Wake County ARES

While the rest of North Carolina was enjoying the first hot, sunny day of 1998, about 50 people were working hard to cleanup after the hurricane that hit around Raleigh the day before. It seems a mock hurricane landed in Wake and Franklin counties during the night of 15 May. Saturday morning, the Red Cross called their volunteers for help. The chapter house in Raleigh was opened along with a shelters in Raleigh and Wake Forest and a service center in Wake Forest. Once all operations were closed, a post-drill briefing was held to review the success and the places improvements could still be made. By 3 pm the hurricane was long gone and all damage was undone.

Most of the damage was north of Raleigh. (Somehow this hurricane managed to land here but not damage anywhere around the area.) Red Cross said that they were able to get all facilities opened in record breaking time. They were quite pleased with their ability to respond more quickly and efficiently than in the past.

I received a call at 7am on Saturday 16 May. and was asked to come to the Raleigh chapter house and to get two other hams for assignments to be made. At 8 am we had a briefing to advise the status of the event. Within an 1.5 hours the two shelters were opened and the service center was opening. Shortly after the shelters opened, we had hams staffed in 3 of the 4 locations (actually all 4 were staffed because the service center and shelter in Wake Forest were in the same room.) The drill ended at 12:30 pm, right after lunch was served.

HAM radio came through again! This is the first time Red Cross decided to try a new method of communications, cellular phones. N4YRD advised them that cellular communications were not necessarily the best method of communications in a large disaster; however, they were worth

trying since Red Cross handles many different sizes of disasters. As usual, cellular phones failed!!! The service center phone never worked once it arrived in Wake Forest. Ham radio was the only communication method available to them for the drill, except for they cheated and used the shelter's phone. Another chance to shine came at the very end of the drill. The Raleigh shelter, directly across the street from the chapter house, could not be reached by cellular phone to tell them to close down the drill. This phone had worked all morning with no problems at all. When contacted by ham radio, the phone appeared to be working; however, it did not ring when called from headquarters. The much desired message was delivered over the ham air waves; and, immediately after, the phone started working again.

I stayed for the briefing after the drill. Red Cross did not have their communications person in attendance so the presiding officer allowed me to talk on behalf of communications. It was pointed out that their first attempt at high-tech communications failed, even under the best of circumstances; and, that amateur radio was able to handle the communications in every event. In fact, several of the workers in headquarters at the chapter house found it much easier to ask ham radio to pass a message than to look up the phone number and call the phone at the shelter.

Just a few people put on a good enough show to prove, once again, amateur radio is still a method of communication that local agencies can count on to serve in a disaster. About the only way we can let them down is to not show up when requested.

Many thanks to AF4JG, Bill Powell; AE4MY, Frank Bridges; and N4ZUD, Terri Jaskolka for their assistance. Their several hours of effort put an-

*(Continued on page 2)*







