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Hams to construct emergency station in area

Advertisement

By Ben Rodgers

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When Hurricane Katrina ripped through parts of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi in 2005, thousands were left without water, power or hope.

With no telephone lines or Internet service, a myriad of people were left without the means to communicate until amateur radio users or hams, sprang to the rescue.

Using only an emergency power generator, the Green Bay Mike and Key club will construct an emergency station, much like those used after Katrina, to contact other ham users around the country and the world.

The annual event Field Day, will be held from 1 p.m. Saturday to 1 p.m. Sunday at Ashwaubomay Park, 2881 S. Broadway, Ashwaubenon.

"Field Day gives people an opportunity to see amateur radio operators working like they would in an emergency," said Dave Catalano, Amateur Radio Service emergency coordinator for Brown County.

Radio antennas will be set up between trees and will run radios off 12-volt batteries while using solar power to recharge power supplies.

Through the National Association for Amateur Radio, ham volunteers provide emergency communications for the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Federal Emergency Management Association, and thousands of state and local agencies for free.

"They supplemented police communications and emergency communications," said Joe Tenor, Green Bay Mike and Key Club member. "When the regular (phone) lines go down as well as the cell phone towers, you don't have those communications anymore, channels get bogged down."

As well as helping establish communications for the police and hospitals, hams also sent messages back and forth to family members who were out of the area.

"It works over regular radio frequencies. You can use VHF or UHF communications, it's in the same area of frequencies that police use," said Tenor. "(Ham radios) can send Morse code and operators can hook a computer up to a radio and send data messages back and forth. It's similar to chatting but going over the radio."

The group makes contacts all night long, Tenor said. Field Day is about making as many contacts as you can across the country or the world. A few people stay up all night sending Morse Code while others make voice contacts, Tenor said.

The Green Bay Mike and Key Club has been providing amateur radio service to Northeastern Wisconsin since 1939, and members of the local Amateur Radio Service number more than 100.

If you go

- Field Day is being held at Ashwaubomay Park, Ashwaubenon.
 - Field Day will be held from 1 p.m. Saturday to 1 p.m. Sunday.
 - Admission is free.
 - Food and beverages will not be provided, so bring your own.
- Press-Gazette