

Mecklenburg County ARES®

Field Day Safety

Field Day is this weekend. With so many Amateurs involved with this event we will do a brief review regarding Field Day safety.

Many of us are going to deploy to the field this week. We will set up antennas or towers and operate in an environment that entirely different than air conditioned shacks. Above and beyond the normal outdoor hazards of wind, rain and heat, we will also be assembling and rigging antennas and towers. Here is a few tips for being safe during this event:

Weather – The weather forecast for Field Day weekend is for temperatures near 90 with a chance of thunderstorms Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Don't forget to bring some rain gear. An umbrella or other rain gear may help keep you dry.

Heat – The elevated temperatures this weekend pose a significant threat if you are outside for hours at a time. Add to this to the strenuous activity of field day setup and the potential for you to overheat is high. Everyone should bring plenty of water to stay hydrated. Stay in the shade as much as possible and also monitor the other folks on your team for symptoms of heat exhaustion.

Site Placement – If it is at all possible, the operating stations should be in the shade to keep the operators cool during the hottest part of the day. Before installing an operating station under trees, be sure to check that the trees are healthy and dead branches will not fall and injure an operator or damage equipment.

All antennas, towers and masts should be well away from power lines. They should be positioned so that if they happen to fall, in any direction, then they will never touch a power line. Operating stations should also be positioned outside the fall zone of any tower or mast.

Erecting Towers and Masts – Many of us will be erecting antennas and portable structures to hold antennas. Safety should always be the 1st consideration. Unless you are actively participating in erecting a tower or mast you should stay well out of the area. Listen carefully to the leader of the work crew for instructions. Erecting and taking down a tower or tall mast is one of the most dangerous activities during Field Day.

Exertion – Field Day set up is hot and many heavy items will need to be lifted. Always ask for help to carry large items. Never carry heavy items alone. Always take frequent rest breaks and don't forget to drink plenty of water.

Generators – Never refuel a portable generator when it is running. Gasoline fumes can ignite if spilled on a hot generator. Losing a few minutes of operating time is better than a being burned in a gasoline fire. If gas is spilled while refueling then move the generator well away from the spill and make sure any gasoline spilled on the generator has been removed before starting it. Always be sure to store fuel containers far away from a generator.

Site Safety – Field Day always has a proliferation of wires, cords and ropes. Each of these poses a hazard. All tent and antenna guy lines should be conspicuously marked to reduce this hazard. Any cables running across a walkway should be covered to help eliminate trip hazards.

RF – Part of our training as Amateur Radio operators involved RF Safety. It is our job to make sure we keep our operators and the public a safe distance from our antennas. Never transmit until your antenna is installed in a safe location to reduce RF exposure.

In all of our Field Day activities our #1 consideration should be safety. It is important to practice our radio field skills and learning how to do so safely is an important part of this process. I hope that all of us have a safe and fun Field Day.

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