Mecklenburg County ARES[©]

Field Day

ARRL Field Day is the single most popular on-the-air event held annually in the US and Canada. On the fourth weekend of June of each year, more than 35,000 radio amateurs gather with their clubs, groups or simply with friends to operate from remote locations.

Field Day is a picnic, a campout, practice for emergencies, an informal contest and, most of all, FUN! It is a time where many aspects of Amateur Radio come together to highlight our many roles. While some will treat it as a contest, other groups use the opportunity to practice their emergency response capabilities. It is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate Amateur Radio to the organizations that Amateur Radio might serve in an emergency, as well as the general public.

For many clubs, ARRL Field Day is one of the highlights of their annual calendar. The contest part is simply to contact as many other stations as possible and to learn to operate our radio gear in abnormal situations and less than optimal conditions.

But despite the development of very complex, modern communications systems — or maybe because they ARE so complex — ham radio has been called into action again and again to provide communications in crises when it really matters. Amateur Radio people (also called "hams") are well known for our communications support in real disaster and post-disaster situations.[1]

Since the first ARRL Field Day in 1933, radio amateurs throughout North America have practiced the rapid deployment of radio communications equipment in environments ranging from operations under tents in remote areas to operations inside Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs). Operations using emergency and alternative power sources are highly encouraged, since electricity and other public infrastructures are often among the first to fail during a natural disaster or severe weather.

To determine the effectiveness of the exercise and of each participant's operations, there is an integrated contesting component, and many clubs also engage in concurrent leisure activities (camping out, cookouts, etc.). Operations typically last a continuous twenty-four hours, requiring scheduled relief operators to keep stations on the air. Additional contest points are awarded for experimenting with unusual modes, making contacts via satellite, and involving youth in the activity.[2]

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[1] http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Field-Day/2013/2013%20FD%20Flier.pdf

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_Day_%28amateur_radio%29

Here in Mecklenburg County both the W4BFB and W4CQ clubs have extensive field day events every year. Field Day is the largest Amateur Radio event in the County.

W4BFB deploys to Wilgrove Park at 7750 Jim Harper Lane in Mint Hill, where they erect 3 portable towers and also offer several stations where the general public can get on the air.

TheW4CQ club deploys to the Salvation Army Headquarters at 501 Archdale Drive in Charlotte where they have preinstalled a tower and wire antennas at that Served Agency.   W4CQ also has an HF station where visitors can get on the air.

In my opinion, all Amateurs should visit at least one field day location. It will give you exposure to operations that simulate disaster communications, lets you meet the other Amateurs in your area and allows you see how different radios and modes are used in a field environment.

My first Field Day was in 1995. W4BFB was holding their event on the Charlotte Police and Fire Academy grounds. I got to experience Ham Radio in a way that no other event could reveal, operating away from creature comforts and commercial power while practicing operating skills in less than optimal conditions.

I hope that you will attend a Field Day event in your community as it is a unique rewarding experience that only happens once a year.

Map to W4BFB Field Day - http://tinyurl.com/ngvyvhr

Map to W4CQ Field Day - http://tinyurl.com/lmz4cyk