



CENTRALIA AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAM

March 2020

Amateur Radio is a hobby ... Amateur Radio Emergency Service is a commitment!

A Few Words About The Coronavirus



Since January 15th when the first case of the Coronavirus landed at in the United States at SeaTac Airport in Seattle (confirmed Jan 20), our lives have changed dramatically. Now, the virus has been confirmed in all 50 states and there are very few left who think this is no worse than a bad cold.

In a matter of weeks, our daily routines have been turned on their heads. Locally, for our own Amateur Radio Emergency Service team, this means we no longer are able to meet for training sessions. Our regular Monday and Thursday coffee meetings at Fiddlers and our monthly brunch sessions at Judy's Country Kitchen have ceased. CW practice, our field communications exercises and even the Seattle Comm Academy have had to be cancelled.

But we are communications people and we can at least adapt if not overcome. Nothing prevents you from using our two repeaters or the BawFaw system. For many, the HF frequencies are wide open and available. Most of us who have all that expensive equipment complained more than once that if we only had more time to play radio, we would be perfectly happy. Let's stay safe, stay at home, and use our radio privileges to help keep some sanity in our world.

Centralia ARES "On-The-Air" Coffee Nets



While we may not be able to meet at Fiddler's Coffee Shop in Centralia for awhile, the original purpose of those Monday coffee times was so we could plan the construction of our communications vans. When the vans were basically done, we increased the coffee days to Monday and Thursday (because why not). Coffee (and donuts) and good conversation became the reason to meet. And the donuts... did I mention that?

John, AD6KT, turned the grumbling over the lack of coffee...and donuts... into something positive. Now every Monday and Thursday, at 10am, John is the net control for our on the air coffee net. We are using the K7CEM repeater simply to maximize our ability to reach as many team members as possible. The net is a pretty informal affair and everyone gets a chance to say hello and let the other team members know what is happening in each other's lives. Tell us if you have a birthday coming up, or complain about that movie you've seen a thousand time or actually ask questions or offer advice about a ham radio topic. Let's help each other through difficult times - you know, those times without donuts - and use our radio equipment as well. We'll be listening for you on Monday and Thursday mornings,

"Conversations" On The Hamshack Hotline Phones

Most of the ARES team have one of these neat looking Hamshack Hotline phones sitting around their home somewhere close to their radios. It may be covered with papers, dirty clothes or otherwise not used to its potential and that is just wrong! These are great communications systems and thanks to Paul, KE7PCB, they are inexpensive and easy to install and use. No better time to put them to use than right now.

On March 26th, right after the 10am Coffee Net, we held a *Hamshack Hotline Net*. Simply dialing into the designated Hamshack Hotline Bridge Group (we've been using 366) we can all enjoy a party line type (you remember party lines don't you?) conversation. We will be using the Hamshack Hotline system for various get togethers and tests during the COVID-19 situation.





SeaPac, the Northwest's largest ham convention and the ARRL Northwest Division Convention previously scheduled for June 5-7, 2020

in Seaside, Oregon has officially been cancelled due to the COVID-19 issues. SeaPac is just one of many amateur radio conventions running up against the "Stay Safe—Stay Home" requirements throughout the United States. SeaPac, like most other conventions, however, will return.

Plans are already in place working towards the 2021 convention.



Moon over the Tower - Jan. 2016 Newsletter

ZOOM - Meetings During the "Stay Home - Stay Safe" Period



They say when one door closes another opens and that has certainly been true during our current restrictions on travel. For now and the foreseeable future, gatherings such as our normal Amateur Radio Emergency Service meetings have been banned and we are encouraged to "Stay Safe—Stay Home".

As we searched for alternate ways to meet, we found Zoom, a remote conferencing service that appears to fit our needs very well. Zoom is free for groups our size and can be viewed on a PC, tablet or even on your phone. Don, KI7ZNG, has taken on the job of moderator for our Zoom connection and as this newsletter is written, the team has successfully participated in three Zoom tele-conferences. We have also discovered some benefits we hadn't even considered. For example, we have included Linc and

Teresa Haymaker, former team members now living in Colorado and Merle Olmsted who resides in Kentucky. It has been wonderful to have them join us as well. The Chehalis Valley Amateur Radio Society (CVARS) also used Zoom to provide its members with recent training as well.

Where will we take Zoom? We're not entirely sure just yet. We have really enjoyed relaxed and entertaining meetings on Zoom after our Monday & Thursday on-air meetings. They are very similar to our regular coffee dates. We hope to bring back our training schedule soon using Zoom as our main platform. CW practice for our Morse Code group may be in our future as well. Hmm... I wonder if we can do Field Day via Zoom. Let's hope things have changed for the better by the end of June. For now, join us for our Monday / Thursday Zoom coffee meetings just after the 10am on air net. If you need assistance in making Zoom happen, contact Don, KI7ZNG. Thanks Don for all your help.

The K7CEM VHF / UHF Repeater System

Centralia ARES owns and operates some great repeater systems. These are the coordinated VHF and UHF repeaters located at the Cooks Hill Fire Station #5 and the C.A.R.E.S. repeater located on Winterwood Dr. near Bill's (N7GWK) home.

The K7CEM repeater was a gift from three generous hams. The UHF repeater was given to us by Kim Aiken, AC7YY, a former Centralia ARES team member who just wanted to see it put to good use. Another early team member, Bill McGowan, W7FQQ (SK) was also interested in helping out. Bill contacted his son-in-law, Steve Szombathy (W7UDI) and convinced him to donate a used VHF repeater that Steve had rebuilt. Steve also donated several mobile radios to outfit the EOC. Steve, who lives in Elensburg delivered the equipment and installed the repeater on a beautiful spring day in May 2014. At the same time, the rest of the team, with the generous help of Riverside Fire Authority, placed the antenna system at the 70' level of the fire department's 100' tower with the assistance of their 90' stabilized ladder truck.

All this comes to mind this week as Bill (N7GWK) spent a difficult week working through the repeater's recertification process which has to be done every five years. Bill generously accepted the job without realizing how demanding it would be. Added to that, Bill has worked through an unusual power spike issue on the repeater and a few weeks before that a system shut down caused by a blown fuse. Overall, the K7CEM repeater system has worked very well for the past six years. Our thanks to Kim, Bill McGowan and Steve for their foresight and help in making this repeater possible, and to Bill, N7GWK, for his dedication to keeping the system running - even during a pandemic! It just goes to show that hams are a resilient bunch of crazy people.

