



CENTRALIA AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAM

September, 2020

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

Wild Fire Field Exercise #4 - Summer 2020



John Campeau, AD6KT and Jake Klawitter, KJ7CFD, taking traffic in Comm II during the wild fire field exercise.

As summer in Centralia winds down, the ARES team conducted one of the last wild fire field exercises of the season. With heavy smoke from wild fires around the region finally moving out, we were able to get some outside training accomplished.

This exercise's goals were to practice taking and logging radio traffic from multiple windshield survey teams in the field. To make it more interesting, we set up both comm vans, each with a logging and radio team, and all radio traffic came into the vans on the same frequency. Field radio teams were assigned to either comm II or comm III so they all had to work out taking turns reporting information which requires all radio traffic to be short and concise.

Field radio teams were allowed to create scenarios but all reports had to contain exact locations, map coordinates, and incident type. If the report was a fire, they had to indicate if it was a brush fire, house fire or just smoke. Size of fire, wind direction and fuel package information was also mandatory.

Comm van teams were asked to log all radio traffic and at times had to ask for the reports to be repeated when necessary.

Radio operators controlled the speed of the reports and were responsible for "completing the circle of information" by repeating all information received to make sure the reports were accurate and understood.

Often, this type of field exercise can become chaotic and confusing but this time things went very well with everyone taking their turn and working to make the reports manageable. By the end of the evening, everyone was tired but there were smiles all around during the debriefing. We have another exercise coming up in early October so maybe we will have another chance at perfection. Thanks everyone for doing a great job!



Briefing before the wild fire field exercise

How Did You Do On The "I Know It All" - Challenge!

The Centralia ARES team trains on the first and third Monday evenings. Some of those Mondays are holidays and we still conduct training. Labor Day is the one exception. Most families are using that holiday to get away before the weather turns or to visit family. When it was announced that we would have no training on Labor Day this year, we decided to do something a little different. We called it the **"I Know It All" - Challenge!**

The challenge consisted of 25 questions about our team, how it deploys, frequencies used, working out map coordinates, figuring out latitude and longitude of your home, identifying helicopter landing zones and flood response checkpoints, and a few other things everyone should know or know where to find the information in our team's field resource manual. Get all 25 questions right and send in a photo of you in your ARES vest and you get an **"I Know It All" Challenge!** certificate and formal recognition on the team email.

While there were a few that decided not to accept the challenge, the majority of team members took it on. Interestingly enough, those that did the challenge all got every question right! Nicely done team members! I hope your certificate has by now been suitably framed and is proudly hanging on your wall. You have indeed shown you **"Know It All"**.

Is This A Secret Plan Of Samuel Morse?

Ham radio enthusiasts and especially CW operators have used the Morse code since the mid 1800's but perhaps we are just now learning the real secret behind all those dits and dahs. In his book *Leave Only Footprints* author Conor Knighton describes his visit to South Carolina's Congaree National Park. Every year for two weeks in early summer visitors to the park may observe what is called *"synchronous fireflies"*. While most fireflies throw off their tiny flickers each summer, they usually do so randomly but the fireflies in Congaree National Park have adapted their flickers so all the fireflies flash at the same time.

Nobody has any idea why the fireflies do this. In most species of fireflies flashing is thought to be a mating ritual. But why do fireflies at Congaree flash *simultaneously*? There is speculation the male fireflies have synced up their mating Morse code so the females can spot them easier.

Mating Morse code? Just when I thought I learned those dits and dahs so I could communicate with fellow hams, I now learn there is a much better use for the code. So far, I don't think Samuel Morse's mating plan is working for me but if you are having better luck, please let me know.

Why We Use Communication Vans



If each Centralia ARES team member has an amateur radio in their personal vehicles, why do we need a comm van much less two and even a comm trailer? The answer is versatility. At the most basic level, the vans provide shelter from the weather, a warm heater and seating for three operators, but the vans also provide much more. They allow for direct communications with our served agencies, provide a mobile command and control center, and are always ready when a sophisticated communications system is required whether we need to communicate across town, to the Washington State EOC or beyond. Each van has systems to talk with police and fire units, and our ARES repeaters provide solid amateur radio communications. With high frequency (HF), very high frequency (VHF), and ultra high frequency (UHF) radios, many digital and voice communications are available. We even have Citizens Band (CB) on board. During a disaster, CB is a familiar form of communications for many of our citizens. Versatility. Preparedness comes in many forms but ours comes with well equipped communication vans full of radios!