



# CENTRALIA AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAM

November, 2020

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

## Fall 2020



This year has certainly been different. I bet you thought we were going to talk about Covid-19 or perhaps the Presidential elections didn't you. Nope! That stuff is either old news or just not worth rehashing. I'm assuming you still had your annual Thanksgiving dinner or watched the Macy's parade (without the 100,000 spectators). For many, Black Friday is over for the year. Winter is almost here and Christmas is just around the corner.

Nope. I want to talk ham radio. Solar Cycle 25 is gaining strength and the next few years will be a great time to explore everything ham radio has to offer, especially for those who have HF capability. Now is the time to make sure your HF station is fully functionable with an antenna that you know how to use and a radio capable of taking you where you want to go. No one buys their HF set up done and ready to use. We all put it together one piece at a time. Prioritize what is required to get you on the air and make it happen now. If you are already on the HF bands, take the time to learn about the bands. Each one is different and day and night changes them in other ways. The ham magazines are full of propagation information as well as contest and special event material. For some of us Solar Cycle 25's maximum could be our last and even if you are lucky enough to see Solar Cycle 26, it is still much easier to learn CW while your fingers (and mind) are nimble. There is so much to do on the HF bands. Did you get that ham license just for VHF use? If you did, you are missing the opportunity of a life time. Several of you took part in a code class last winter. Have you been on the air making CW contacts? Several of you purchased HF equipment recently. Are you operational on the HF bands? Don't let Solar Cycle 25 slide by without squeezing every bit of fun out of it before it disappears.

## Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) Training

At our Centralia ARES October 16th meeting, AEC Bill Knepper, N7GWK, gave the first in a series of presentations about Digital Mobile Radios (DMR). Over the next few meetings, Bill will be expanding on this topic. Digital radios can be confusing but they are amazing pieces of ham equipment. A large part of our ARES team currently own at least a DMR HT. It certainly isn't a requirement that you own one but I recommend that you at least take the time to learn how systems like this are changing ham radio.

Bill has made owning one of the AnyTone radios really simple by creating the programming system optimal for our ARES team so you don't have to. He is always willing to actually program your radio to make things easier yet. It's not all about the digital portion of these radios either. The analog portion is what you are already used to so it is fully capable for our ARES team. Testing in the downtown Centralia area has shown these HTs may have a better audio capability than most other similar HTs. Like any radio, it takes time to become familiar with all its capabilities so a little patience goes a long ways. If you have questions or need more information give Bill a call. He is always willing to help.

## Operation Propagation - More Than A Simple Little Contest

At our last ARES meeting we introduced Operation Propagation to you. For many of you it may have seemed like just another crazy little contest your EC dreamed up but there are some very important pieces as part of this exercise.

Centralia ARES owns and operates two low power repeaters, the K7CEM and the CARES systems. They were designed powerful enough to support our served agencies but not so powerful as to interfere with other regional ham repeaters. Propagation in Kansas and propagation here are very different. While “line of sight” may be hundreds of miles in Kansas, here it could be less than a mile in many locations. The key is knowing and understanding the terrain in and around Centralia and understanding how that changes our propagation. The way you learn how that works is by testing it. I can tell you how propagation will work in some areas but you will have a much better understanding of it if you test it yourself. That’s why Operation Propagation sends you to find 19 parks, three historical markers and two volunteer fire stations in and around our community.

There’s another important reason. You are a much better ARES team member if you know and understand where places are located in our service area and are also familiar with the streets and roads that make up our community. While the parks are not particularly important to our ARES team, finding them requires you to learn where they are and plan the route to and from their locations.

Testing both repeaters and then testing HTs on both repeaters at each site helps you understand your communication options throughout our service area as well.

Finally, we are creating a digital propagation map which will show our particular region and document where our strengths and weaknesses are. To create these maps, we need data point information. Operation Propagation will give us at least some of that information. Much of the information in this exercise is located within the Centralia and Chehalis areas. In future exercises and/or contests we will be documenting our propagation along many of the important routes in and out of our area. At some point we will also document propagation at the simplex level but that can wait until 2021.

Until then, I hope you enjoy Operation Propagation simply as a fun little contest. Special event QSL cards and certificates make this exercise fun but the important part of Operation Propagation is being active on the air and learning where you can and cannot communicate as we serve our police and fire response agencies.

## My Hope For December And The Christmas Season



OK, we’ve all been trying to be polite about this year. Yes, we’ve tried to be kind but my guess is that you have heard enough about Covid-19 and I hope your particular presidential candidate won but once Thanksgiving is over, I draw the line. No more Mr. Nice Guy! It is Christmas season and you just don’t mess with Christmas - at least not in my house. (take a breath and calm down). I will try my best to not mention that “C-19” thing if at all possible during December and most likely no one

really cares if my presidential candidate won or lost so I will also try to ignore politics - at least for this month. Instead, we will have our Zoom coffee meetings and if necessary, our Zoom ARES meetings. For this year, we will do without our lighted tractor parade or our CVARS Christmas dinner.

So... I hope you and your family are healthy and warm and safe. I hope you have plenty of toilet paper and lots of food to eat. I hope you are surrounded by people who love you and finally, I hope you have packed your Christmas wish list with lots and lots of ham radio equipment. By the way, did you know Santa is a ham? Yep! Trust me on these things. I have connections that work for the government. They wouldn’t lie.