



# CENTRALIA AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE TEAM February 2021

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

## COMM 2021 ACADEMY

Until Covid-19 arrived, hams from all over the region looked forward each spring to attending the annual Communications Academy in Seattle. Two days of emergency communications subjects, equipment displays and more. For several years, Centralia ARES had been asked to display their unique communication vans at the Saturday vehicle show. The Communications Academy was sadly cancelled as the pandemic spread. The planning staff at the Communications Academy, to their credit began planning a three day event for 2021 but that too was destined to require a change.

Not to be outdone, the planning staff stepped up with yet another change... a new name, now being called "Comm Academy" and a new way of getting the information out using Zoom. For the first time, the Comm Academy, scheduled for April 10th-11th, will be free to everyone with classes that include: Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake planning, grounding and bonding home and mobile HF stations, wildfire communications support, Winlink digital voice & tech based comms, basic orientation for new EmComm volunteers, the importance of the Incident Command System and more.

While the Comm Academy is free this year, you will still need to register to attend. Go to [www.commacademy.org](http://www.commacademy.org) and press the register now button. Don't wait. The 2021 Comm Academy sounds like a great place to attend, especially from your own home this year.

### A QSL Card For The Records... At Least For Me



If you have spent any time on the High Frequency bands in your amateur radio career, most likely you've received a few, and perhaps more than a few, QSL cards. At one time, a QSL card was the only contact confirmation a ham could get and were required for many awards. Many "mature" hams have hundreds if not thousands of QSL cards filed away or adorning all four walls of their ham shacks. When a card was needed, it was polite to send your own card and a self addressed stamped return envelope with your address on it making it very easy for the receiving ham to simply drop his card in and put it in the mail.

Imagine my surprise when I recently found an envelope in my mailbox addressed to me in my own handwriting. When I opened it I found a great QSL card from W5KFT in Texas. I was even more surprised when I looked at the date of contact. We spoke on August 17, 2007! It usually didn't take 13 years to receive a return QSL card and it is certainly a new record for me, but I am really happy to renew our acquaintance in 2021!

## Update On The UHF/DMR Repeater



Our “slightly used” UHF / DMR repeater has arrived. After a nervous week of waiting while no one seemed to know quite where the repeater was sitting, it has been delivered. The top left photo shows the view after the package was opened and the lower right photo, of course, is of the repeater itself.

Next comes programming and testing and then installation at the Riverside Fire Station #5 repeater site. We are still working out particulars on how best to use the DMR properties included in this system. With the narrow confines of the repeater room, the plan is to video the installation so all interested team members have an opportunity to see the process.



Thanks again, to all team members who donated to this project. You made the purchase happen. We should be on the air soon!

## Operation Propagation - Part Three



Comm III staged near Centralia Police Department for mobile radio simplex propagation testing

The first part of Operation Propagation, beginning in November 2020, was designed to test our K7CEM and CARES repeater propagation from 19 different parks in the region, three historical markers and two outlying Riverside Fire Stations. Part two, conducted in January and February 2021, led us out into the areas around Centralia and Chehalis to test outlying propagation. Team members were each assigned a county road and were tasked with testing reception on those roads mile by mile. In some areas propagation exceeded our expectations while hills and valleys in other areas created communications issues. Learning how and where propagation works in our area has been an adventure.

As we begin our final set of Operation Propagation exercises this month, we will be testing simplex parameters. During our March 1st field exercise, we placed Comm III in the downtown Centralia area near the police department at an approximate elevation of 112 feet and had the team scatter throughout the twin cities. We wanted to find those particular places where simplex simply wouldn't work. Conducting 89 separate checks over a two hour period, we found only a few problem locations. Our next exercise, planned for March 15th, will be even more interesting as we test simplex using only our analog HT and DMR handheld radios.

Our final set of tests, scheduled for Saturday, March 27th will include simplex tests out on the county roads outside of Centralia and Chehalis. For most of the team members, these tests have been a great learning experience as they come to understand how mountains, hills and valleys create propagation challenges. Becoming familiar with our response area and all the streets and roads doesn't hurt either. There are times when propagation among hills and valleys while supporting our served agencies can be difficult. These are the situations where each of us must know where to find an alternate communications site and make it work.