

Have a Field Day with Hams Saturday

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Erik Wander/KMXT

Saturday is Amateur Radio Field Day, a nationwide event in which amateur, or ham, radio operators gather to practice and showcase their skills. The Kodiak Island Amateur Radio Club and the Kodiak Amateur Radio Emergency Service will participate in the event with a demonstration at the Kodiak Military History Museum. KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

The Amateur Radio Field Day event takes place Saturday at the Kodiak Military History Museum at Fort Abercrombie from noon to 4 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Amateur Radio Field Day is held annually during the last week of June. Ham radio operators across the country gather in often remote places, set up emergency stations and attempt to contact one another, thereby practicing and improving their proficiency. The event in Kodiak includes demonstrations using authentic, fully restored vintage military radios. Mike Dolph is the Kodiak Island district emergency coordinator with Kodiak Amateur Radio Emergency Service.

-- (Dolph
1 41 sec. "This year, we've elected to ... with
other stations.")

In addition to the vintage equipment, this year's showcase will feature modern-day, conventional amateur radio setups for a total of three or four stations operating simultaneously. Dolph said that in the age of cellphone, text messaging, internet, GPS and other instant communications, ham radio remains relevant, not only as a hobby, but as an emergency service. He pointed

to historical and recent emergencies and disasters, such as the flooding in interior Alaska and Hurricane Katrina, as evidence of its continued usefulness.

-- (Dolph
2 50 sec. "In all of those incidences
... in Kodiak was by ham radio.")

That
was Nick Laktonen from the top of Pillar Mountain on the day of the 1964 earthquake. In order to become a ham radio operator, people must attain a license from the Federal Communications Commission. Dolph said that FCC requirements have changed in the last 15 years. Among the changes, the FCC has done away with the Morse Code proficiency requirement, which Dolph said is still practiced by some and still useful in certain circumstances.

-- (Dolph
3 50 sec. "Actually, a proficient ... still a
very productive mode.")

Dolph
estimates that there are 20 to 25 licensed amateur radio operators in Kodiak and said there are 10 active Kodiak Amateur Radio Emergency Service operators. He said anyone wishing to obtain a license can study online at a variety of different web sites, and then take the required FCC exam. Dolph said it may not be as easy as it seems.

-- (Dolph
4 39 sec. "The exams on all the levels ... level
of license you have.")

I'm
Erik Wander.

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