

The Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross, New Providence Amateur Radio Club hold Field Day exercise

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Barbara Rybolt / Independent Press



Courtesy of the Red Cross

AN EMERGENCY EXERCISE - On Sunday June 28 at approximately 3:00am New Providence Amateur Radio Club members Lou Alexander, on the left, and Bill Hudzik contacted other ham radio operators in North America during a 24 hour field exercise. Ham radio operators can prove critical in the event of a telecommunications breakdown. Using emergency power supplies, ham radio operators will construct emergency stations in parks, shopping malls, schools and back yards around the country,

Each year, the Colonial Crossroads Chapter and the New Providence Amateur Radio Club (NPARC) partner to hold a field day exercise that tests emergency radio communications throughout North American.

Amateur radio, often called ham radio, is both a hobby and a service in which participants called "hams" use various

types of wireless radio communications equipment to communicate with other radio amateurs for public service and recreation. According to the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) there are 660,000 Amateur Radio operators in the US and more than 2.5 million in the world.

Over the past year, the news has been full of reports of ham radio operators providing critical communications in emergencies world-wide. During Hurricane Katrina, ham radio was often the only way people could communicate and hundreds of volunteers traveled south to save lives and property.

During the field day exercise on June 28, NPARC operators spent 24 hours contacting and sharing information with other ham radio operators. The front porch of the Colonial Crossroad Chapter's Summit house at 695 Springfield Ave. was the staging ground for part of this event.

According to Barb Chestnut, director of response for the chapter, the relationship the chapter has with the ham radio operators is critical. "In the event that we were operating a shelter and did not have telecommunications ability, we would rely on the amateur radio operators to relay and receive emergency communications."

The NPARC is a general interest amateur radio club that is open to all. The club was formed in the early 1960's, primarily by hams working at Bell Labs. NPARC currently has about 65 members - men and women - of all ages, including school age students, with a variety of ham radio skills and interests.

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