

Ham radios heat up airwaves on Radio Relay League's Field Day

MONROE — Skykomish Valley amateur radio operators will work "round the clock" this weekend to set up a field radio communication station, get on the air, and contact hundreds of other operators in the U.S. and Canada as part of the American Radio Relay League's Field Day.

According to Ernie Allsop, president of the Sky Valley Amateur Club, Field Day is the annual "shakedown run" for the ARRL's National Field Organization.

"Field Day is a way for hams to get outdoors and have fun under some difficult conditions, but it's also a chance to fine-tune emergency communications skills," Allsop said.

"We use generators and battery power, and we set up antennas in the field. This year the Air National Guard's 143rd Communication Battalion will participate by supplying tents, antenna towers and an emergency power supply."

The 143rd uses Field Day as an opportunity to practice the skills needed to quickly assemble an emergency communications site.

This year would be a good time, said Allsop, for those interested to see a really professional emergency communication exercise.

The idea is to put together a self-sufficient, working station quickly and begin making contacts."

The ARRL Field Organization has been effective in establishing emergency communication networks during floods, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes and other major disasters.

Members of formal emergency organizations such as the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Communication Emergency Services (RACES) regularly participate.

The League estimates that more than 35,000 hams participate in Field Day every year.

The Sky Valley Field Day operations will be at the Lions Community Park in Startup, immediately behind the tennis courts along SR 2.

Set-up begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, June 22. The public is invited.

For more information, call Allsop at 794-1114 or Dave Axe, 793-3153.