



Second Century

Bring on Field Day

“This year’s event, held June 23 – 24, will get tens of thousands of radio amateurs out into their communities — and on the air.”

I’m sitting here in Newington, Connecticut in late April, where in the last 24 hours we’ve received an inch or two of what the weather forecasters call “a wintry mix,” followed by several inches of rain in downpours throughout the day. Despite this less than optimal weather, I’m thinking about the fact that ARRL Field Day is only 2 months away in weather that, if history holds for most of the participants (and if the stories I’ve been told are true), will be well into summer high temperature ranges and bring mosquitoes the size of horseflies. Regardless of whether those conditions materialize (or if the skies open up and deliver the same rains we’ve seen here today), approximately 40,000 radio amateurs across North America will participate in what some consider the single most popular on-the-air event held each year.

To participate in Field Day, they will leave the comfort of their home shacks and move radio equipment, erect antennas, pitch tents, and spend as long as 27 hours operating in “remote” locations such as fields, mountaintops, public parks, and even places like shopping centers. They will spend time on the air, contacting other stations across the country, and even the world.

For those of you who don’t know about, or haven’t participated in, Field Day, held each year on the fourth weekend of June, you may be asking, “Why would they do that?” Well, there are several reasons.

First, ARRL Field Day constitutes the largest test and demonstration of Amateur Radio’s capabilities in times of need. It shows that hams are ready to serve their communities when there is no power available, none of the normal communications systems are up, and people need communications, from emergency communications to health and welfare traffic from affected areas. On Field Day, hams show how they can use a variety of equipment and modes to support the various agencies that deliver services in a disaster.

Second, many of the participants in ARRL Field Day use the opportunity to promote Amateur Radio to their local emer-

gency management organizations, other served agencies, and the general community at large. What better way to show people exactly what ham radio can do than give them an up-close look at operating, from phone, to CW, to digital operations. Hams will be out in their communities on Field Day, showing how communicating across the country and the world is possible with nothing more than a radio, a small antenna, and a power source. Setups that use solar panels or small generators to help power their equipment can bring in whole other avenues for conversation and demonstration.

But as much as ARRL Field Day is a chance to practice and demonstrate the capabilities of ham radio in times of emergencies and, at the same time, promote Amateur Radio to a wide variety of people and organizations, one of the biggest reasons people participate in the event is the opportunity for fun and fellowship with other ham radio operators. Some of the best Field Day traditions include food and friendship interspersed with long hours operating the radios. Swapping experiences from past Field Days and talking about operating methods, new equipment, or new modes are all part of the experience, and what keeps bringing people back every year.

Another opportunity afforded by this year’s ARRL Field Day is the chance to participate in the ARRL International Grid Chase (IGC). Simply by working other stations and uploading your contacts to Logbook of The World, you can get in the game. Rules for the contest can be found on ARRL’s website.

So whatever your motivation, I encourage you to participate in this year’s ARRL Field Day. Find a club, find a friend, or simply take your station portable and join in the weekend of June 23 – 24. You will be amazed at what you might learn, or who you might meet on the air.

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