

## Field Day Program

“Can you hear me now?” That’s the plaintive cry of a TV commercial I’m sure all of you have heard. And yet it has become the tune for many of our Emergency Communications exercises. Think about that. Can you hear me now? What ever happened to exercises that actually did something? Exercises that were fun, used the skills we have, used the skills that we do not often use AND allowed us to learn new skills. What ever happened to those exercises? When was the last time you helped set up temporary antennas, used emergency power sources, and improvised radio stations to contact other portable stations on UHF/VHF or HF, when was the last time you participated in a drill using PSK31, Winlink, Air Mail, APRS, CW, FM, satellites, and other digital modes.

Are we so lazy and short of attention span that anything beyond “Can you hear me now?” is too strenuous? Are we that lazy, or so complacent, to think that a ten minute exercise will actually build skills or keep people coming back? Many will whine that it takes much more time than that to get ready. Oh really?! Why does it take so long to get set up? That IS part of the exercise is it not? Are you there on

time AND ready to communicate? Let me repeat, that IS part of the exercise. With existing antennas, such as at an EOC or hospital, it should be five minutes from arrival to on the air. FIVE MINUTES.

I believe that we have all seen exercises where people were late arriving and literally it took them more than an hour to be ready to communicate. Notice I said ready to communicate. That did not include the time to format the message, transmit it, or receive the acknowledgment. As much as a TWO HOUR delay from schedule! I'm sure if you talk with the people involved you will hear mournful wailing about how busy they are or the problems they had in getting to the location. Those are all valid, IF YOU HAD THIRTY SECONDS NOTICE, but totally invalid if you volunteered to work an advance planned event where you knew the time, location and all special considerations.

*“Can you hear me now?”* If you do not have more than an hour for your exercise you do not have time for a field exercise. Admit it and move on. It takes from two to three hours for the average person to get beyond the Gee, “I Haven’t Done That In A Long Time”, and really learn and start having fun. Anything else is an exercise in set-up/tear-down and nothing else. After the first three times you do not

learn from set-up and tear-down. You learn with what is done in between! And THAT is how you get better participation. That's how you have better trained people.

Folks, FIELD DAY is coming up on June 28 and 29. This would be a good time to test all of your skills, Modes of operations and to be an ELMER to your new hams and the people we serve. Show them our digital modes, how our States Nets operate, how we handle traffic. The more we educate those we serve the more faith they will have in us. The more we educate our new hams the more useful they will be during an emergency. So, this Field Day let's all get out, have fun, practice our skills and learn new ones.