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BARA

Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

June 2008

Website: <http://w2ow.org> OR <http://www.wtsn.binghamton.edu/bara>

The President's Corner

As I write to you this month, the heat is stifling (it feels like August!). It's the kind of weather where the high electric demands (for air conditioning) and frequent thunderstorms can lead to power outages. And when that happens, where do people turn for communications? Traditional wire-based telephones, with their independent power systems, usually remain intact, but increasingly people are giving up their landlines in favor of mobile phones. During power outages, mobile phone customers often find it impossible to get a dial tone because of the extremely high volume of calls redirected through the cellular network. And after a couple of days on battery backup, cellular tower sites go down as well.

That's where we come in. This scenario, whereby people find themselves without telecommunications capabilities, will be increasingly common over the next few years (barring some as-yet-unimaginable and instantly affordable technological breakthroughs). And it is a situation where amateur radio is perfectly suited to come to the rescue. Are we ready to aid our local community if this scenario plays out here?

There are several ways we can prepare ourselves to assist during a communications crisis. One is to participate on the local 2 meter STARNet which is held each night at 6:30 PM. STARNet is currently hosted on the K2TDV repeater on 146.73 MHz (100.0 Hz PL; -600 kHz offset). If you have 2-meter reception capability and are unfamiliar with this network, it's a good idea to listen in, to get a sense of how formal message-handling is conducted on the airwaves. And if you've never participated, feel free to jump in once you feel you have the hang of it — you don't really need to communicate anything of vital importance, because it's only an exercise, so a sentence or two about how your day went is fine.

Another great way to hone your emergency communications skills is to participate in the annual Field Day exercise. The ARRL-sponsored event is presented as a contest (in order to render it more interesting to folks who might not otherwise be motivated to participate), but we at BARA are in it for the practice and the fun/comraderie, rather than the competitive aspect. We will participate this year from the W2OW shack site the weekend of June 28-29 (perhaps some setting up will take place the evening of Friday the 27th). I hope to see some of you there!

We sure don't want to experience a long-term power outage (although I enjoy the short-term variety — it's fun to watch how people interact when they're forced to walk away from their television and computer screens!), but if the worst should come, you as an amateur radio operator are situated in a unique position to possibly be a hero! — 73! allen lutins. KC2KLC

Hello Fellow Hams!

2008 Empire State Games

For some this is old news, for others it's new. The Empire State Games are coming back to Binghamton — for the third time! The opening ceremonies will be on Wednesday July 23rd and the games run from the 24th through Sunday the 27th.

Why do you think the decision was made to come back to Binghamton for the third time? It can't be our weather or sunshine, but the facilities for the events, the people, and the COMMUNICATIONS we have provided in the past are all in our favor.

For those who have not been a part of the games before, it is like a small Olympics. The state is divided into four divisions (West, Central, East, and NYC/LI). The divisions compete against each other in the various events. The events begin each day around 8:00 AM and may continue to 10:00 or 11:00 PM, depending on the type of event. The main venue is Binghamton University, but venues in Binghamton, Endicott, Vestal,

Chenango Bridge, West Windsor, Kirkwood, Conklin, Endwell, Owego, Cortland and Ithaca will also be in use.

Our involvement is to provide communications between the medical staff, trainers, officials, and the main command point. Past games have proven our ability to provide almost instant communications for emergencies, scoring, and other purposes. We need hams to help in 2008 — if you can move and are not on life support, we have a job for you!

Most operations will be on 2-meters using HTs and Repeaters, “loaner” equipment will be available. In some cases specialized equipment will be provided to assure reliable communications. A Frequency/Communications Plan has been worked out so that locations in Broome and Tioga Counties will hear what is happening at the other locations.

Restricted mobility and similar needs can be met if you volunteer early enough. Likewise, early registration permits us to mesh your work and vacation schedules to our communications needs.

Please mark your calendar from July 24th through the 27th and give us a hand.

Hams like to tell of our good deeds and the help we provide — NOW IS A TIME FOR US TO COME FORWARD AND DO OUR PART. The games are a highly visible, community oriented event that can showcase the amateur radio service.

Contact Ford AB2HS, Brian K2DLB, or Mel WE2K, on the 146.865 repeater for applications or download them from the BARA Web Site. Time is getting short and we will be putting the schedules in place very soon, so get your application in as soon as possible! — *by way of Ford, AB2HS*

New Frequencies and the Empire State Games

By way of Ford Drake, AB2HS, we receive the following summary of the Communications Plan for the upcoming Empire State Games. If the plan appears complex, consider the magnitude of the task and the requirement for continuous and reliable communications. Exercises such as this are good “public relations” for us as Hams, but they also provide “real time” training valuable in emergency communications situations.

The Empire State Games are coming at the end of July (24th-27th) and we will be using different repeaters as many of you know and the rest will know soon. Some Repeaters on Ingraham Hill — where the

146.865 and the 146.73 repeaters are located — are experiencing noise problems. These noises are probably a combination of a number of things including new digital signals and loose hardware on towers. Some of the problems are fixable but it will take time, money, and the proper people to resolve these issues. The the Ham repeaters are not the problem, but we can't do much more than inform the proper people, which has already been done.

The noise problem may or may not be fixed in time for the games and there are places that cannot access the 146.265 receiver. In an effort to alleviate these issues, Brian K2DLB, and Ford, AB2HS, have installed a second receiver on another hill (referred to as Site 2). The purpose of this second site is to provide coverage of the Triple Cities area without having to depend on the Ingraham Hill 146.265 receiver.

Access to the Site 2 receiver is fairly simple, if you check your transceiver manual and learn how to handle a “non-standard repeater offset”. You listen on your radio the 146.865 but use a positive 600 offset for transmit (instead of the negative offset you have been using and which your radio will probably use by default) That's right, transmit on 147.465. You also need to program a 146.2 PL tone for at least your transmit, but I recommend the tone for receive as well. To summarize: On Receive, your rig should read 146.865; when you key the microphone to transmit, your display should read 147.465. Look at the instructions for your radios and read up on how to make this change; it's something we don't need to do often, so a little refresher is not a bad idea.

Brian K2DLB, Ed N2RWH, Sharon N2WGM, and Ford, AB2HS, have spent many hours setting up frequencies and receivers for the games to make sure that communicators can be heard from all venues. A plan has been developed and you will have to use the frequencies specified for each venue in order to assure reliable communications. Here are some examples:

- ◆ UE High School and Vestal High School venues use the plus transmit offset.
- ◆ Binghamton University uses the minus offset.
- ◆ BCC venues (baseball and hockey, for example) use the plus offset.
- ◆ The Chenango Ice rink will probably use special frequencies and communicators will be provided with a radio supplied use on site.

The SVARA owned repeaters (146.865, 146.820) will be linked together along with the remote receivers and the 147.39 repeater in Owego and the

147.075 repeater to cover venues in the Kirkwood and Conklin area. There will be repeater linkages between Cortland and Ithaca. Although the repeaters will be repeating the same messages, operators will have to use the repeater specified for their particular locations. Full details will be documented in the information packets provided to communicators so everybody will be on the same page.

Please note that we don't want any VOX operation during the Games and any cross band repeating mobiles are to be approved by Brian, K2DLB, or Ford, AB2HS. This requirement is made because we must assure reliable communications and we need to know all the links in the communications circuit. Another repeater will be specified as a secondary for tactical use and backup in the event of problems with the main system and emergency power will be provided for all the remotes and repeaters.

The complexity of this system is a result of the wide coverage required by the separate venues and the hill-and-valley topography of our area. During the games you will have to key up and wait 1-2 seconds for all links and repeaters to become active. If this convention is not followed you will be cutting off the first part of your transmission (just as in the present linked system).

Another thing to keep in mind: If you haven't used your Ht since the games in 2004, your battery pack is probably dead and will need to be replaced. Get your equipment out now, charge it up, and use your HT. Make sure your batteries are reliable and that your equipment is working! Check it out now, cycle it and give it some use. Plan ahead, the night before the games start is not the time to discover equipment problems.

Also, don't forget to send or deliver your applications to Mel WE2K so we have you on the list and we know who we can schedule — scheduling will be starting soon. The Games arrive the last week of July and we have a little over a month to wrap up our preparations — *thanks to Ford, AB2HS*

Field Day is Coming!

The last full rainy weekend in June is getting closer. "So what?", you ask. Well, it is that time of year we call **ARRL FIELD DAY** and it's our chance to "play radio" and to flex our communication emergency preparedness muscles outside (literally) our usual operating environment.

Ah, I hark back to the days when the event captured coverage from three TV channels and front

page exposure in THE PRESS. BARA, through the efforts of, WB2SGS, captured Field Day proclamations from the town, county and state governments. One year featured amateur radio via satellite; radio telescope techniques were attempted another year; and an aerial (air-reeled wire) held in space by a weather balloon tethered to a Heathkit DX-100 (a real boat anchor) was center stage during a third year. Those years also featured a most precious commodity — HAMS in abundance. Pup and cabin tents, pop up trailers, tarps and vehicles of various descriptions were utilized for operating positions and overnight lodging. The HAMS were skilled and unskilled, young and old, male and female. All would pitch in and add to, and at times subtract from, the task at hand. Visitors were not uncommon. What was common was the camaraderie among participants. Generator monitoring was never a problem since an adjacent tub ice-cooled a common amber beverage. Both generator and tub were protected overnight by the Blue Nun.

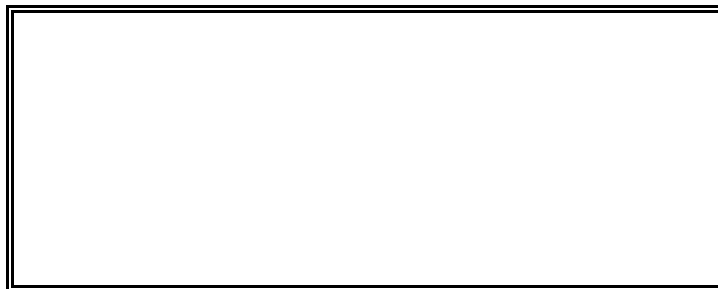
The level of participation was such that arguments were not uncommon relative to who would operate on what bands. Schedules were developed and posted and by early Sunday morning the grubby were preparing their own grub. By mid-day a picnic atmosphere developed and continued through the tear down and site clean up activity. Those were the days my friend. (There is a song in there somewhere.)

This year 2008, things are a bit different. The field day site is the W2OW hilltop on Milks road. To date the number of intended participants is underwhelming, but, the hilltop is available for any and all who wish to participate or observe. The wise will arrive (and set up) before the 2:00 PM kickoff. We will figure out the operating class to accompany the W2OW call sign just prior to the start. If you can't make "kickoff", come when you can — pop in anytime and see what's going on. Get "back to nature" and spend the night for a true overnight operation! With sufficient interest and planning, there may even be hot dogs, burgers and soda on Sunday at about 2:00 PM, plus whatever other goodies are "donated" to the cause.

Field Day 2008 will happen at the W2OW hilltop site; drop a note to wb2ghh@yahoo.com with your intentions! — *Jack, WB2GHH, Field Day 2008 Coordinator*

Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, Inc.
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First Class



Club Officers and Committees			
President	allen lutins	kc2klc	729-4817
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	John Rudy	WB2FQZ	669-4308
W2OW Trustee	Mel Snitchler	WE2K	723-9612
Newsletter	Ed Plesnar	KB2SCF	754-3810

Next General Meeting
7:30 PM, Wednesday, June 18th
Town of Binghamton Town Hall, 279 Park Avenue, South of the
Ross Park Entrance

Board Meeting
7:00 PM, Wednesday July 2nd
Conference Room, WSKG Studios, Vestal

Exam Session
7:00 PM Monday, June 30th
Vestal Public Library, Route 434 Vestal

BARA Dues
\$18/year Single Member; \$27/year Family

Local Repeater Nets
146.73 MHz STAR Net (NTS Feeder) Every
Evening at 6:30 PM Local Time
146.82 MHz BRAT Net (Informal BARA) Sunday Evening at
8:00 PM Local Time

*Our Printing Sponsor: Unicorn Electronics, Valley Plaza Drive,
Johnson City, NY*



BARA, The Binghamton Amateur Radio Association is an ARRL Affiliated Club

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