

Amateur Radio Club

THE HAM NEXT DOOR

The words Ham Radio conjure up images of tall antennas and people talking over (interfering with) your broadcast television. The Hams at Four Seasons are not nerds with pocket protectors; they are retired accountants, software engineers and scientists. In SPARC , the local Banning radio club, we have retired therapists, postman and even a semi-retired Catholic Priest. Some were radiomen in the service; others were introduced to radio after their retirement and some like me got involved through CERT and Emergency Preparedness.

Hams are often the only type of communication available after natural disasters: earthquakes, fires, and floods. Most disasters knock out electric power which normally enables us to communicate by phone. You can have the most sophisticated cell phone that Verizon sells but it won't help you if the cell towers are off line.

During the most recent floods in Colorado, a Nebraska man was concerned about his daughter who lived in Colorado. She lived in one city and worked in another. She became cut off from her home because of the floods. Her father was worried because she was on special medication for a medical condition. All of the cell phone service was knocked out by the floods. He contacted a local ham in her town by using Internet Radio Linking Protocol (IRLP). She was later located at a Red Cross Shelter in her town. He located his daughter on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday morning cell phone service was restored. Ham Radio had allowed him to call his daughter a full half a day before the cell phones were repaired.

There was another recent incident that illustrates the value of Ham Radio. An airman, from Nellis AFB in Nevada, got lost in the mountains next to Henderson, Nevada. He put out a mayday call to a local repeater. The repeater was linked to 90 other repeaters on what is called the WIN System. Someone monitoring a repeater in Arizona responded to his call. When he determined that the hiker was in Nevada he put out a call on the WIN System for any Las Vegas station that could make the call to Las Vegas Search and Rescue. The Las Vegas station made the call and 15 minutes later the rescue helicopter was on its way.

Ham Radio Operators are like snowflakes; each one is different and unique. You cannot tell us by our antennas, or pocket protectors, and the FCC has asked us to use the minimum amount of power to make our connections. Be nice to your neighbor; they might be the Ham Next Door.

Our website is w6fsb.com, our meetings are on the last Friday of the month at 10AM -- in the Lodge Ballroom. See you there!

Mike Mendoza, KK6BUW - Club secretary