

Training Segment--Using Field Day for Training, Member Involvement, and Public Education

Cook County ARES Net--2014/04/23

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Using Field Day for Training, Member Involvement, and Public Education

Field Day is about eight weeks away, so now is a good time to think about how we might improve the Field Day experience for our members and the public.

And no, this is not a suggestion that our Field Day operations be completely re-jiggered to eliminate the traditional elements of the event that many of us love. By all means, don't jettison the emergency exercise, the pseudo-contest operation (more contest than pseudo at some Field Days), the cooking, the eating, the socializing and other fellowship, or the other great parts of the Field Day experience.

But, for tonight and for the next few weeks, I'd like to encourage you to think about how you might improve your Field Day by

1. persuading additional members of your ARES group, club, or the like, or perhaps officials from local government or other served agencies, or members of the public, to come out and participate; and
2. getting the regulars who typically come to your Field Day, but aren't busy operating or cooking, a little more involved.

And my suggestion here is that you try SOMETHING that is:

1. new, or at least that you don't regularly do at your Field Day; and
2. hands-on in some way.

And my rationale here is that Field Day operations have only so many operating positions available during the day when most people are coming out to check out Field Day, and are not otherwise busy cooking, or eating, or setting up, or tearing down. So you have people coming out (perhaps some new hams, perhaps some old hats who are just not into the swing of Field Day, perhaps some people who are just there to socialize) for whom you don't have an operating position where you can put them to work or get them involved. And even if there is an open operating position, some people are mike shy or just don't want to operate.

The new activity could, for example, be training in some facet of EmComm, such as traffic handling, or an in-person ICS class.

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An alternative could be a hands-on demonstration of a mode or type of operation you don't usually use at Field Day. And I'd like to encourage you to think carefully about how you might do this to maximize both the success of that operating activity and the opportunity for your members and visitors to roll up their sleeves and participate. I urge you to find a subject matter expert on the topic of the training, or whatever new mode you're trying who can:

- provide the planned training;
- furnish the right equipment, properly configured to operate;
- know how to use the mode/equipment successfully in a Field Day environment; and
- demonstrate to and mentor visitors.

Having an expert who understands the challenges of Field Day is important. If you're trying to make a satellite contact using one of the FM satellites, you need to have enough Effective Radiated Power (i.e., power and antenna elements), pointed in the right direction, to capture the FM receiver in the satellite. Having someone who knows what they are doing will maximize the success of the activity, which will help make it a rewarding experience for participants.

This kind of activity can be done without negatively affecting the rest of your Field Day operation. For example, receivers don't count against you. Also, at various times in Field Day, there may be a station that is not being effectively used. If your VHF/UHF station is primarily equipped for FM and you don't have a really high antennas, there's a good chance you've worked virtually everyone in range and on the air well before dinner time. Maybe that station can take a break while you try that new mode.

Just some food for thought. You've got about nine weeks. Now is the time to plan for some special activity at your Field Day to catch the interest of new members, visitors, served agencies, the public, or even your Field Day regulars.