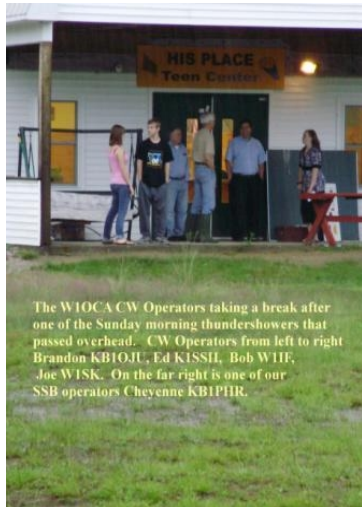


Oxford County ARES Newsletter for June 2009

Field Day is June 27-28, 2009!

Oxford County ARES is hosting a Field Day site in Fryeburg, Maine at the Fryeburg Fairgrounds. This is a two day event officially starting at 2:00 pm EDT with the purpose to contact other stations participating in Field Day activities. Oxford County ARES will have the Oxford County ARES/CERT trailer at the site as well.



The WIOCA CW Operators taking a break after one of the Sunday morning thundershowers that passed overhead. CW Operators from left to right Brandon KB1OJL, Ed K1SSIL, Bob W1IF, Joe W1SK. On the far right is one of our SSB operators Cheyenne KB1PIR.

In addition to operating radios, this weekend you will have an opportunity to meet with other amateurs and potential amateurs. And since this is a two day event we will have food on site. Our Oxford County ARES members have been contributing cash for the food for the weekend.



Last year the Oxford County ARES/CERT trailer serve as the home for the GOTA station. We had quite a few new and inactive hams, show up and operate.

Other events in June:

- ARES Meeting June 1st at the Oxford County EMA
- The Bangor Hamfest June 6th at Hermon High School.
- Oxford ARES Digital Nets Mondays after the 2m VHF net
- Trek Across Maine June 19, 20, 21

Pottle Hill 10K Road Race June 20, 2009

The annual Pottle Hill 10K road race is one week earlier than our Field Day. This has been an annual event that we have provided communications for the Pottle Works fund raising event. We typically meet for breakfast to go over the final details and plan our assignments here and also at the finish line net control site. We are in need of radio amateurs this year since the Trek Across Maine is the same weekend. This event is always a good time and a chance to try out the mobile and hand-held radios. And as always, please remember to pack extra batteries.



Digital Communications for Oxford County ARES

We have been experimenting with improving our capability to move large quantities of information more efficiently through our county. Several members have established contacts with each other to transmit data via the radio. The intent is to free up voice communications and have lists and documents transmitted and received digitally. Many of us that have played in the digital realm are using a program called Fldigi.

Without the strict handshaking protocols that inhibited communications via packet, we are attempting to set up a system that works reliably on HF using the smallest amount of frequency space. The improvements in Ham Radio Deluxe's digital program have made

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it another option. If you find some time on Monday after the 2 Meter VHF net, come join in the group. We have amateurs using many different PSK programs for Windows and Linux. We haven't heard from anyone using a Mac OS yet.

Food for Thought from ARRL ARES Newsletter May 20, 2009:

Letters: 6 Meter FM for ARES Ops

Most ARES communications are performed on 2 meter FM and for good reasons: The majority of amateurs own 2 meter FM radios and many have mobile installations that provide great coverage in most urban and suburban areas. There are in many areas so many repeaters up that there is a waiting list for frequencies. For many events here in Northern Virginia, a handheld radio will do the job well.

We do, however, have some events that are run in large, forested park areas where 2 meter repeater coverage is poor or in some cases, the repeaters that cover areas are also popular on weekends with the clubs that sponsor those repeaters. It can be unfair to run a 50 mile event and tie up a wide area repeater for a day.

Our solution was to try other VHF bands. While most of us also have 440 MHz FM gear, we found that it did not provide the range in wooded areas. We went to 6 meters for several reasons. First, there are many amateurs who own the ICOM IC-706 and other compact radios that have 6 meter FM capability. The coverage of 6 meters in a wooded environment is unbelievably good. We have found that a 5 watt 6 meter simplex FM signal can be heard more clearly than a 50 watt 2 meter simplex signal.

We have two events that are along the Occoquan Reservoir in Fairfax County, Virginia and two other events that are run along the Potomac River from Alexandria to Mt. Vernon. We've found that 2 meter repeater coverage along both the reservoir and the river is not good and running events with mobile equipment on 2 meter simplex is not the best approach.

When trying 6 meters we found that coverage was much better. While there are many commercial 6 meter FM radios on the market, there are also many surplus commercial radios available if you can find the right ones and they are properly converted. In our area, one of the members of the [Amateur Radio Research and Development Club](#) (AMRAD) picked up a truckload of Midland commercial

radios and figured out how to convert them to the 6 meter band. Most of them have 22 channels and must be programmed by using a computer program and a serial cable with a non-standard connector to the radio. With 22 channels, you will have all of the simplex frequencies and many 6 meter repeater pairs in your area. I'm sure that there are Motorola models that can be had as well.

Commercial gear has a few advantages over our amateur equipment. One is that it is easy to use. Turn it on, set the channel, set the squelch and talk. These radios are generally bullet proof; they will take more abuse. They were designed to live in cabs, trash trucks, and police cars. They also have a great deal of audio gain available. If you are in a high noise environment you will still be able to hear your traffic.

Six meter antennas are another consideration. For mobile operations, you can use a 2 meter 5/8th wave that also loads up as a 1/4 wave on 6 meters. Alternatives are home made or commercially made ground planes, J-poles, and dipoles. I use a 6 meter Ringo for portable use on a set of military mast sections. I've marked the vertical parts so they can be collapsed for easy transport and set up quickly.

If your ARES unit or club decides to use commercial 6 meter equipment, I recommend that you determine a few simplex frequencies that should be programmed into all radios. Two popular frequencies in Northern Virginia are 52.02 MHz and 52.51 MHz. I recommend that you stay away from 52.525 MHz as it is the national calling frequency and when 6 meters is open you may get check ins from all over the country.

Another consideration for use of a second band when working ARES or public service is the ever increasing use of APRS on 2 meters for such events. If you have an APRS tracker in a vehicle at the lead or tail end of a race or on other support vehicles, you want to not interfere with that signal, so moving your voice communications to another band works. -- Richard Bunn, N4ASX, ARES EC, Alexandria, Virginia

This letter prepared by Wayne Strout, N1YIS for the Oxford County ARES group.

The ARRL ARES Newsletter is published by the ARRL and is free to ARRL members.