

Press Release
Winn Parish Amateur Radio Emergency Services

Three locals become Amateur Radio Operators

May 20, 2006 (Winnfield, LA) Winn Parish Amateur Radio Emergency Services is proud to announce that Tony Acosta, Patrick Ohaver and Scott Zimmerman have received their Technician class Amateur Radio License. We would like to welcome them into a group of over 700,000 hams in the United States. Since the recent activities of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, there has been a renewed interest in Amateur Radio operations for emergency communications.

What is Amateur Radio you may ask? Amateur Radio or Ham Radio as it is often referred to was started in 1901 with Marconi's successful transmission of the letter S over 2000 miles from Cornwall, England to St John's, Newfoundland. Experimentation continued with various people until in 1927 congress created the FCC and setup the Amateur Radio segment of the radio bands.

While Amateur Radio is primarily a hobby to those who use it, it did have a specific purpose when established by the FCC, part of that purpose was to provide an expansion of the existing reservoir within the amateur radio service of trained operators, technicians and electronics experts. Along with this was a desire to have a bunch of trained operators to provide secondary and sometimes primary communications in a "communications emergency". Ham operators are the only groups of radio operators that maintain their own communications infrastructure and can set up in a moments notice when all other communication systems are down or overloaded. The amateur radio motto is "When all else fails, Amateur Radio".

Hams have Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with several disaster services and organizations to provide their communications. Some of those agencies include the Salvation Army, The American Red Cross, FEMA, the National Weather Service, & The Department of Homeland Security, just to name a few. Hams have been known to pass "Health and Welfare" messages during wartime as well as Emergency and Priority messages natural disasters. Recently Hams have been involved in providing communication for the Tennessee tornadoes and the flooding in the North East. Hams were the first to get reliable communications out of the North Shore area after Katrina.

Winn Parish Medical Center has recently been able to receive ham radio equipment as part of an initiative through the Department of Health and Hospitals to place Amateur Radio stations throughout all medical facilities in the state to assist in emergency communications during disasters. This will add another tool to our existing communications equipment for emergency communications.

If you are a local amateur radio operator and would like to become active in a new organization or perhaps you are just interested in learning how to become an Amateur Radio Operator, Winn Parish Amateur Radio Emergency Services will hold an organizational meeting June 6th at 7:00 PM in the Board Room at Winn Parish Medical Center.

If you would like further information, please contact Cory Lee, ARES Emergency Coordinator for Winn Parish at (318) 648-3068 or email kc5ewj@wpares.org. Also see our website at <http://www.wpares.org>.



Photo Caption:
(L-R) Scott Zimmerman, Patrick Ohaver & Tony Acosta and now licensed Amateur Radio Operators
Photo By: Janice Austin