



Radio-Active!

January 18, 2026, Volume 5 Issue 1

Winter Field Day – Something for everyone

Winter Field Day (WFD) is much more than a simple exercise in operating your radio during the colder months—it's an adventure that invites amateur radio operators of every experience level to step outside their comfort zones, test their resilience, and build lasting connections within the ham community. As the temperatures drop and shorter daylight hours settle on the landscape, Winter Field Day offers a compelling chance to see just how well your equipment, skills, and ingenuity hold up under the pressure of winter's icy grip. These skills are not only enjoyable to practice but are also vital for providing reliable communications during real-world emergencies, when help is needed most and conditions are far from ideal.

Participants in Winter Field Day gain hands-on experience with setting up antennas in frozen ground, operating portable stations in tents or vehicles, and troubleshooting equipment issues in low temperatures. Such practice is essential for anyone interested in public service, emergency communications, or just pushing the boundaries of their technical know-how. The event is a laboratory for innovation—operators often devise creative solutions for battery heating, antenna deployment, and sheltering gear from rain or wind, knowledge that can be shared and celebrated throughout the amateur radio community.

But Winter Field Day is not just about enduring the elements or racking up contacts. It is about camaraderie, teamwork, and building memories. Our local clubs, Santa Cruz County Amateur Radio Club and San Lorenzo Valley Amateur Radio Club use the event as an opportunity to mentor new operators, foster youth involvement, and showcase the versatility of amateur radio to curious onlookers. Also unique for this event in Santa Cruz County are several educational presentations on some aspects.

For those who thrive on competition, Winter Field Day offers a structured contest with points awarded for different modes, bands, and operating conditions. There is a thrill in seeing your call sign propagate across the bands, knowing others are braving the same conditions from snowy forests, windswept plains, and cozy cabins. The friendly rivalry adds energy to the event, but at its heart, WFD remains focused on learning, cooperation, and fun.

So, mark your calendar for this coming weekend, January 24 -25, dust off your winter gear, and gather your fellow hams for a weekend of radios, resilience, and camaraderie. Winter Field Day at the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Mounted Posse House, is waiting to challenge, inspire, and connect you—do not let this unique chance slip by. Brave the cold and discover just how much you can accomplish when you step into the winter airwaves! See additional information and the schedule on the last page.

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Free Ham Radio Technician License Class set to start 2/19/26. Encourage family and friends to get their license. Sign up here:



Santa Cruz County ARES Purpose

- The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment with their local ARES leadership for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes.
- We are not fire fighters or police or sheriff's officers. We are volunteers who care about our communities by using our emergency communication skills.
- Before volunteering in an emergency, we first take care of ourselves, our family, and our home.
- We value every member's contribution, irrespective of license class, years of experience, or the price tag of equipment.

Play radio at this month's Membership Meeting

Our next ARES meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, January 21, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM**, and will take place outdoors in the parking lot of the County EOC at **5200 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz.**

Why outdoors?

We are bringing back the popular Comm Post Message Passing Exercise! Set up your go-kit in the parking lot as if you are establishing an emergency communications post in a location without power or phone service. You will send and receive short, tactical messages—just like in a real emergency. For a comprehensive go-kit checklist, see: <https://xczcomm.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PSPS-Go-Kit.pdf>.

Do not have all the gear? No problem!

You're welcome to join in with just the basics:

- 2M-70cm dual band radio (a handheld works great)
- Clipboard, pen, and ICS-214 log sheet
- Light source
- Weather-appropriate clothing

Anticipated Schedule *(subject to last-minute changes):*

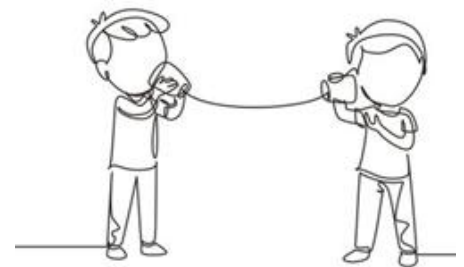
- **7:00 PM (or earlier):** Arrive, claim a parking spot, and set up your communications post. Pick up your tactical call sign and message packet at the main entrance. Messages will be brief and tactical, designed for quick transmission.
- **7:15 PM:** Roll call and check-in on the directed net using simplex **Coastal 1, 146.535 MHz**. Net Control will help you find stations to exchange messages with. You may be directed to other frequencies to send or receive messages, which can be sent by voice or Winlink (if available). Log all sent and received messages on your ICS-214 sheet.
- **8:00 PM:** Wrap up the message-passing exercise and turn in your log sheets. Join the hot-wash discussion and critique at the main entrance and sign up for future ARES Net Control opportunities.
- **8:15 PM:** Explore other participants' setups—get inspired and gather ideas for your own gear.
- **8:45 PM:** Pack up your station and head out.

Exercise Frequencies:

Make sure your radio is ready for simplex operation on these channels:

- Ch 13 - SLV1: 147.555 MHz
- Ch 14 - SLV2: 446.875 MHz
- Ch 15 - SLV3: 147.450 MHz
- Ch 16 - CSTL1: 146.535 MHz
- Ch 17 - CSTL2: 441.000 MHz
- Ch 18 - CSTL3: 147.570 MHz

Come join us this Wednesday evening for a fun, hands-on experience. Everyone is welcome — see you there.



Report your volunteer hours!

The reported volunteer hours for December were 472 hours and 2025 total was 6692. Please remember to enter your hours on the form on <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
Reporting the time you spend on ARES and ham radio activities reminds county public safety managers that we are around and ready to serve in time of need.



Testing, Testing!

On **Thursday, February 12, beginning at 7:00 PM**, Santa Cruz County will conduct an emergency communication exercise to evaluate the effectiveness of two-way radio links between various local groups and the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Participating organizations include Firewise, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), and neighborhood groups.

At the start of the test, operators at the EOC will use amateur radio station W6XCZ to transmit a test message to all participants via the following repeaters:

ARES Chan	Repeater	Frequency	TX Offset	PL Tone	Location
2	AB6VU	445.550 MHz	+ 5.00 MHz	94.8 Hz	Boulder Creek
5	WR6AOK	147.120 MHz	+ 600 kHz	94.8 Hz	Ben Lomond Mountain
6	K6BJ	146.790 MHz	- 600kHz	94.8 Hz	Upper DeLaveaga Park
8	K6RMW/W	147.945 MHz	- 600kHz	94.8 Hz	Watsonville Hospital
40	W6TUW	145.290 MHz	- 600kHz	94.8 Hz	Bonny Doon

Instructions for Participants:

- After receiving the test message, designated ham operators should relay it to as many neighbors as possible.
- Next, contact the EOC by radio and report:
 - The name of the neighborhood group.
 - The number of individuals in the group who confirmed receipt of the test message.
 - (Optional) Any additional test message you wish to send back to the EOC.

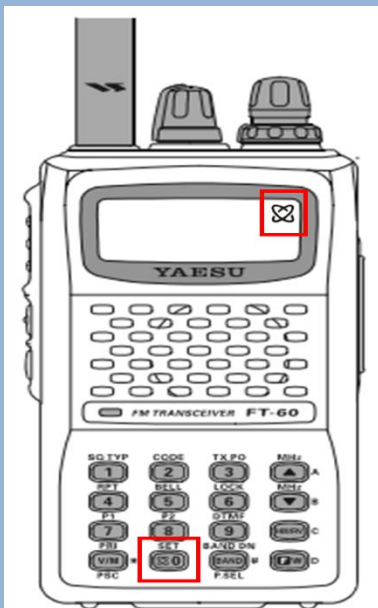
A summary of the results will be published after the test.

Resources

- Website: <https://xczcomm.com/>
- Reporting volunteer hours: <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ARES-of-Santa-Cruz-County-Ca-296232310799866>
- Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/431308973875528>
- PIO Articles: <https://arrlsantaclara-valley.org/news/> or <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/news/>
- Submitting personal information such as DSW application, personal data update, education certificates, PDFs of deployment documents: email to EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov
- Santa Cruz Communications Support offers four loaner kits for ham operators: two for vehicle deployment (mobile dual-band radio, mag mount antenna, battery, kneeboard) and two for stationary outdoor use (vehicle kit plus tripod antenna, lighting, and pop-up). To borrow a kit, contact John (N6QX), Roberta (AJ6KN), Stephen (KM6NEP), or Dan (N6RJX).

Disabling Wires

1. Verify radio is unlocked.
To unlock—Long press #6
2. Press the F/W key (lower right button) then immediately press the 0 key to enter the menu mode.
3. Rotate the Dial knob to menu 23 – INT MR.
4. Press the F/W key then rotate the Dial knob to select a memory (d1 through d9) that is empty, i.e., it contains ●●●●●● (six dots) = no tone.
5. Press the F/W key to store the setting.
6. Rotate the Dial knob to menu 21 – I NET.
7. Press the F/W key then rotate the Dial knob to select INT.MEM.
8. Press the F/W key to store the setting.
9. Press the PTT button to exit the menu mode.



Yaesu WIRE

(A repeat article from July 2024 - it is left here as a resource)

So, you bought yourself the Santa Cruz County ARES recommended Yaesu FT-60 handi-talkie. You programmed it to our frequencies. Then you start participating in Nets and events. And you try to transmit. Either you are not heard at all, or the first part of your transmission is cut off. Net control asks for a repeat of the information, but this time hears a DTMF tone at the beginning of your transmission. Net control or other listeners may chime in and state the station (you) has “Wires” turned on. How did that happen? *Very easily.* Most of us have experienced this phenomenon with this radio. Yaesu’s WIRE stands for **W**ide-coverage **I**nternet **R**epeater **E**nhancement **S**ystem. It is an internet communication system that allows amateur radio repeaters to connect over Voice over IP (VoIP). WIRE uses DTMF signaling to connect, so any radio with a DTMF encoding keypad can be used to establish an internet link.

When your radio sends out the DTMF tone, it simultaneously mutes your voice audio (or lowers it significantly). That’s why Net Control and the rest of the Net cannot hear you! When you are saying your call sign, the radio has muted or lowered your voice signal. Additionally, most repeaters automatically mute the audio when they hear DTMF tones, cutting off the user. The person making the transmission has no idea what is happening other than a small, easy to miss indicator on their display.

WIRE is a feature that is well used elsewhere but has had challenges in getting a foothold in the US. According to some, the introduction of Echolink or Allstar may have influenced this.

On the FT-60R, which uses WIRE-II technology (and not the current X version), the key that is used to turn on WIRE is the “0 Set” key, located on the bottom row, second from the left (see diagram to left). Press it momentarily to turn WIRE on (or off). You might do this by accident if you want to enter Set mode and forget to first hit F/W key. You can tell WIRE is on if the small ‘atom’ symbol appears in the top right corner of the display. When participating in an event, we encourage locking your radio after setting your frequencies for the event and verifying the WIRE is not active. If you do not plan on using this feature, consider an alternative way of handling it by following the steps in the left-hand column. After performing the steps, it is still possible to ‘activate’ the WIRE and the symbol will appear, *but it will not send tones over the air and mute your audio!*

Activities – Save the dates

2026 SCC ARES Events

Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date?	Description
May 17, 2026	Strawberry Fields Forever Bike Ride	Approximate	Strawberry Fields Forever is an annual benefit bike ride through some of the most beautiful regions of Santa Cruz County. ARES provides comms between rest stops and SAG vehicles.
June 2nd or 3rd week, 2026	Santa Cruz Regional Active Shooter and Casualty Care Response Training	Approximate	This event is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's department and provides first responder training for an active shooter. ARES along with CERT provides perimeter monitoring in maintaining a closed event location.
July 4, 2026	Aptos 4th of July Parade	Approximate	We provide monitoring of the public to provide information to the Sheriffs
8/16/2026 (est)	Race through the Redwoods	Approximate	Race through the Redwoods is a 10K foot race that starts and finishes at Roaring Camp but the majority traverses the redwoods in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. It is promoted by the Felton Business and Community Association. ARES provides monitoring of runners positions and safety for the organizers.
9/20/2026 (est)	Santa Cruz Triathlon	Approximate	Santa Cruz Triathlon is a non-profit that donates proceeds to various athletic programs in the county. ARES provides monitoring of participants positions and safety for the organizers.
October 30, 2026 (est) 1530 - 2030	Halloween Trunk or Treat 5200 Soquel Ave, Santa Cruz	Approximate	Trunk of Treat is organized by the Santa Cruz Sheriffs. ARES provides monitoring of participants along with closed road staffing and shuttle parking location.

2026 Other Radio Events for Ham Operator Participation

Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date?	Description
Each Wednesday 10am - 12pm	Loft Coffee 2701 Cabrillo College Dr, Aptos		Gathering of general interest, sharing of ideas, getting some elmer help
2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month 10am	C.A.K.E. @ Loft Coffee 2701 Cabrillo College Dr, Aptos		C.A.K.E. = Coffee/Caffeine Assisted Knowledge Exchange. Gathering of general interest, sharing of ideas, getting some elmer help
1st Saturday of each month [12/6/25, 1/3/26] 10am - 2pm	POTA	Approximate	Play radio at a scenic park near by. Not formal and any mode can be used. Emails sent prior to event to indicate the specific park.
January 24 - 25, 2026	Winter Field Day	Confirmed	Located at the Posse House on the Ocean Street Extension. Lots of radio demonstrations being planned along with an exercise.
April 16 - 19, 2026	Sea Otter Classic	Confirmed	Large scale bicycle event that takes place at the Laguna Seca Raceway and Park, Monterey
April 26, 2026	Big Sur International Marathon	Confirmed	Point to Point foot race/run along Highway 1 from Big Sur to Carmel. Ham radio operators provide communications along the route.

COME & JOIN US!

WINTER

Field Day



Jan 24 - 25 2026

Join us for a full weekend of hands-on **amateur radio** activities during Field Day, running from 8:00 AM Saturday through 2:00 PM Sunday.

Jan 24 - 25

Field Day

8:00AM Saturday-
2:00PM Sunday

Jan 24

Public is Welcome

10:00AM-5:00PM

Jan 24

Educational Sessions

10:00AM-4:00PM
(Winlink training/setup)

Jan 25

Educational Sessions

10:00AM-12:00PM
(Winlink folks unable to
finish Saturday)



We'll be operating the same modes as Summer Field Day, including:

Phone | CW | Digital |

Get-on-the Air (GOTA) for anyone who wants to give it a try!



Sheriff's Mounted Posse
2127 Ocean Street
Extension, Santa Cruz, CA