



Radio-Active!

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Welcome New Operators!

Last month we shared some exciting news—and it just keeps getting better! Getting or upgrading an amateur radio license is now easier than ever for hams in Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay area thanks to **SURF Exams** (<https://surfexams.net>), a new ARRL-accredited Volunteer Examiner (VE) team. SURF Exams brings a fresh, modern approach to testing, offering a well-organized, friendly, and supportive environment led by experienced volunteer examiners who understand today's amateur radio community.

Their **very first testing session**, held on **March 28th** at the Emergency Operations Center, was an emphatic success—with an **astonishing 100% pass rate!**

Many of the applicants sitting for the Technician exam were recent graduates of our local Exam Prep class, led by **Bob, KO6XX; Kathi, KE6VTY; Dan, N6RJX; and Roberta, AJ6KN**. Their dedication and instruction clearly paid off, transforming preparation into achievement.

Joe, KG6G, a VE, provided this recap of the event:

We stared down Wi-Fi issues, kept a busy room moving, and had nothing but success from the applicants.

Some details:

- We administered a total of forty-four tests to twenty-six applicants. We did it in a timely manner, in a silent room, and in a welcoming and friendly way.
- We gave 23 Technician exams to twenty-two people (one took it twice). **100%** passed in the end!
- We gave 16 General exams and five passed. But that is **100%** of the people that studied for the General. The other folks were just getting a feel for it after passing their technician exam.
- We gave 5 Extra exams to four people. One took it twice and in the end **100%** passed.
- We gave the newly minted Roberta Joiner Roberts Award to one of our applicants that passed all three exams in one sitting.

All the paperwork has been sent to the ARRL who will get it to the FCC Monday.

Congratulations to the entire team, you are directly meeting the needs of our community and strengthening the future of amateur radio and emergency communications in our region. Even more exciting, several newly licensed operators have already signed up to join ARES, expanding our capabilities and growing our response network. This is momentum in action—and it is inspiring to watch it build!

IN THIS ISSUE

New operators 2

Hours 3

Test Results 3

Wires 4

Save the dates 5

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.

Welcome New Operators - Continued



Name	Callsign	License Class
Johnathon	AK6SV	Amateur Extra
Peter	KN6TYR	Amateur Extra Upgrade
Brian	KO6LLN	General Upgrade
David	KO6MVI	Amateur Extra Upgrade
Jason	KO6NAE	Technician
Jordan	KO6NAG	Technician
Bob	KO6NAH	Technician
Paul	KO6NAI	Technician
Michael	KO6NAQ	General
Heather	KO6NAR	General
Ingrid	KO6NAS	Technician
Rachelle	KO6NAT	Technician
SL	KO6NAU	Technician
Julianne	KO6NAV	Technician
Zachary	KO6NBU	Technician
Thomas	KO6NBV	Technician
Phillip	KO6NBW	Technician
Amy	KO6NBX	Technician
Jonathan	KO6NBY	General
David	KO6NCO	Technician
Clara	KO6NCP	Technician
Dianna	KO6NCP	Technician
Joanne	KO6NCR	Technician
Beth	KO6NDD	Technician
David	N6DTA	Amateur Extra Upgrade



New TA – Bezael
(AI Robot built by KO6XX)

Report your volunteer hours!

ARES volunteers reported **122 service hours in March**, highlighting our continued commitment to training, preparedness, and community service.

Reporting your hours does more than track activity—it demonstrates to county public safety managers that ARES is active, reliable, and ready to serve when needed. Logged volunteer time helps maintain our visibility and reinforces the value of amateur radio in emergency response. Please remember to report all ARES and ham radio–related activities, no matter how small.

Enter your hours here:

<https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>

Every hour tells our story. Let us keep it visible.

Testing, Testing! Results



Last Tuesday, April 7th, Santa Cruz County proudly conducted its second emergency communications exercise, building on the success of the first and showcasing exciting progress in our disaster-readiness capabilities. The goal was to evaluate and strengthen two-way radio links between local community groups and the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Participants included Firewise communities, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), and neighborhood preparedness groups from across the county.

This exercise was especially noteworthy because of the significant upgrades made to the EOC radio equipment since the previous test—and those improvements clearly paid off.

At the start of the exercise, John, N6QX, and Roberta, AJ6KN, transmitted a test message from the EOC to all amateur radio operators using our familiar local repeaters. Ham radio operators then sprang into action, efficiently relaying the message to neighbors within their groups using MURS radios—demonstrating the power of coordinated, layered communications.

Participation surged this time around! Thirty-three neighborhood groups took part, with 298 individuals confirming receipt of the message, marking a 14% increase in group participation since the first exercise. This growth speaks volumes about our community’s commitment to preparedness and the shared belief that reliable, alternative communications are essential when disaster strikes.

Looking ahead, the next communications exercise is scheduled for **Sunday, June 7, at 7:00 PM**, and even more enhancements are on the way. While the first two exercises maintained active links between K6BJ and WR6AOK, the upcoming test will intentionally disconnect those links. This change is expected to reduce doubled and tripled transmissions, improving overall net efficiency.

In addition, the net structure will be refined so that Bulletins are issued several times at the beginning of the exercise, clearly distributing the test message. Ham radio operators will then check in solely to report neighborhood tallies, streamlining operations and improving the experience for everyone involved.

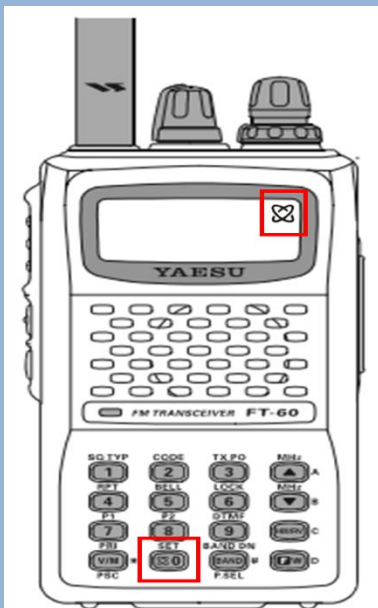
Each exercise brings us closer to a faster, clearer, and more resilient emergency communications system—and the momentum keeps building!

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://arlsantaclara.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 WIRES

(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 WIRES 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). WIRES 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 is 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.

WIRES 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 WIRES-II technology (and not the current X version), the key that is used to turn on WIRES is the “0 Set” key, located on the bottom row, second from the left (see diagram to left). Press it momentarily to turn WIRES 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 WIRES 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 WIRES is not active.

If you do not plan to use 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 WIRES 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	Confirmed	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. See article with links
June 22 - 26, 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 [3/7/26] 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.
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.