



# Radio-Active!

May 18, 2026, Volume 5 Issue 5

## The event season has begun!

April was a busy month as many Ham Radio-supported events returned, bringing ARES members back into action.



Day 1 Santa Cruz Representation

Eleven Santa Cruz ARES members took part in two Monterey County events, and for many it was a welcome return. The Sea Otter Classic, held each spring since 1991 at Laguna Seca and in the back country of Fort Ord, is a four-day bicycling and outdoor sports festival unlike any other. Known as the world's largest cycling festival, it draws nearly 10,000 professional and amateur athletes along with 74,000 fans, launching the Central Coast cycling season in spectacular fashion. Riders of every age hammer over gravel, race the pavement, and fly down towering

berms across 12 events. At its heart, the Sea Otter Classic exists to make lives better through sport, recreation, and the celebration of an active outdoor lifestyle.

The Big Sur International Marathon, a 26.2-mile point-to-point race along scenic Highway 1 from Big Sur to Carmel, takes place each April and draws about 4,500 entrants supported by 2,500 volunteers. For runners, it is a bucket-list course framed by towering redwoods, crashing surf, coastal mountains, and vivid green pastures. It is also a serious challenge: participants must be at least 16 years old, in good health, and well trained to finish within the six-hour cutoff. Beyond the race itself, the marathon's mission is to enrich and empower the community through charitable giving and to inspire healthy lifestyles by creating unforgettable running experiences. Since its inaugural race, it has returned more than \$6.4 million to Monterey County schools, nonprofits, public safety agencies, and environmental organizations through its annual grant program.

Large scale events such as the Big Sur Marathon and Sea Otter Classic do not simply happen—they are built through months of planning and the coordinated effort of a small army of volunteers. For a few days, each event becomes a pop-up city, with countless people working together to keep participants safe, informed, and moving. Is it flawless every minute? Of course not. But thanks to committed volunteers coming from near and far, both events run with remarkable energy and purpose. Continued on Page 2



Temporary Antenna for Comms

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## 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.

## Events - Continued

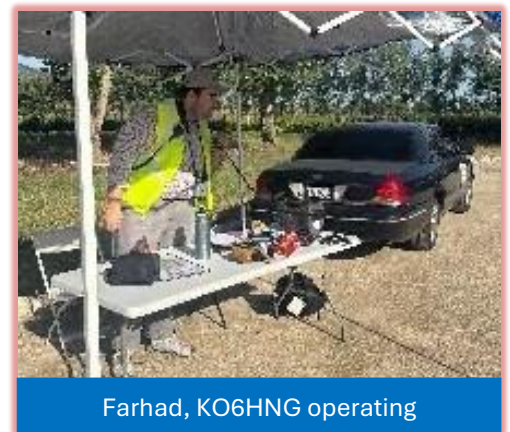


This year, 37 volunteers (a 20% increase from 2025 volunteers) supported Sea Otter Classic radio communications. The San Benito County Amateur Radio Association, led by Tim, W6TST, served as the primary organizer.

Volunteers came from five

counties, with Santa Cruz County providing 30% of the team and covering 27 shifts. Among the 11 Santa Cruz volunteers, seven were seasoned veterans—John, N6QX; Dan, KM6GMG; and Jim, KN6NCG; Roberta, AJ6KN; John, KJ6WJT; Dan, N6RJX; Ed, N6EMA; and JoMarie, KM6URE, while John, AK6SV; Ben, KO6CNT; and Farhad, KO6HNG, were first-time volunteers. Before the event, Tim led several Zoom briefings to walk everyone through the logistics, the ICS 205 frequency list, and the event maps. The plan was clear: know the procedures, know the plan, and know the data. That preparation mattered, because assignments drove equipment choices. The road course required APRS and a mobile rig, while many back-country positions could be handled with an HT. With cell coverage spotty at best, two temporary towers and repeaters were installed specifically for the event. One was a 100-foot tower mounted on a trailer with a generator-powered winch and placed atop one of Laguna Seca's highest hills. The other stood on Chews Ridge, a former fire lookout about 50 miles southeast of Monterey and about 30 miles west of Highway 101, at an elevation of 5,043 feet. That repeater helped cover the many nooks and crannies of Arroyo Seco and Carmel Valley.

On event days, volunteers arrive at sunrise, sometimes after driving through fog or drizzle, only to find sunny but windy conditions at Laguna Seca. After Tim's morning briefing, teams paired up, loaded gear into vehicles, and headed into the back country of Fort Ord using Caltopo maps to reach their assigned locations. Because Fort Ord is now Bureau of Land Management property, the request was to minimize vehicles in an area usually limited to foot, bike, or horse access. Even so, several roads were signed and in surprisingly good condition. Along the way, volunteers saw remnants of Fort Ord's earlier life—small buildings, picnic pavilions, and even a clearing marked Lightfighter LZ, a former helicopter landing zone. The landscape was full of life: rattlesnakes warming in the sun, rabbits darting through the brush, and birds everywhere. The plant life was just as memorable, with varied trees, hanging moss, and plenty of poison oak. Continued on Page 3.

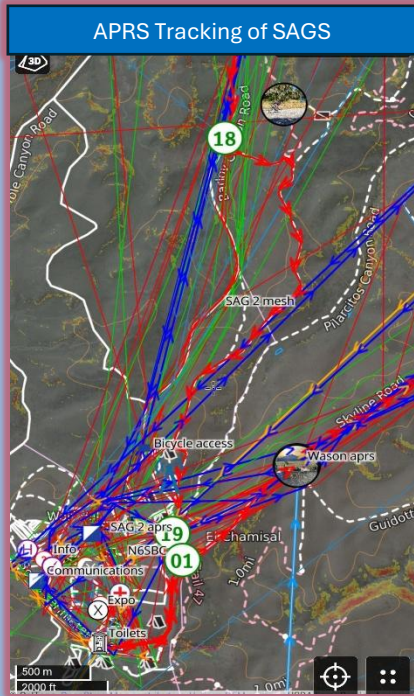


## Events - Continued

Sea Otter brought its share of challenges. A few route signs created confusion, and some volunteers needed clarification on exactly where their posts were located. Many positions were shared with other agencies, including sheriff personnel, firefighter/EMS teams, musicians, and ski patrol. Ski patrol handled back-country medical support, while EMS provided transport. Most radio traffic involved the expected health-and-welfare checks, SAG requests for mechanical breakdowns, and a smaller number of medical issues. Net control, based in San Benito's communications trailer and staffed throughout all four days by Tim and Roberta, AJ6KN, provided the steady voice that kept everything connected. One day featured a demanding 90-mile road course through the Salinas Valley, down to Arroyo Seco, and up through Carmel Valley. Two of our volunteers worked as part of the SAG crews on that route, switching frequencies repeatedly as they moved through changing terrain and sometimes delaying reports until they emerged from canyon dead zones.

Similarly, the Big Sur Marathon used about 30 radio volunteers. Some of the same operators who worked Sea Otter also volunteered for the marathon. Radio communications covered 13 aid stations, four SAGs, two convoys, and two sweeps. They worked alongside sheriff, CHP, police, multiple county clubs, school programs, medical personnel on e-bikes, Cal OES, the Army Corps of Engineers, and a Verizon Response team. To cover the course, four temporary repeaters were placed and linked along the route, a necessity since cellphone service disappears outside the Carmel area heading south toward Big Sur. The day started early—operators were expected to arrive by 4 a.m., check in, receive credentials, and reach their posts before Highway 1 became access controlled. Once that happened, movement meant waiting for an escorted convoy in a single lane and in a single direction. Runners owned the ocean side of the highway, while emergency vehicles, course vehicles, and convoys used the hillside lane. Volunteers cheered runners on with unmistakable enthusiasm, a grand piano rang out at the halfway point, Taiko drummers energized a midway point, and other musicians along the course helped turn a grueling race into something unforgettable.

Every Santa Cruz County radio volunteer who participated came away saying the same thing: these events are a lot of work, a lot of fun, and absolutely worth doing again. Many are already planning to return next year—and we hope even more of you will join the adventure.



## SAR and ARES Together Again!

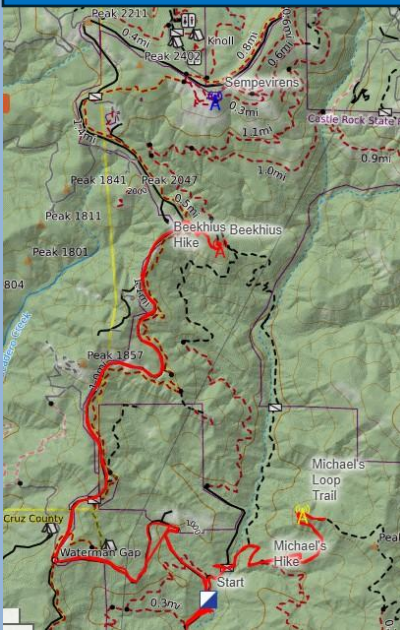
The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team is no ordinary volunteer unit. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit made up of highly trained volunteers, SAR serves the community through public education and the search, rescue, and recovery of missing persons across Santa Cruz County and throughout California. On Saturday, April 25, that mission took center stage once again when SAR called on ARES to support its annual training exercise.

In the days leading up to the event, John N6QX met with volunteers over Zoom to share lessons from past SAR operations and help the team prepare. But the details were sparse, adding a sense of mystery to the assignment. Participants were told only to report at 8:00 AM for a briefing at the intersection of Highway 9 and Old Saratoga Toll Road in Castle Rock State Park, where the SAR Command Post would be established.

Castle Rock State Park proved to be a spectacular stage for the exercise. Perched high along one of the tallest ridges in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the park is a world of sculpted sandstone, dense forest, and sweeping vistas. Its rugged trails wind through black oaks, knobcone pines, and high-elevation coast redwoods, while climbers and hikers fan out across rock formations, caverns, and overlooks. Beautiful as it is, the landscape is also demanding—exactly the kind of terrain that turns a training exercise into a realistic test of skill, stamina, and coordination. The steep hills and deep valleys of Castle Rock disrupted line-of-sight communications, making radio planning essential. In advance of the exercise, Ben KOCNT and Pete KN6TYR studied the area's antenna coverage and identified the strongest opportunities for field radio operator placement. Their coverage mapping was loaded into CalTopo and shared with the SAR commander, giving everyone a clearer picture of how to work with the mountain rather than against it.

After the Command Post briefing, deployment began around 9:00 AM. The weather wasted no time adding to the realism: cool temperatures, drizzle, and off-and-on rain stayed with the team for most of the day. Dan KM6GNG took up position on the Beekhuis Road Trail. Ben KOCNT and Nikita KO6LTQ headed to Michael's Loop. Pete KN6TYR moved to the Sempervirens Point Overlook parking lot, where the higher elevation gave him a strong vantage point over the park. His station quickly became one of the most visible on the course, drawing questions from curious visitors. Back at base, Roberta AJ6KN, John N6QX and JoMarie KM6URE set up the ARES Command Post under a pop-up canopy roughly fifty feet from the SAR Command Post. A 15-foot mast supported the VHF/UHF antenna, Coastal 1 simplex channel and the KI6YDR repeater out of Boulder Creek were used. Another 30-foot masted antenna supported the public service radio. SAR also deployed Starlink, making it possible to monitor teams through the CalTopo application. With so much tree cover at the command post, its performance came as a welcome surprise. For the seven SAR members in the field, the exercise focused on one of the most fundamental rescue skills of all: navigation. Team members worked through the terrain using the tools available to them, including paper maps and compasses, building confidence in techniques that remain essential when technology is limited or conditions become difficult. By the end of the day, the exercise had accomplished exactly what it set out to do. The ARES team successfully relayed information back to the SAR Command Post that otherwise might not have been heard, proving once again how critical dependable communications can be in rugged country. SAR team leader John Mizell expressed his appreciation for the ARES operators, and the strong coordination between the two groups was evident throughout the exercise.

CalTopo Map with Radio Positions



## Report your volunteer hours!

ARES volunteers reported **596 hours in April**, 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! Coming up

Looking ahead, the next Neighborhood 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!

## Volunteers needed to support our First Responders!

It is that time of year again when our first responders receive a refresher and updated information on responses to an active shooter situation. The Training event is a professionally conducted training for law enforcement, fire, and medical first responders who may be called upon to face an active shooter in a crowded environment. The training includes live scenarios with volunteer actors playing the roles of shooters, victims, and panicked bystanders. This training is an 8-hour course that repeats for five days in June (6/22 – 6/26) with new 30-50 attendees per day from the various agencies.

**SO HOW DO WE HELP?** ARES along with CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) are activated to support this effort by monitoring the location perimeter and parking areas of the access-controlled training site, redirecting unauthorized pedestrian and/or vehicle traffic that may inadvertently enter the area, and reporting/communicating potential suspicious activity or other issues. This allows more first responders to participate in the class. *There are 105 volunteer slots that need to be filled by a CERT or ARES volunteer with a current DSW ID.* There are two shifts for each of the days: 0700-1230 and 1200-1730. The first shift primarily greets the participants and directing parking, and the second shift is keeping the campus secure as the scenarios are played out.

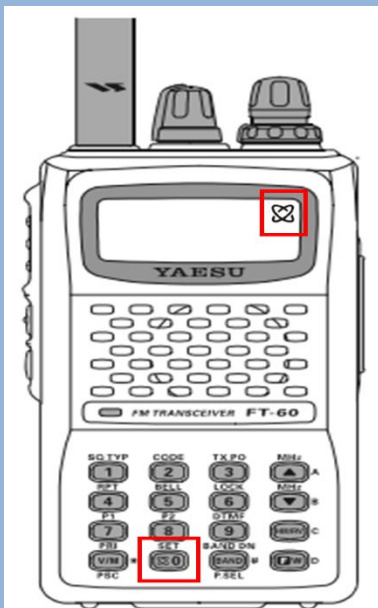
*Get a bit of fresh air, watch the wildlife, practice using the radio, build a sense of comradery with other volunteers, laugh and have fun.* **Sign up TODAY to get your choice of time slots at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026Active>**

## 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://arrlsantaclaravalley.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](mailto: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
June 22 - 26, 2026	Santa Cruz Regional Active Shooter and Casualty Care Response Training	Confirmed	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. Signup here: <a href="https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026Active">https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2026Active</a>
July 4, 2026	Aptos 4th of July Parade	Approximate	We provide monitoring of the public to provide information to the Sheriffs
July 26, 2026	Wharf to Wharf	Possibility	Discussion if radio comms is needed
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 [6/6/26] 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.
June 27 - 28, 2026	Summer Field Day	Confirmed	

## Field Day – it is right around the corner



Field day is ham radio's Open House, and it will be soon, June 27—28, 2026. It is a way to welcome the public to come to learn more about ham radio as well as operators to explore other aspects of the hobby. The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) is the national association for amateur radio, connecting hams around the US is the principle organization for this activity. ARRL boasts that Field Day is the largest on-air amateur radio event in the world with more than 40,000 hams throughout North America setting up temporary transmitting stations in public places to demonstrate ham radio's science, skill and service to our communities and our nation. It combines public service, emergency preparedness, community outreach, and technical skills all in a single event. The event includes a contest to contact as many other stations as possible and to learn to operate our radio gear in abnormal situations and in less than optimal conditions.

Locally, in Santa Cruz County, our two radio clubs (San Lorenzo Valley Amateur Radio Club and Santa Cruz County Amateur Radio Club) have often joined forces for planning the event. The Field Day committee announced to be returning to the old Par three golf course in Aptos (2600 Mar Vista Drive; located at the end of Old Dominion Court). It includes seven acres of land to spread out, and it is near highway 1. The different stations including phone (voice), CW (Morse code), satellite, digital, VHF, and a GOTA ("get on the air") station that is staffed with a coach.

A promotional banner for ARRL Field Day 2026. The banner features a background image of a field with tents and people. Text on the banner includes: "TIME TO START PLANNING FOR...", "ARRL FIELD DAY 2026!", "MARK YOUR CALENDAR: JUNE 27-28", "4th FULL WEEKEND IN JUNE!", "JUNE 27-28, 2026", "ON THE AIR • ON THE GO • BE PREPARED!", "Practice Emergency Communications • Test Your Gear • Have Fun Outdoors!", "Official ARRL Field Day Page: [www.arrl.org/field-day](http://www.arrl.org/field-day)", "Field Day Rules: [www.arrl.org/field-day-rules](http://www.arrl.org/field-day-rules)", "FFARA UPDATES", "Five Flags Amateur Radio Association Field Day 2026 Info Coming Soon!", and "www.w4uc.org".