Amateurs in Action

Recounts of ham radio operators who have used their effort and skills to help others in a time of need

Earthquake in China



Living life along the Ring of Fire, most mainland Chinese on the eastern seaboard are no strangers to earthquakes. But when one occurs much farther inland, it tends to catch the majority off-guard, often leading to greater casualties. The 2008 Sichuan Earthquake was one such event. On the afternoon of 12 May 2008, the magnitude 8.0 quake struck the Sichuan province of China, epicenter located about 50 miles to the west of Chengdu, the provincial capital, resulting in widespread disaster, over 69,000 casualties, and even causing more than 200,000 landslides.

Just another day at the office for Liu Hu BG8AAS, when around 2:45 pm the quake suddenly shattered all his office windows. Liu, who lives in Chengdu, immediately went to work and set up and announced a ham radio net, then advertised it and invited amateurs to check in. He also invited operators to help set up a disaster relief network, coordinated by his net. In his rush, Liu had forgotten to take paper with him, and ended up writing everything on his hands.



Another ham, Luo Minglin BY8AA, also from Chengdu, organized yet another relief net on the sole remaining operational repeater. Overall, about 200 amateur operators answered Liu and Luo's calls and joined the effort.

The morning following the quake, Zhang Zhen BG8DOU helped set up a makeshift repeater, which became the main communication channel for rescue instructions, status reports, and even public use. The repeater allowed the mayor of nearby Mianzhu to give orders to those on the front lines of the rescue and recovery activity. Yong Xiang BG8CVE set up an amateur radio relay station to report conditions for the western side of Sichuan province until his batteries gave out.

The CRSA (Chinese Radio Sports Association, the Chinese equivalent of the ARRL) recognized the importance of amateur radio when wide-area communication goes down. *Thanks for the cooperation and efforts made by all amateur radio societies*, said Fan Bin BA1RB of CRSA. *We've received numerous inquiries and warm concerns from amateur societies worldwide.*

You can read more about the amateur radio relief efforts during the Sichuan Earthquake aftermath on ARRL and China.org.



Station of Liu Hu BG8AAS