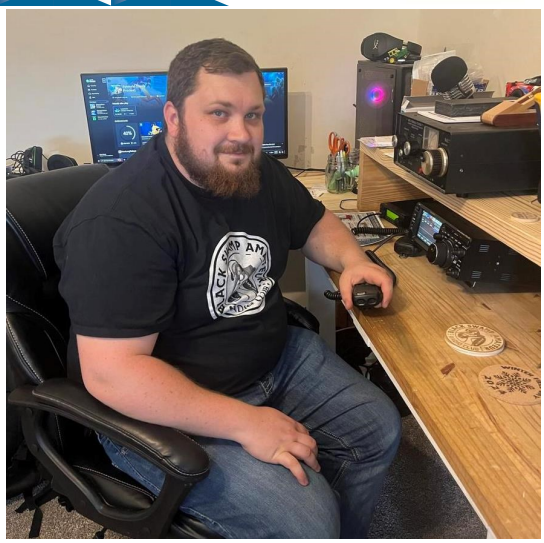
Amateurs in Action

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

Stuck in Death Valley



Caleb Gustwiller KD8TGB

On Friday 05 April 2024, Moritz Wacker KO6DZX and his family could not have picked a better weekend to take off and visit Death Valley National Park. After a five-hour road trip almost due north from their home in San Diego, the family made a campfire dinner and bedded down for the night. The next day brought a new adventure, as they started to explore Death Valley's wonders in their SUV. What they hadn't counted on was the mud that awaited them, and eventually Moritz got their vehicle stuck.

After numerous tries to get himself un-stuck, and being outside cell range, Moritz felt a small panic and decided to pull out his Xiegu G90 HF transceiver, connected it with some coax to a quarter-wave vertical, and tuned up on 10 meters. He started calling for help, asking whether anybody could pick up his signal. A fairly new ham, Moritz brought along his radio, in the off-chance that he could do a little contacting of his own. Now, it became a potential lifeline.

Across the country in Ohio, Caleb Gustwiller KD8TGB and Craig Rower KE8QJV, who live twenty miles from each other, picked up Moritz's distress call on 28.430 MHz. Other members of the Black Swamp Amateur Radio Club of Fayette, Ohio, also heard Moritz's faint signal, and posted the distress message on the POTA Facebook group. Others listening called the County Sheriff in Death Valley. More Facebook group members reached out to the National Parks Service police and alerted them.

Eventually, rangers found the family within a few hours of being alerted, and the Wackers made it back home safely that night. *It was an all-out effort from various locations*, said Caleb. *Without Caleb hearing this distress call*, said Craig, *it could have quickly become a very deadly situation for the operator and his family.*



Craig Rower KE8QJV

You can read more about the 10-meter rescue on the ARRL website and the BSARC website, and even a video on it.