

# Amateurs in Action

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



## Out-of-state contact

In the early afternoon of 15 July 2003, Walter Siebert K3KBR of Valley Lee, Maryland, started suffering serious chest pains, and called 911 right away. But his call was routed to the wrong place, so he tried calling again, and for some odd reason, he got routed to yet another wrong location. (The phone carrier reportedly had a hard time explaining what happened in those cases.)

With nobody else home at the time, Walter desperately resorted to the only remaining solution he could think of — his ham radio. He knew there was an occasional local ARES net on 3.947 MHz, so he tuned there and called to get somebody's attention.

*Help me...help me...I'm having a heart attack.*

About that moment, Larry Wheeler KG4RGN of Williamsburg, Virginia, started tuning in to the local ARES net. Larry was helping his work place, the [Surry Nuclear Power Station](#), monitor the net, when he heard Walter's call for help, from over a hundred miles away. Once Larry was confident that this wasn't a prank, he immediately asked everybody on the net to stand by while he cleared the frequency.

Larry had become licensed in January of the previous year, and in April of 2003, upgraded to General. Periodically, the nuclear power plant where he works holds emergency drills, and the local ARES net is invited to be part of that drill on HF. After collecting some vital information from Walter, Larry contacted his local 911 dispatcher, who eventually routed the call to the correct emergency officials up in Maryland. More than 90 minutes after Walter's first 911 attempt, his local ambulance came by and whisked him off to nearby St. Mary's Hospital, where doctors removed a blood clot, saving his life.



**Walter Siebert K3KBR**



**Larry Wheeler KG4RGN**

Walter lived with his son Martin at the time. *I wouldn't have been home for another three hours, Martin said. If it hadn't been for the guy on the radio, he'd be gone.* Larry said he's simply glad he was on the radio when he was. *I was in the right place at the right time,* reported Larry. *It's pretty amazing when you have this little black box that sits on your desk, and a wire on your roof, and you can talk to someone in Sweden or Africa. Or in this case, Maryland.*

And what equipment saved Walter's life? His son said he had an "old vacuum tube radio" connected to a wire antenna strung up between a couple of trees in Martin's back yard. A hundred watts and a wire.

You can read this story in the [Daily Press](#) and see the entry in the ARRL news compilation [The ARRL Letter](#).