

# Amateurs in Action

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



## We were stranded

In October 2015, Thomas (W8TAM) and Julie (K8VOX, now WT8J) Martin had traveled from their home in Ann Arbor, to the [Burned Dam State Forest Campground](#) in the Ottawa National Forest of the Michigan UP (Upper Peninsula). They had the entire campground to themselves, and eventually bedded down in the chilly UP air, gazing at the aurora display above.

*The next morning, we hopped in the car to warm up, and everything was fine, until a red error light came on the dash with a beep. It wasn't obvious what the light was for, so I looked in the manual. 'Electric power steering'. We decided to drive the car around the campground and see how it worked.... It made it around once, shifted to neutral, lit all the error lights up, and wouldn't go back into drive.*



*I had brought my Yaesu FT-2900R mobile radio, and a Comet CA-2x4SR 40" antenna on a mag mount. We had food, a water filter, and warmth, but no cell service...we were stranded. I keyed up the radio, and started looking for repeaters, (calling) 'CQ Emergency' three times, and waited. I waited a minute, and called again. This time, Geo Thurner W8FWG responded, and I explained our situation, and where we were. (Because of our scratchy signal), we used the phonetic alphabet to transfer all of that information, to make sure it was understood.*

Geo got hold of AAA, but the roadside service folks said that the Martins were too far outside their serviceable area to dispatch help. With that, Geo decided to initiate an emergency net, attempting to organize local hams to find somebody who can help the Martins. Through some relays, Geo got hold of Ted Trudgeon AA8YF, who answered the call, and said he should be at the campground in 25 minutes, then took off.

After one final transmission to Geo, the Martins' car battery finally died. They then turned to their second radio, a Baofeng BF-F8HP handheld. They couldn't hit the same repeater with the HT, even when they switched to the mobile antenna, but it could still receive. So, they were able to listen to the net while they awaited their rescue.

Later, it occurred to Thomas that they might be able to reach Ted on the repeater output, so he switched his Baofeng HT to reverse, and was able to reach him. The Martins guided Ted into their campsite, where Ted jumped their vehicle, and followed the Martins into a nearby town, so they could get their vehicle repaired.

Thomas said he was grateful to everybody who helped that day, to the repeater owner, and to Yaesu for making such a powerful mobile radio. He said that their "lessons learned" were to bring extra batteries, learn the phonetic alphabet, and practice using and running a net. Finally he said, *Listen to your radio, you never know when someone will use it to call for help.*

You can read this story on the [Battle Creek Emergency Services Michigan newsletter](#).