

# Living in the Past

*Historical perspective*



## Young women hams to the rescue

On 29 November 2007, the National Weather Service issued its first-ever hurricane-force wind warning for the Oregon coast. By 02 December, the second of three storm fronts had brought wind gusts up to 137 mph, and up to 14 inches of snow onto the Washington southwest coast. Named the [Great Coastal Gale of 2007](#), the storm was blamed for widespread record flooding and 18 deaths, one of the (perhaps three) largest storms to ever strike that area in recorded history.

Over 116,000 were without power for days. Numerous cell, broadcast, and amateur radio repeater towers were toppled or became inoperable. Land-line phone systems were damaged, allowing the ability to call only within their prefix, but without 911.

## An obscure LDS branch

Back up eight months. [President Norman Hansen](#) of the (LDS) Centralia Washington Stake had received some new preparedness pamphlets from the Church, which he distributed to his wards and neighboring stakes right away. Brian Felt, [President of the Long Beach Branch](#) (in the Rainier Oregon Stake), took the pamphlets seriously, and challenged the youth in his branch to obtain their amateur radio licenses, among other preparedness measures.

Turned out that many of the Young Women and two of their leaders took the counsel to heart and actually became licensed. They formed a branch net, and practiced their fun, new craft, not truly believing their hobby would actually turn into anything useful.

When the storm hit, men, both young and old, were called out to help with the cleanup effort, clearing roadways, removing heavy debris, and nailing tarps on roofs all over the county. The Relief Society operated the Distribution Center, giving aid to hundreds of families. The National Guard made it in to help, but much of the County emergency services could not.

Under the leadership of President Felt and the Young Women leaders, the Young Women set up a net and a schedule of operation to monitor ham radio traffic and relay messages to the County EOC (Emergency Operations Center) for days, all on simplex. Hundreds of families received assistance because of the coordination, and many loved ones made contact, as a result.

[Speaking later](#) about lessons learned in the aftermath of the storm, President Felt said, *Women and Young Women are incredible resources, capable of far more than traditional women's roles, when a disaster strikes.*

