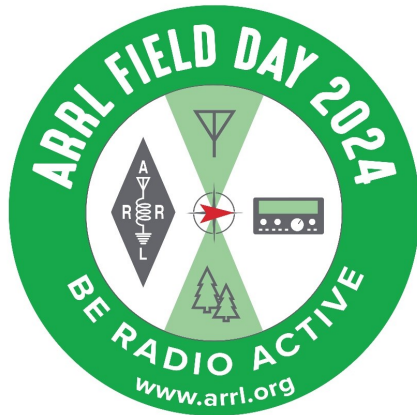


Strays – Field Day participation

Throughout the year, ham radio enthusiasts participate in a variety of activities, such as club meetings, nets, contesting, elmering, antenna-building, exams, and just plain chatting on the radio. But perhaps the largest annual amateur event, and the one many of us look forward to with eager anticipation, is **Field Day**.

On the fourth full weekend of June, those who participate descend on an agreed-upon location, set up their HF radio stations, and get on the air for 24 hours, at-

tempting to make as many contacts as possible with other participating hams across the nation. They log (or record) their contacts in software during that time, then submit their logs to the ARRL afterwards. A person can partici-



pate in Field Day alone, by using his or her own call sign, or with a club, using the club's call sign. And each participant can get on the air for a short time, or for the entire 24 hours.

The original purpose of Field Day, as established by **ARRL**, was to demonstrate emergency deployment readiness. Eventually, a system of points was developed, as an incentive to keep the station as primitive as possible. For example, extra points can be earned by working completely on emergency power, which means battery, generator, or solar. A Field Day location can be distant, in a nearby park, or right at home, with greater points awarded for setting up away from home. Also, part of the readiness demonstration is the requirement that the operators must



not set up their stations until a few hours before the official start of Field Day.

Operating an HF station is not the only activity available at Field Day, especially when people get involved as a club. There are many supporting tasks that need to be considered, such as securing permits, transportation of equipment, setting up, logging contacts, mentoring new hams or unlicensed folks, repairing antennas and coax, safety, publicity, tearing down, and food preparation, as applicable.

Field Day is not everybody's cup of tea, but it's one more potentially fun activity that can stretch and test our amateur radio abilities, and another way to get together with other hams and geek out. It's also a time many hams use as a goal to create and then test a new antenna, try out a new radio, or take advantage of the opportunity to get out of town and hear what many voices sound like, without all that city noise.

For example, say you've been wanting to try out your new solar panel, charge controller, and LiFePO₄ battery as a power source for your portable station, but the high level of noise from your house and those in your neighborhood make it nearly impossible to make a fair test. You don't have to wait for Field Day to check out your portable station power, but getting it out of town, and yet having a lot of nearby support, makes it easy for you to test your equipment.

Field Day challenges us to go just a little above and beyond what we normally do, in the name of readiness, and have fun in the process. At the end of it all, you pack up, go home, and submit your Field Day log of contacts in Cabrillo format. And who'll be the winner of this contest? You will be, for making the effort and having a great time!

