

Press Release - RACES Mountain District – Mile High Radio Club – December 2008



RACES – Mountain District – Mile High Radio Club
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Repeater Station WA6SSS 146.895 (-) pl 118.8



Officers - President: Tom Unwin WA6SSS, Vice President: Christy Huss KG6AVU, Secretary: Vi Hallacy K6VBH, Treasurer: Vi Hallacy K6VBH, **Board Members:** Bill Baker KN6JV, Rick Foster KG6TIJ, Chris Johnson KI6LOD, Bill Tell KD6KTV

Mile High Radio Club (MHRC) begins its 20th year of service – a year in review!

You may not be aware that this organization exists. The MHRC is very active and plays an important roll in our community. This past year is no exception. The club was formed in 1989 by a small group of individuals wanting the social contact and exchange of knowledge with others who were interested in amateur radio. They soon recognized the importance of amateur radio and the role radio communications could play in the event of disasters. Some time later, a fixed site repeater station (WA6SSS) was assembled on the Pine Cove Water District property where it remains today. This repeater site, due to the 6000 foot plus elevation, provides amateur radio communications to and from points as far away as San Diego and Santa Barbara. The club's core values are focused on emergency communications through their financial sponsorship of the Mountain District Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) organization and maintenance of the repeater.



The primary mission of Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) during an emergency and or disaster is to provide communication services that include the use of portable stations, either as a backup to established communications, or as a fill in where communications do not normally exist.

The Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a public service provided by a volunteer group of amateur radio operators that is directed by local, county and state emergency management agencies and operated under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the United States government. RACES provides radio communications during periods of local, regional or national civil emergencies. These emergencies are not limited to war related activities, but can include natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, wildfires, power outages, floods, victim searches, air crashes, and many others.

Here in California, the Mountain District RACES organization serves the areas of Idyllwild, Pine Cove, Fern Valley, Garner Valley, Poppet Flats and Pinyon Pines.

Election of 2009 MHRC Officers and Board Members were installed at the clubs November meeting.

Front row; Board Members Paul Miglin KG6TIL, Bill Baker KN6JV & Rick Foster KG6TIJ. Back row; Bill Tell KD6KTV, Chris Johnson KI6LOD, Treasurer & Secretary Vi Hallacy K6VBH, President Tom Unwin WA6SSS, Vice President Christy Huss KG6AVU. Bill Baker KN6JV also serves as Mountain District RACES Officer.



Monthly Meeting Schedule – MHRC & RACES – Mountain District

Meetings for both the Mile High Radio Club and Mountain District RACES are held at 6:30pm on the second Thursday of every month except December. They are held at the Idyllwild Fire Department Training Room. Anyone interested in learning about amateur radio and the services provided by RACES Mountain District is welcome to attend their meetings.

Portable “Field Ready” Repeater

MHRC has researched and assessed the needs for a field ready portable repeater system that can be deployed during an emergency. They are currently seeking donations to fund their efforts. Due to our local topography, radio communications are not able to reach all locations; we all notice this with our cell phones. With portable repeater systems, they can be placed in key locations quickly to cover areas that normal communications can't reach during times of emergency. The Mile High Radio Club is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. Donations can be mailed to PO Box 1204, Idyllwild, CA 92549.



Spring Challenge Mountain Bike Race – Idyllwild Cycling

The MHRC amateur radio operators have been with the Idyllwild Spring Challenge event from the beginning. This mountain bike course covers a wide range of terrain from 4,300 to 6,500 in elevation. MHRC radio operators provide the valuable communications network from several stations positioned over the entire 30 mile racecourse. The radio operators report back to Hurkey Creek base camp each of the rider's numbers and times as they pass through the stations. This is a professional event. The riders are racing for position and accurate score keeping is critical. Also, should a rider become injured a report would be relayed to base camp so medical aid could be deployed.

Riverside Emergency Animal Rescue System (REARS) Drill

Locally, the Mountain District RACES organization has participated with the Riverside Emergency Animal Rescue System REARS, the Moreno Valley RACES organization and Riverside County Office of Emergency Services during an exercise in Garner Valley. This drill placed teams in the field. Each team consisted of a driver, a partner and a RACES radio operator in a truck and horse trailer rig. Once the team left the command post shown here in the picture, they received their orders



from command center via a RACES radio operator. Assignments and destinations varied from team to team. Once a team was on site with the radioed address, the REARS volunteers retrieved further instructions pinned on the fence at location. When an assessment of the situation was made by the REARS volunteers, the message was relayed back to command via the RACES radio operator. During this operation, the teams in the field were being tracked via APRS, an Automatic Position Reporting System. This is a device that through amateur radio and the Global Positioning System (GPS), the Command Center was able to track the teams in the field, via a real time on a screen map. This is a great resource to have should field deployed teams find themselves in trouble and need to be located as a beacon is always being transmitted.



American Radio Relay League (ARRL) Field Day – A National Event

This annual event held on the fourth full weekend in June, and called "Field Day", is the climax of the week long "Amateur Radio Week" sponsored by the ARRL, the National Association for Amateur Radio. Using only emergency power supplies, the MHRC ham operators set up an emergency station along Highway 243 across from the site of the new Idyllwild Community Recreation Center.

Ham Radio operators across the country show off their emergency capabilities during this event. The news is full of reports of ham radio operators providing critical communications in emergencies world-wide. When trouble is brewing, ham radio people are often the first to provide critical information and communications.

Communication networks that ham radio operators can quickly create have saved many lives when other systems have failed or were overloaded. When all else fails ham radio works!

Fourth of July Parade – Idyllwild Rotary

Annually, the RACES Mountain District operators provide parade route communications and message transfer between the announcer stations. There are always last minute changes to a parade's order. This is a great communication skills builder, as it teaches the radio operators the art of message handling in a noisy environment.

Jazz in the Pines – Idyllwild Arts Foundation

A centrally located communications tent is set up for two full days at this event. Both the MHRC and Mountain District RACES Operators staff the tent. This event utilizes many volunteers performing many tasks, all of which need to communicate with one another. The communications tent is equipped with several radios, a separate radio frequency for Stage Director, Security, Medical (EMT), Parking, Ticket Sales and Logistics.



The MHRC and RACES operators take part by relaying messages between the various groups of volunteers. Throughout the two day event many messages are relayed between the various groups. Some of them involve the safety and welfare of the patrons. With the Riverside County Sheriff and IFPD EMTs on stand by, help is always nearby.

Fire Watch – US Forest Service

During times of Red Flag warnings, the Mile Radio Club and RACES are often activated for Fire Watch. Radio operators are assigned to strategic sites in the field depending on conditions and the requirements of local fire officials. Reports are radioed in from the field every half hour to a command post located at the Forest Service. Field radio operators are also equipped with portable weather meters, binoculars, topography maps and compasses allowing them to better report field conditions.



Idyllwild Health and Resource Fair – Help Center

Smokey the Bear was recently sighted on amateur radio during this year's Health and Resource Fair put on by the Help Center at the Idyllwild School. Both RACES Mountain District and the MHRC members displayed portable communications equipment and handed out literature to the public, educating them on the importance of amateur radio in their community.

The Great California Shakeout – US Geological Survey

Mountain District RACES operators participated during the Great California Shakeout. At 10am on November 13th, a mock earthquake took place measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale. Locally, RACES operators assessed their own situation both at home and at work and then answered up for roll call on the solar powered WA6SSS repeater. During roll call, Bill Baker KN6JV, District Officer, logged the status of his communication team. Once individual RACES operators were able to take assignments, they were sent to either IFPD or Station 23 in Pine Cove. Each of these locations is equipped with RACES Mountain District owned amateur band (2m, 1.25cm & 70cm) radios. These radios can reach both the Riverside County Office of Emergency Services and the OES located in Indio. The RACES operators relayed mock messages from the field back to Mountain RACES Command Center. Communications then were sent to both Riverside and Indio OES stations. A problem during this exercise was detected with the (WA6HYQ) repeater located on Santa Rosa Mountain that will need to be attended to. That is one of the purposes of a drill; to locate problems before a disaster occurs.

Mile High Radio Club Celebrates its 20th Year of Service - What to expect in 2009!!

Plans are being formed now for new activities. MHRC is also planning to conduct an amateur radio course (both Technician and General class's are being considered) during the first half of 2009. For those interested in obtaining their amateur radio license. Please call Bill Baker now to get on the list at 951-659-4366 and leave a message if he is not there.



You can certainly expect to see this active group of amateur radio operators participating in events in and around your community in the up-coming year. Want to learn more about this great organization? See what their plans are for the next year or are interested in joining, check them out (check often their web-site is constantly being updated) at www.milehighradioclub.org Membership applications plus many helpful tools and useful information about emergency communications are all located on their web-site. If you do not have a computer all information can be mailed to you as well, simply drop them a letter, their mailing address is; Mile High Radio Club, PO Box 1204, Idyllwild, CA 92549.

Credits – all articles and photos – MHRC and Mountain District RACES

Respectfully submitted, RACES Mountain District – Officer Bill Baker KN6JV
Vi Hallacy K6VBH & Bill Tell KD6KTV

Visit RACES & MHRC at www.milehighradioclub.org or e-mail mhrc@arrl.net
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