

Socorro Amateur Radio Association

"If it happens, it's news to us"

SARA News

www.socorroara.org

August 2011

MEETINGS

Minutes of the July Meeting

See http://www.socorroara.org/sara/minutes/110713_minutes.pdf.

The August Meeting

Wednesday, August 10, 2011 at 7:30 pm local, in the Socorro County Annex, 198 Neel Ave.

EVENTS

- **Alamogordo Hamfest** – September 3, 2011, in Alamogordo at the Otero County Fairgrounds starting at 7 AM till everyone is tired. Contact Dave Pote, AE5OV (ae5ov@arrl.net) or Jim O'Leary, N7DRB (n7drb@arrl.net). A flyer for this event is available at <http://www.socorroara.org/temp/Alamogordo%20Fest%202011.pdf>.
- **SARA/TARA Hamfest:** October 29, 2011

NETS

- **Weekly ARES net** at 20:00 hrs local on Wednesdays on the SARA Repeater [146.68(-) w/ 100 Hz tone].
- **NM Section ARES & RACES HF net** – First and third Sundays of each month. The net

Officers

President: Ray Calkins - N0RBT
Vice President: Eric Albrecht - W5VZB
Secretary: Brad Smith KD5JNI
Treasurer: Jim Lommen - KC7QY
Past President: James Boswell - KA5SIW
SARA News Editor: David Johnson - KB5YIW

provides a forum to discuss Amateur Radio support of all types of emergency communications including MARS, SAR, CAP, public service events. Meet at the Socorro County EOC at 16:30 hrs MST.

Gatherings, gatherings –

- Everyone is invited to coffee every Saturday ~08:00 to 09:30 hrs at McDonalds.

ARES REPORT

During the month of June the Socorro Amateur Radio Association's Amateur Radio Emergency Services committee was active again. During the month of June we had our normal 2 meter nets on Wednesday evenings at 8:00PM on the SARA repeater 146.680 -100, except for the 2nd Wednesday which was the SARA meeting night. With the three 2 meter net nights we had a total of 34 check ins, and on the 1st & 3rd Sunday night HF nets we had a total of 11 check ins from Socorro county ARES. On the 25th of this month we had "Field Day" with a group of 20 persons working the airwaves out of Clark Field, 8 of which are ARES members, and the "Knot hole gang" working the airwaves out at Datil Wells. For those of you that don't know, Clark Field used to be called "Lions Field" because the Socorro Lions Club

SARA Repeater

The Socorro Amateur Radio Association supports a VHF repeater located on Socorro Peak immediately west of Socorro. The repeater and autopatch are "open" and the autopatch is accessed/terminated using "*/#". Local emergency service can be reached by keying "911."

146.68 (-)
100 or 123 Hz required
123 Hz on output

- See You At The Meeting -

- Have you used the SARA repeater today? -

donated the land and lights to the city for a park. Good work ARES people (Vern Leavitt KD5UHB).

SARA NEWS

This will be my last issue as editor of *SARA News*. After he assumed the presidency of SARA in May 2006, Vern Leavitt asked me to return as editor so that *SARA News* could be resurrected. I shared Vern's view that the newsletter was central to a sense of community and a means to more effectively bind the membership together. Vern (and later Prescott Grey) recognized that SARA consisted of committed amateur radio operators, only a few of whom would attend meetings to know what was going on. How those not attending would be kept in the loop was critical. Years earlier I had hoped that the SARA web pages would serve some of this function. The fact is that few members take the initiative to search out Association information. It has to be **delivered** to be more reliably assimilated.

While the newsletter had been dependably published since the revival of the Association in September of 1989, in the two years prior to Vern's election in 2006, it had appeared less frequently, finally disappearing all together. This interval marked the culmination of a dramatic decline in SARA membership, to the point where we had few identified members and little in the way of activities - just monthly meetings. It was not unusual to have meetings attended by as many officers as members. I won't insist that the recovery experienced by SARA under the leadership of Vern and Prescott Grey was solely due to *SARA News*. They instituted many other practices that were central to those successes, but each month Vern and Prescott contributed a column for that issue. This was that critical link to those members who did not regularly attend. For all members, the columns served the important function of setting the course ahead, bringing all of the membership along for the ride. I don't know this, but I suspect that knowing that a column had to be written might have caused these presidents to give some thought to those directions.

Quite aside from the fact that I am burned out after assembling 87 newsletters over seven plus years, I have become frustrated by the fact that when I sit down to 'assemble' the newsletter, each month, I

am almost entirely pulling filler from the *ARRL Letter*, *Amateur Radio Newslines* and online sources for jokes - material already available to our membership. A request for member contributions has appeared on the last page of the newsletter since 2006. With important exceptions (contributions from Bill Brundage, Vern Leavitt and Jon Spargo), if local content was included, it was written by me. I signed on to edit, not report. A year ago, in the August 2010 edition of *SARA News*, I shared my growing frustration. I can't say whether anyone reads *SARA News*. I'm not much interested in reading what I've been putting into recent issues.

I don't know what the future of *SARA News* is. If it is to survive, *SARA News* needs an editor who can provide an infusion of new ideas and enthusiasm. If you are interested in taking on this responsibility, please let the president know. Publishing the newsletter is only a chore when there is nothing to include. Whether *SARA News* remains a monthly undertaking, moves to quarterly or disappears altogether, is really up to the Association and that person willing to take on the responsibility (Dave Johnson, KB5YIW).

NEWS FROM THE ARRL

New Mexico Hams Provide Communications Support During Wildfires: One month after it began, the Las Conchas Fire - New Mexico's largest fire on record - has burned almost 157,000 acres and is 90 percent contained. The fire, which began on June 26, is believed to have been human set. The next day, the fire threatened the Los Alamos National Laboratory, forcing the evacuation of the entire town of Los Alamos. The American Red Cross established two shelters, one in Pojoaque and another in Espanola, both north of Santa Fe. During the evacuation, the Santa Fe ARES® (SFARES) Group placed itself on alert.

On June 28, the American Red Cross requested communication support at the two shelters due to a lack of landline telephones in the shelters, as well as poor cell phone coverage and quality. The New Mexico State Emergency Operations Center activated the Santa Fe and Los Alamos ARES® Groups that morning. It requested the SFARES®

- Encourage a friend to join SARA -

Group to establish a communication post at the shelter in Pojoaque, while the Los Alamos ARES® (LAARES) Group was asked to establish a similar capability at the Espanola shelter. Both communication posts were directed to utilize the VHF 2 meter repeater (146.82 MHz) on Tesuque Peak. This repeater allowed both Shelter communication posts to communicate with each other, as well as with the State EOC, south of Santa Fe.

SFARES members responded to the activation and established a communication post within 45 minutes of the activation. SFARES members developed a continuing watch that was manned from 7 AM until 10 PM. Although the start and stop times varied a little based on Red Cross requirements, SFARES members maintained the communication post until July 2 when it was placed in a standby status by the State EOC. The LAARES Group maintained the same continuing watch at the Espanola shelter. During the activation, LAARES members were also displaced from their homes, due to the mandatory evacuation from Los Alamos.

“While message traffic normally concerned health and welfare and originated by the Red Cross, there were requests from the State EOC and from the Incident Commanders staff,” said SFARES Emergency Coordinator Don Hinsman, N4VIP. “All traffic was logged according to normal ARES® procedures and responses to all requests were obtained. Due to external demands on LAARES members, SFARES Group members augmented the Espanola shelter.”

Hinsman, along with ARRL State Assistant Section Manager Bill Boedecker, NM5BB, and ARRL Santa Fe and San Miguel County District Emergency Coordinator William Beardsley, KE5ZAV, found they needed digital transfer capability between the Pojoaque shelter and the State EOC.

“On June 30, Alex Kent, NM5AK, utilized the VHF 2 meter repeater on Pajarito Peak to transfer test messages to and from the shelter to the State EOC using MT-63 mode in FLDIGI and FLMSG,” Hinsman told the ARRL. “All test messages were received with 100 percent copy. The Pajarito Peak repeater is located within the active fire boundary of the Las Conchas Fire. This repeater functioned continuously during the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000.

It is powered by solar panels and is not susceptible to landline power losses. Pajarito Peak is one of five repeaters maintained by the Santa Fe Amateur Radio Club (SFARC); the Tesuque Peak repeater is another. SFARC members noticed a less than optimum performance on Tesuque Repeater, so Alan Hill, N5BGC, and John Spiess, KB5ZQE, went to Tesuque Peak on July 2 to repair the SFARC repeater system. The repeater had 20 W forward and 10 W reflected, which is not acceptable. They replaced a 50 foot section of coax, resulting in a new reading of 20 W forward and 0 W reflected. This repair was coordinated through the State EOC during the communication support. No loss of communications was experienced during the repair and a better repeater was available after the repair.”

As of July 26, the Las Conchas fire had destroyed 63 homes and 49 outbuildings. On July 23, a National Incident Management Team (NIMO) took over management of the Las Conchas fire suppression efforts from the Northern Rockies National Incident Management Team. “The NIMO Team will continue management of the Las Conchas fire and assigned resources until the fire is declared contained,” the US Forest Service declared on its Las Conchas Fire website. “The fire has been divided into four branches and local fire suppression resources from the ranger districts, Bandelier National Monument, and Valles Caldera National Preserve will form Task Forces of firefighters, engines and water tenders. Each Branch will continue to mop-up hot spots, patrol the fire perimeter, and complete remaining fireline suppression rehabilitation.” More than 130 people have been involved in fighting the fire. According to the USFS, four helicopters, 18 fire engines, two water tankers and three bulldozers are assisting in fighting the fire.

“The response by LAARES and SFARES Groups is another excellent example of how Amateur Radio operators provide support in times of emergency,” Hinsman said. The following hams helped provide communications support: K5RVR, K5SDC, K5YDX, KB5ZQE, KD5IRG, KD8QAQ, KE5ZAV, KJ5KU, KM5HH, N4VIP, N5BGC, N5EYS, N5UJT, N5XDF, N6ZZT, NM5AK, NM5BB, NM5RW, W4KYM and W5UO (ARRL Letter, 7/26/2011).

SARA News by Email?

Many SARA Members elect to receive their *SARA News* by email rather than in the mail. There are advantages for you and SARA if you elect to do this. You see *SARA News* faster and SARA saves paper and postage. If you would like to receive the newsletter via email, send a request to kb5yiw@arrl.net

Submissions to SARA News

Contributions and photos related to SARA and amateur radio are solicited for inclusion in *SARA News*. Text should be on the order of 200 to 300 words. Each month ham related ads to buy, sell or trade may be included. Material will be included on a space available and pretty much at the discretion of the editor. To be assured of consideration for the next newsletter, material must be received by the 25th day of the month. I would prefer to have submissions in digital form with text in the form of an ascii file or as text in an email message. Send email to kb5yiw@arrl.net. (D. Johnson -ed.)

Join/Renew Your SARA Membership

Are you a member? When does your membership expire? If you are reading this from a newsletter sent to you via U.S. Mail, take a look at the mailing label. Your membership expiration date is listed on the bottom line of the label. A list of SARA members and their expiration dates is also available online at socorroara.org/members.html. Newsletters will continue to be sent for a month or so after expiration just in case you haven't had a chance to check your expiration date. If you do not receive your newsletter by mail you might check the membership list on the SARA web page. The address is <http://socorroara.org/members.html>.

If you are a member seeking to renew or a ham new to the Socorro area, joining SARA is easy and inexpensive. Download a membership application (from www.socorroara.org/SARAform.html) and send it with a check for \$15 (\$20 for family memberships) to: Socorro Amateur Radio Association, 722 N. California St., Socorro, NM 87801 or drop by the Socorro Radio Shack and say that you would like to join.