



RADIO-ACTIVE!

December 15, 2025, Volume 4, Issue 11

ACTIVATIONS!

November became a very busy month with two very different activations. The first was assisting with the Second Harvest Food Bank food distribution in collaboration with the Community Emergency Response team (CERT) and other volunteer organizations. The second was with Santa Cruz County Search and Rescue and multi-agency response search effort for missing person, Jeanne Burke.

The primary goal of our food distribution events was to efficiently and safely guide the public through two drive-through locations: the Santa Cruz Boardwalk and the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds. With approximately ten days' notice, we successfully recruited volunteers in advance. ARES members contributed a total of 45 hours at the Boardwalk and 28 hours at the Fairgrounds. Our volunteers utilized Multi-use Radio Service (MURS) radios for effective communication. Both events were scheduled to start at 4 pm and last 3–4 hours.

At the Boardwalk, we anticipated serving around 1,000 vehicles. However, limited event promotion and weather conditions resulted in only about 250 distributions.

In contrast, the Fairgrounds event expected 3,000 vehicles and experienced an overwhelming early turnout. This turnout led to significant traffic congestion on the roads approaching the Fairgrounds. We began nearly 30 minutes early and ran out of food 2.5 hours later. Many of our volunteers were delayed due to the traffic and staffing was in constant flux to make it work.



Fairgrounds—Awaiting distribution

Despite the challenges, our volunteers demonstrated flexibility and commitment, ensuring the success of both distributions.

Continue reading on next page for our second activation.



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Boardwalk Briefing



Command Post—MURs Antenna

Santa Cruz County ARES Purpose

- The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment with their local ARES leadership for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes
- We are not fire fighters or police or sheriff's officers. We are volunteers who care about our communities by using our emergency communication skills.
- Before volunteering in an emergency we first take care of ourselves, our family, and our home.
- We value every member's contributions, irrespective of license class, years of experience, or the price tag of equipment.



Dan N6R1X viewing Caltopo Map

ARES Supports SAR in Search for A Missing Person

Roberta, AJ6KN; Andrew, N6AAG

On November 19, 2025, John N6QX, our District Emergency Coordinator, received a mid-afternoon request from Santa Cruz County's Search and Rescue (SAR) for communications support during the search effort for Jeanne Burke, a missing 73-year-old woman from Felton. Initially, Roberta AJ6KN joined the SAR team deployed in Bonny Doon to coordinate efforts, while John reached out to ARES members for assistance.



SAR Briefing

Mission Purpose

Our objective was to strengthen SAR's communications so every available resource could be deployed in the field.

Collaboration and Impact

ARES worked for five days alongside SAR teams from multiple counties, the Santa Cruz County Sheriffs, and the National Guard, who provided tracking and text messaging support. The gratitude from SAR and the Sheriffs was immense, and the experience offered valuable lessons in a real-world deployment. With new insights, Roberta plans to be more proactive in future operations, quickly gathering critical information and assessing available resources, including those offered by the National Guard.

As part of the lessons learned from our volunteers, we now have three public service radios available for deployment with agencies and are planning exercises to identify optimal operational locations for vulnerable neighborhoods like Bonny Doon.

Another lesson learned was having alternative and redundant mapping systems for our ARES volunteers. Cell phone coverage was very spotty in this rugged terrain. Having off-line maps accessible for the operators was important when requests to relocate their station in the dark came up. Each of the ARES volunteers came away with at least one other lesson learned.

By the Numbers

- ▶ **ARES Operators Involved:** 16
- ▶ **Total Radio Support Hours:** 210+
- ▶ **Operators:** Andrew N6AAG, Christian AC3T, Dan N6R1X, Debra KM6HGI, Ed N6EMA, Glen AK6FM, Jim KN6NCG, John N6QX, JoMarie KM6URE, Lisa KN6IAB, Mike K9VF, Pete KN6TYR, Roberta AJ6KN, Susan WA6OCV, Tammy KG6DQW, Tom KO6BTX.

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Report your volunteer hours!

The reported volunteer hours for November was 786 hours. Total so far for year has been 6207 hours. Please remember to enter your hours on the form on <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>

Reporting the time you spend on ARES and ham radio activities reminds county public safety managers that we're around and ready to serve in time of need.

Holiday Party Recap

Our holiday party was held Sunday December 7 at the Santa Cruz Sheriff's Posse House. We had a great turn out with good food and cheer. Below are just some pictures. Check out K6BJ.org for more pictures.



Resources

- Website:
<https://xczcomm.com/>
- Reporting volunteer hours:
<https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
- Upcoming events:
<https://xczcomm.com/index.php/calendar-of-events/>
- Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ARES-of-Santa-Cruz-County-Ca-296232310799866>
- Facebook group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/431308973875528>
- PIO Articles:
<https://arrlsantaclaravalley.org/news/> or
<https://xczcomm.com/index.php/news/>
- XCZ Comm You Tube:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHZH8TUSgh4SqHTPXSWolPA>
- Submitting deployment documents:
send in PDF form to
EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov
- Submitting personal information such as DSW application, personal data update, education certificates:
email to
EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov

SAR—continued

Day-by-Day Highlights

Day 1:

Organized by John N6QX, ten ham radio operators arrived on-scene just as it was getting to be dusk at the Bonny Doon Command Post at the Martin Fire Station (aka Station 32). SAR requested two operators for the Sheriff's Communications van at the command post and two teams assisting in the field relaying communications. These two relay locations were near a possible sighting of the missing person was reported.

Initially, the Moore Ranch and Back Ranch Relay teams used public service radios and the local ham repeater, W6TUW. However, with the challenges of communications in the terrain and weather permitting, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was able to dispatch one of their aircraft, with a tactical call of High Bird, to provide relay communications needed between the field teams and the command post. Communications included health and welfare checks of the search teams, reassigning the search teams to different locations, search team transportation requests back to the command post, gate access codes, and messages about items found in the search. Logging the team communications was important to know where each team was at any point in time. MURS radios were used to speak with the SAR Command staff who were located in another van at the fire station.

On this day, there were about 30 search teams in the field, with each team averaging two to four volunteers. Some teams included dogs and while others were using drones to aid in the search. Teams searched for about 10 hours in the dark this first evening until some safety concerns arose after reporting some coyote sightings and terrain challenges.

Days 2-3:

Glen AK6FM served as Pineridge Relay and back-up for High Bird, after attaching a SAR (public service) radio to his home antenna. Routine traffic, transport needs, and assignments were relayed throughout the day. Pineridge Relay was able to hear only about 30% of the traffic and so Glen stood down at the end of day.

Day 4:

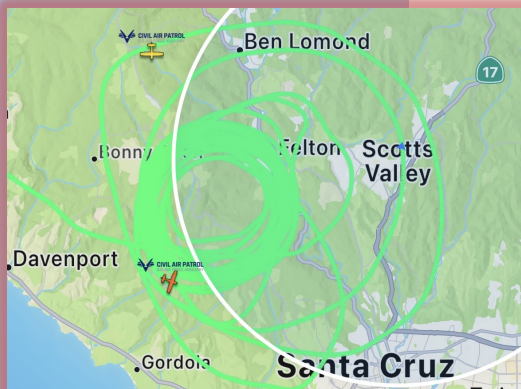
ARES volunteers continued relaying traffic, including a head-injured mountain biker a search team came upon. Thanks to the proximity of another search team with a RN volunteer and Life Flight availability, the cyclist received timely care.

Day 5:

The Civil Air Patrol could not dispatch an aircraft at the beginning of the day because of fog at the airport. So, Dan, N6RJX was dispatched to a field location above the search teams and was another communications relay point.



Tammy KG6DQW; Mike K9VF; George CAP; Dan N6RJX;
Jim KN6NCG; Roberta AJ6KN



Civil Air Patrol Flight Pattern



Dan N6RJX; Pete KN6TYR; Tom KO6BTX

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SAR—Continued

The Pineridge relay was relocated to Dennis and Susan Mason's location, hosts of the W6TUW repeater. High Bird resumed operations once weather permitted. Notable incidents included a smoke sighting near the Bonny Doon Airstrip and a drone spotting a red object, later identified as a mylar balloon. At one point, High Bird had to take evasive action from an interfering small aircraft.

The operation ended at the end of the day with SAR planning to review the searched locations data and identify if there were any locations overlooked and re-search any locations.

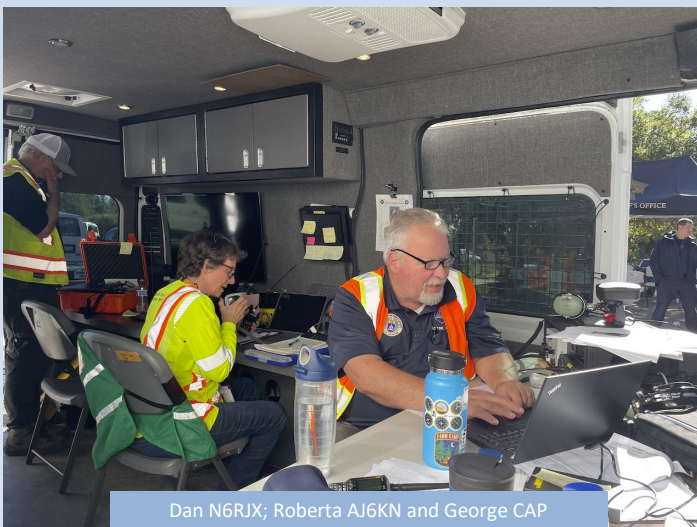
Community Support and Recognition

It was impressive to experience the amount of volunteer time and effort that was given to this search. All were wishing for a great outcome but at this time there has not been any finding but one continues to hope.

A special shout-out to 3rd District Supervisor Justin Cummings, who allocated \$5,000 from the "cup tax" to the Bonny Doon Firesafe Council. These funds enabled the W6TUW repeater antenna to be raised to 60 feet, greatly improving radio coverage for the area. Also, our ARES volunteers were very supportive of each other. Special thanks to Lisa KN6IAB for providing accommodations for Roberta AJ6KN during the deployment.

Santa Cruz Voice's COMMUNITY MATTERS, a local weekly internet radio show features guest interviews to discuss topics of interest to the Santa Cruz Community. On Friday, 11/28/25 Roberta AJ6KN and Pete KN6TYR were interviewed about the activation. You can listen to show by clicking here: - scroll down to 11/28/25:

[Community Matters – Santa Cruz Voice](#)



Dan N6RJX; Roberta AJ6KN and George CAP

Equipment available to loan

Santa Cruz Communications Support have made **FOUR** kits available for loaning to allow ham operators participate in a deployment or to trial a different setup. Two kits are for a vehicle deployment and includes mobile dual-band radio, mag mount antenna, battery and knee-board. The other two kits are for stationary outdoor deployments and includes the vehicle kit with additional supplies of a tripod antenna, lighting, and pop-up. Contact either John, N6QX, Roberta, AJ6KN, Stephen, KM6NEP or Dan, N6RJX for arrainging for check out.

2026 SCC ARES Events

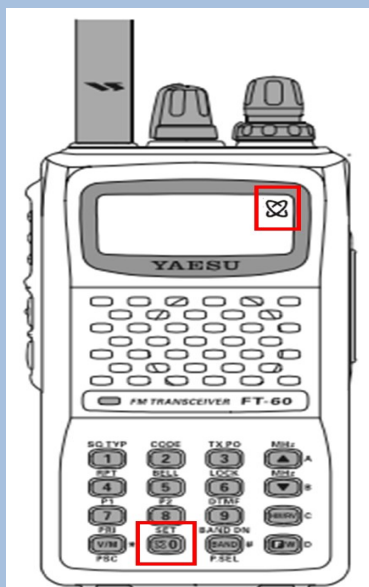
Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date?	Description
May 17, 2026	Strawberry Fields Forever Bike Ride	Approximate	Strawberry Fields Forever is an annual benefit bike ride through some of the most beautiful regions of Santa Cruz County. ARES provides comms between rest stops and SAG vehicles.
June 2nd or 3rd week, 2026	Santa Cruz Regional Active Shooter and Casualty Care Response Training	Approximate	This event is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's department and provides first responder training for an active shooter. ARES along with CERT provides perimeter monitoring in maintaining a closed event location.
July 4, 2026	Aptos 4th of July Parade	Approximate	We provide monitoring of the public to provide information to the Sheriffs
8/16/2026 (est)	Race through the Redwoods	Approximate	Race through the Redwoods is a 10K foot race that starts and finishes at Roaring Camp but the majority traverses the redwoods in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. It is promoted by the Felton Business and Community Association. ARES provides monitoring of runners positions and safety for the organizers.
9/20/2026 (est)	Santa Cruz Triathlon	Approximate	Santa Cruz Triathlon is a non-profit that donates proceeds to various athletic programs in the county. ARES provides monitoring of participants positions and safety for the organizers.
October 30, 2026 (est) 1530 - 2030	Halloween Trunk or Treat 5200 Soquel Ave, Santa Cruz	Approximate	Trunk of Treat is organized by the Santa Cruz Sheriffs. ARES provides monitoring of participants along with closed road staffing and shuttle parking location.

2026 Other Radio Events for Ham Operator Participation

Date	Event	Approx. or confirmed date?	Description
Each Wednesday 10am - 12pm	Loft Coffee 2701 Cabrillo College Dr, Aptos		Gathering of general interest, sharing of ideas, getting some elmer help
2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month 10am	C.A.K.E. @ Loft Coffee 2701 Cabrillo College Dr, Aptos		C.A.K.E. = Coffee/Caffeine Assisted Knowledge Exchange. Gathering of general interest, sharing of ideas, getting some elmer help
1st Saturday of each month [12/6/25, 1/3/26] 10am - 2pm	POTA	Approximate	Play radio at a scenic park near by. Not formal and any mode can be used. Emails sent prior to event to indicate the specific park.
January 24 - 25, 2026	Winter Field Day	Confirmed	Located at the Posse House on the Ocean Street Extension. Lots of radio demonstrations being planned along with an exercise.
April 16 - 19, 2026	Sea Otter Classic	Confirmed	Large scale bicycle event that takes place at the Laguna Seca Raceway and Park, Monterey
April 26, 2026	Big Sur International Marathon	Confirmed	Point to Point foot race/run along Highway 1 from Big Sur to Carmel. Ham radio operators provide communications along the route.

'Disabling' WIRES

1. Verify radio is unlocked.
To unlock—Long press #6
2. Press the F/W key (lower right button) then immediately press the 0 key to enter the menu mode.
3. Rotate the Dial knob to menu 23 – INT MR.
4. Press the F/W key then rotate the Dial knob to select a memory (d1 through d9) that is empty, i.e. it contains •••••• (six dots) = no tone.
5. Press the F/W key to store the setting.
6. Rotate the Dial knob to menu 21 – I NET.
7. Press the F/W key then rotate the Dial knob to select INT.MEM.
8. Press the F/W key to store the setting.
9. Press the PTT button to exit the menu mode.



Yaesu WIRES

(A repeat article from July 2024—it is left here as a resource)

So, you bought yourself the Santa Cruz County ARES recommended Yaesu FT-60 handi-talkie. You programmed it to our frequencies. Then you start participating in Nets and events. And you try to transmit. Either you are not heard at all or the first part of your transmission is cut off. Net control asks for a repeat of the information but this time hears a DTMF tone at the beginning of your transmission. Net control or other listeners may chime in and state the station (you) has “Wires” turned on. How did that happen? *Very easily.* Most of us have experienced this phenomenon with this radio.

Yaesu’s WIRES stands for **W**ide-coverage **I**nternet **R**epeater **E**nhancement **S**ystem. It is an internet communication system that allows amateur radio repeaters to connect over Voice over IP (VoIP). WIRES uses DTMF signaling to connect, so any radio with a DTMF encoding keypad can be used to establish an internet link.

When your radio sends out the DTMF tone, it simultaneously mutes your voice audio (or lowers it significantly). That’s why Net Control and the rest of the Net can’t hear you!

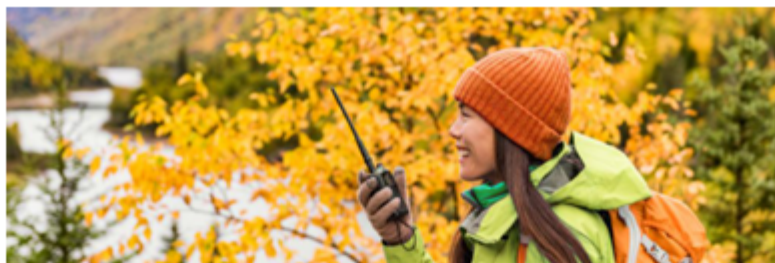
When you are saying your call sign, the radio has muted or lowered your voice signal. Additionally, most repeaters automatically mute the audio when they hear DTMF tones, cutting off the user. The person making the transmission generally has no idea this is happening other than a small, easy to miss indication on their display.

WIRES is a feature that is well used elsewhere but has had challenges in getting a foothold in the US. According to some, the introduction of Echolink or Allstar may have influenced this.

On the FT-60R, which uses WIRES-II technology (and not the current X version), the key that is used to turn on WIRES is the “0 Set” key, located on the bottom row, second from the left (see diagram to left). Press it momentarily to turn WIRES on (or off). You might do this by accident if you want to enter Set mode and forget to first hit F/W key. You can tell WIRES is on if the small ‘atom’ symbol appears in the top right corner of the display. When participating with an event, we encourage locking your radio after setting your frequencies for the event and verifying the WIRES is not active.

If you do not plan on using this feature consider an alternative way of handling it by following the steps in the left-hand column. After performing the steps, it’s still possible to ‘activate’ the WIRES and the symbol will appear, *but it will not send tones over the air and mute your audio!*

Please share with your friends and neighbors!



FREE Ham Radio Class – Starts 2/19/26 for 7 weeks

Get Your FCC Amateur Radio License in Just 6 Weeks – No Experience Needed!

Are you interested in getting your ham radio Technician's license? Our free class will cover the basics—from how radios work, to making your first contact, and understanding licensing requirements. Family friendly with lots of slides, hands-on equipment demonstrations, discussion and connections with other ham radio operators.

- **Instructor:** Bob Fike, KO6XX & Team; Kathi Fike, Dan Selling & Roberta Roberts
- **Date:** 2/19/26 through 3/26/26 – “Now What Do I do” class on 4/2/26 after Testing
- **Time:** 7:00 to 9:00 pm weekly
- **Location:** Santa Cruz County EOC (Emergency Operations Center)
5200 Soquel Avenue; Santa Cruz, CA 95062
- **Testing:** Testing date to be discussed in class
- **“Now What Do I Do” Class:** The Thursday after your testing we will program recommended radios, go over radio etiquette and discuss next steps to “getting on the air”!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ARRL Ham Radio License Manual – Technician: <https://www.amazon.com/ARRL-Ham-Radio-License-Manual/dp/1625951558>
- A free online study tool: <https://hamstudy.org/>
- Enthusiasm and curiosity – no electronics knowledge needed – we start from scratch!

HOW TO REGISTER - Limited to 25 students so register early!

Scan the QR code below or visit <https://bit.ly/ham26>



Questions? Email Roberta Roberts, AJ6KN, Admin for Bob at roberta@slvares.com
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