



Radio-Active!

August 17, 2026, Volume 5 Issue 8

Summer Potluck Draws High Attendance and Strengthens ARES Community

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) summer potluck, held on July 15th, proved to be an outstanding success this year, drawing an impressive turnout and demonstrating the value of combining camaraderie with community engagement. In place of the regularly scheduled membership meeting, members gathered for an evening that focused on building relationships, sharing experiences, and enjoying good food together.

One of the primary reasons for the strong attendance was the relaxed and welcoming atmosphere on a nice summer evening at Skypark in Scotts Valley. While regular membership meetings are essential for conducting business and discussing operational matters, the summer potluck offered members an opportunity to connect on a more personal level. Operators who are often heard only over the airwaves had the chance to sit down face-to-face, exchange stories, and strengthen friendships that are at the heart of our organization.

The potluck format also encouraged broad participation. Members contributed a variety of homemade dishes (did I say pasta salad), desserts, and refreshments, creating a diverse and enjoyable meal that reflected the generosity and spirit of the group. Sharing food naturally fostered conversation and provided a casual setting where newer members could comfortably meet experienced operators and learn more about ARES activities.

The event also served as a well-deserved break from routine. Throughout the year, ARES members dedicate countless hours to training, public service events, emergency preparedness exercises, and community support activities. The potluck provided a chance to relax, celebrate accomplishments, and recognize the collective efforts that keep the organization strong and ready to serve.

The enthusiastic turnout at this year's summer potluck clearly demonstrated that members value opportunities to connect beyond formal meetings. As ARES continues its mission of service and preparedness, events like this help strengthen the bonds that make our organization resilient, welcoming, and ready to answer the call when our communities need us most.

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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 contribution, irrespective of license class, years of experience, or the price tag of equipment.

Summer Potluck - continued



Report your volunteer hours!

ARES volunteers reported **136 hours in July** (without a reminder being sent), highlighting our continued commitment to training, preparedness, and community service.

Reporting your hours does more than track activity—it demonstrates to county public safety managers that ARES is active, dependable, and ready to serve when needed. Logged volunteer time helps maintain our visibility and reinforces the value of amateur radio in emergency response. Please remember to report all ARES and ham radio–related activities, no matter how small.

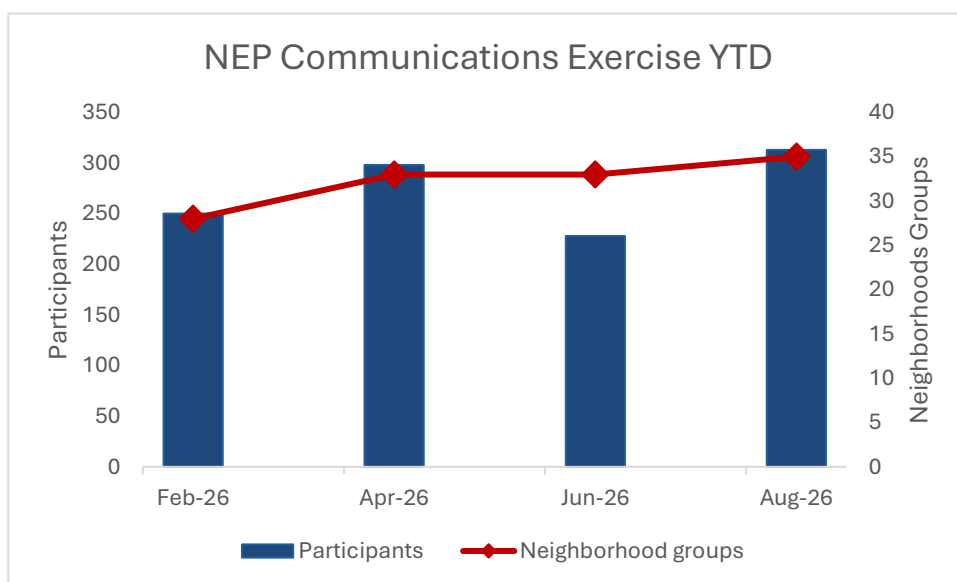
Enter your hours here: <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
Every hour tells our story. Let us keep it visible.

NEP Communications exercise

On Monday, August 3, the airwaves came alive once again for the Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness (NEP) communications exercise. This every-other-month exercise continues to grow in popularity, with more neighborhoods wanting to participate.

At the start of the exercise, bulletins containing the test message were announced several times on three repeaters: WR6AOK, K6BJ, and W6TUW. Ham radio operators then reported back with neighborhood tallies showing how many messages were received.

This was the second time the group used this format, and it appears to be an efficient way to conduct the drill. Watch for the next scheduled event and consider joining in with your neighborhood.



Resources

- Website: <https://xczcomm.com/>
- Reporting volunteer hours: <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ARES-of-Santa-Cruz-County-Ca-296232310799866>
- Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/431308973875528>
- PIO Articles: <https://arrlsantaclara.valley.org/news/> or <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/news/>
- Submitting personal information such as DSW application, personal data update, education certificates, PDFs of deployment documents: email to EOC.ARES@santacruz.ca.gov
- Santa Cruz Communications Support offers four loaner kits for ham operators: two for vehicle deployment (mobile dual-band radio, mag mount antenna, battery, kneeboard) and two for stationary outdoor use (vehicle kit plus tripod antenna, lighting, and pop-up). To borrow a kit, contact John (N6QX), Roberta (AJ6KN), Stephen (KM6NEP), or Dan (N6RJX).

RFI: Making Good Neighbors

How one ham radio operator turned an interference problem into a cooperative neighborhood success story



Low-pass filters, example shown above, are used to transparently pass high frequency signals while blocking or attenuating frequency components above a specific cutoff frequency.



Radio Frequency Interference, or RFI, is one of those challenges most ham radio operators hope they never have to face especially when the problem shows up in a neighbor's home. But as Rusty, N6WSM, recently reminded us, RFI can also be an opportunity to practice patience, good research and engineering, and good neighborly communication.

After adding an end-fed half-wave antenna to his station, Rusty discovered that his transmissions were being heard through a neighbor's stereo system. His first instinct was reasonable: try a low-pass filter on his Yaesu FT-101B and consider whether the antenna orientation could be improved. Fortunately, the neighbors were curious, friendly, and willing to help. That cooperation made all the difference.

The technical discussion that followed quickly shifted the focus from the transmitter to the equipment receiving the interference. Several experienced hams pointed out that, in many cases, the station is not the real source of the problem. Instead, household wiring, speaker leads, control cables, and audio equipment can act like unintended antennas. Once RF enters poorly protected equipment, it can be detected and amplified as audio.

Rusty's approach was a model worth repeating. He did not start by assigning blame. He listened carefully, gathered information, and kept the conversation constructive. The neighbor was technically minded and interested in solving the problem, which allowed both households to work together rather than against each other.

Continued on next page.

RFI – continued

That mindset matters. RFI problems can easily become emotional because they affect people in their own homes. A calm explanation, a willingness to help, and a focus on practical fixes can preserve relationships while leading to better technical results.

The biggest lesson was that a low-pass filter is not always the best first solution. Low-pass filters can be useful in specific transmitter-related situations, but modern RFI complaints involving audio systems often occur because cables connected to the victim equipment are picking up RF. In those cases, the better solution is usually to *reduce RF current on the affected cables*.



Ferrites are ceramic magnetic components made from iron oxide and other metal oxides. In electronics and ham radio, they act as frequency-dependent resistors or magnetic cores that suppress unwanted radio frequency interference (RFI), build efficient RF transformers, and construct baluns or inductors

Ferrites were the central tool. The advice from experienced operators was to use the right ferrite material, especially Fair-Rite Type 31 for HF and lower-VHF suppression work. Multiple turns through a suitable toroid are often far more effective than a single snap-on bead, because the added turns increase the common-mode impedance.

Speaker wiring was another important discovery. Long speaker leads can behave like antennas, especially when they are run as parallel conductors. Replacing ordinary parallel speaker wire with twisted pair can reduce pickup, and adding Type 31 ferrite chokes at the speaker and amplifier ends can further suppress RF current.

Antenna choice and placement also matter. End-fed antennas and other antennas that bring RF current near the shack or neighboring equipment can increase the chance of RFI. Whenever practical, coax-fed antennas should be mounted as high and as far from affected equipment as possible, with a serious common-mode choke at the feed point.

Another club member shared a similar experience while running 500 to 600 watts on 80 through 10 meters. His neighbor's five-speaker entertainment system picked up transmissions during music and movies, and an automated irrigation system was also occasionally triggered by RF.

After several false starts, the solution came through a combination of research, advice from Jim, K9YC, and help from other experienced operators including George, W3AB, and Bob, K6XX. The fix included replacing parallel speaker wire with 14 AWG twisted wire, winding five turns through Fair-Rite Type 31 toroids at both ends of the speaker runs, and adding snap-on ferrite beads to the irrigation controller and solenoid wiring.

A capacitor helped with one nearby irrigation valve, but not all of them. The final solution required experimentation, persistence, and attention to the actual wiring paths that were acting as antennas. Most important, the ham operator and the neighbor worked together respectfully from start to finish. Continued on next page

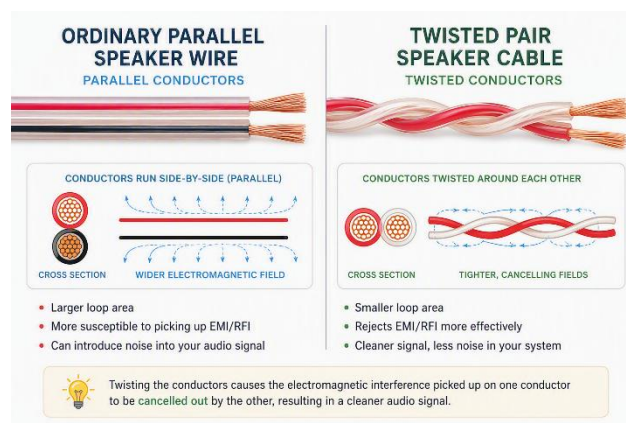
Resources

- The most frequently recommended technical reference was Jim Brown, K9YC's [A Ham's Guide to RFI, Ferrites, Baluns, and Audio Interfacing](#). It explains how RFI is coupled into equipment, why cables behave like antennas, and how ferrite chokes should be applied.
- The ARRL RFI page provides broader guidance for identifying and resolving interference issues, including resources for working with neighbors and understanding the League's role in RFI investigations: [ARRL Radio Frequency Interference Resources](#).
- The ARRL also offers a neighbor-facing information page that can be useful when explaining interference concerns in a calm, non-technical way: [Information for the Neighbors of Hams](#).

RFI: Continued

Lessons Learned

- Start with the relationship. Be calm, helpful, and collaborative with the neighbor.
- Do not assume the transmitter is at fault. Many RFI problems are caused by consumer equipment and wiring that unintentionally receive RF.
- Identify the affected bands, modes, power levels, and equipment before buying parts.
- Use the right ferrite material. For many HF RFI problems, Fair-Rite Type 31 is the commonly recommended starting point.
- Use multiple turns through toroids when possible. More turns usually provide more effective common-mode choking than a single pass.
- Pay attention to cables. Speaker wires, power cords, control lines, CATV cables, and audio leads can all act as antennas.
- Twisted-pair speaker cable can reduce pickup compared with ordinary parallel speaker wire.
- Improve the station where practical: antenna height, distance from affected equipment, feedline choking, and common mode control all help.
- Document what you try. RFI troubleshooting is often a process of careful observation and incremental improvement.



Final Takeaway

RFI troubleshooting is part technical work and part diplomacy. The best outcomes happen when a ham operator brings both skills to the table. Rusty's experience shows that a cooperative neighbor, careful research, and the right suppression techniques can turn an awkward situation into a successful example of amateur radio at its best.

What does an event look like?

New to ARES or wondering what it is like to help at a community event? Take a few minutes to watch these short videos and see our volunteers in action—supporting bike rides, parades, races, training exercises, and public safety activities throughout Santa Cruz County.

- Learn how volunteers help with perimeter monitoring during active shooter training: [Watch the video](#)
- Ride along with ARES at the Mountain Challenge Bike Ride: [Watch the video](#)
- Go behind the scenes at Race Through the Redwoods: [Watch the video](#)
- See ARES support in action at Strawberry Fields Forever: [Watch the video](#)
- Catch the excitement of the Aptos 4th of July Parade: [Watch the video](#)
- Experience the pace and planning behind the Santa Cruz Triathlon: [Watch the video](#)



Help Us Keep You Connected — Please Complete the Email Survey

Your response will help us keep ARES communications reliable, current, and easy for members to receive. As we move our email distribution list to Google Groups, we need to confirm who wants to remain on the list and make sure each member's email address is up to date. This upgrade should improve message delivery, simplify list management, and help eliminate the certificate-related issues some members have experienced with the current system. Please look for the survey in your email and complete it by September 30th. Lack of response will have your email removed from the distribution list. If you missed it—or accidentally deleted it thinking it was spam—the link is provided here so you can still participate: <https://forms.gle/qy3mA3LytVh4JHub9>.

Cap, KE6AFE, SK

On July 22, we said goodbye to Cap Pennell, KE6AFE—Charles Arthur Pennell—whose voice, stories, and generous spirit were familiar to many across our radio community. In the days that followed, members remembered Cap over the air and at his Celebration of Life on August 2nd, sharing moments that reflected his friendship, humor, and service to ARES and the wider amateur radio family. To honor his memory, we are reprinting the article first written about him in March 2023 in this publication. Photos from his Celebration of Life: [View photo gallery](#).

Cap, KE6AFE, grew up in many places on both coasts, including Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Southern California, before settling in Santa Cruz County. He is married and has two children and four grandchildren. Outside of ham radio, his current hobbies include gardening, camping, and walking on the beach or among the redwoods. Some of his favorite family moments are intergenerational Christmas meals. Cap attended Cabrillo Community College and later became a wildland firefighter and CDF Fire Crew Captain. His work with CDF communications helped him become comfortable with VHF FM voice and digital operations. Although he knew 8 wpm CW at age 7, mic fright delayed his pursuit of a license. At age 43, Cap accepted a challenge to become a ham radio operator. In 1993, a co-worker and fellow ham agreed to make a needed straight key as a Christmas present for Cap's nephew—but only if Cap got his ticket in return. Several members of Cap's family also hold amateur radio licenses, including his younger brother Jim, N6BIU, who was once active in supporting the K6BJ repeater, as well as his father, K3TPA, his nephew, and his uncle.

When Cap joined the group, local ARES activity was minimal. After stirring the pot following his retirement from CDF, he was appointed Santa Cruz County ARES District Emergency Coordinator (DEC). He served as ARES DEC from 2004 to 2014 and continued as ACS/RACES Chief Radio Officer until John, N6QX, took over during the pandemic. Cap enjoys interpreting VHF network topology while watching digipeated APRS packets scroll by in his terminal window. Having lived and worked throughout Santa Cruz County since 1964, he brings a unique knowledge of the area's topography. One of his proudest moments was first receiving packets from the MIR space station on his dot-matrix printer. His current equipment includes FM VHF/UHF scanners, a Kenwood TH-D72A handheld transceiver, and an Icom IC-2730A dual-band mobile rig in the living room with rooftop omni antennas. He also maintains two VHF FM 1200-baud packet stations for APRS weather and IGate. Cap would like to encourage more routine on-air chats and make better use of available airtime. As he puts it, the price is right—and it is plain fun. He also appreciates a favorite line from The Amateur's Code: "The Radio Amateur is BALANCED; Radio is an avocation, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community."

Cap can frequently be heard on many local repeaters, offering just-in-time mentoring and coaching to both new and experienced operators. He is gracious and kind on the air, patiently guiding novices as they find their way through the airwaves.



Mighty fine business Mr. Pennell. You will be missed.

2026 ARES in Action!

Volunteer, connect, serve, make every event count.

Mark your calendar • Bring your radio • Be part of the excitement

Featured Events

Sunday, SEP 27 Santa Cruz Triathlon	Confirmed volunteer event ARES supports participant position monitoring and safety communications for organizers.
Friday, OCT 30 Halloween Trunk or Treat	Approx. 1530–2030 • 5200 Soquel Ave, Santa Cruz ARES assists with participant monitoring, closed-road staffing, and shuttle parking communications.
Each Wednesday Loft Coffee	10AM – 12PM • 2701 Cabrillo College, Aptos Share ideas, get Elmer help, and connect with local operators.
2nd/4th Saturday C.A.K.E. at Loft Coffee	10AM • 2701 Cabrillo College, Aptos C.A.K.E. = Coffee assisted knowledge exchange. Meet up, share ideas, ask questions, and learn from local operators.
1st Saturday POTA	10AM • Different locations around the county Bring your gear for relaxed park radio activity and on-air practice.
3rd Saturday SCCARC Swap Meet	8AM • 501 Upper Park Rd, Santa Cruz Clear out your shack, find one-of-a-kind radio treasures, or come shop for your next great discovery.

Choose an event, bring your radio, and jump into the action with Santa Cruz County ARES.

Show up. Tune in. Make a difference.

Let us grow our hobby and include others!

EXPLORE. CONNECT. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

FREE HAM RADIO CLASS FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS & TEACHERS!

TECHNOLOGY • FRIENDS • ADVENTURE • COMMUNITY

EARN YOUR FCC AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE IN JUST 7 WEEKS!

Join other students and discover the exciting world of amateur radio! Learn real-world skills, build confidence, and connect with people around your community—and around the world!



ROBOTICS & AI
See robots in action and learn about artificial intelligence.



ELECTRONICS
Hands-on fun with circuits, components, and soldering.



RADIO & SATELLITES
Talk through satellites and explore how radio waves work.



EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
Learn how hams help in disasters and emergencies.



3D PRINTING & MAKING THINGS
Design, build, and bring your ideas to life!



MEET BEZAELE!

Our classroom robot who loves to teach and inspire.



AND WINK!
Everyone's favorite little robot.

SPECIAL YOUTH OPPORTUNITY!

★ Students 16 years old and younger who pass the Technician exam receive a **FREE** handheld amateur radio! ★



CLASS DETAILS



WHEN: Thursdays, 10/15/26 – 11/19/26
7:00 – 9:00 pm
Followed by "Now What Do I Do?" on 12/10/26



WHERE: Santa Cruz County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
5200 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz



TESTING: Saturday, 12/5/26
1:00 – 3:00 pm at the EOC



INSTRUCTORS: Bob Fike, KO6XX
Dan N6RJX, Kathi KE6VTY,
Roberta AJ6KN

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED – WE START FROM SCRATCH!

WHY JOIN?

- ✓ Learn real technology and useful skills
- ✓ Make new friends and have fun
- ✓ Discover exciting hobbies and careers
- ✓ Help your community in times of need
- ✓ Join a global community of over 3 million hams

**PERFECT FOR
STUDENTS IN
7TH GRADE AND UP!**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Gordon West Ham Radio License Manual – Technician
<http://tiny.cc/GWTechnicianManual2026>
- Free online study tool:
<https://hamstudy.org/>
- Enthusiasm & curiosity!
We'll provide the rest.

HOW TO REGISTER



Scan the QR code or visit
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/hamfallclass2026>
Limited to 25 students – register early!



TEACHERS!

Please share this flyer with your students!



Come for the knowledge.
Stay for the community.
Make a difference.

QUESTIONS?

✉ Email Roberta Roberts, AJ6KN (Admin):
roberta@silvares.org
Bob's email: bob.ko6xx@gmail.com



STRONG SIGNALS. STRONGER COMMUNITY. YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS HERE!

