

# Amateur Radio Was There Through Hurricane Katrina

Excerpts from Sept. 6, 2005, MSNBC.com:

With telephones down and wireless service disrupted, at least one group of people did manage last week to use technology to come to the rescue of those in need.

Often unsung, amateur radio operators regularly assist in emergency situations. Hurricane Katrina was no exception. For the past week, operators of amateur, or ham, radio have been instrumental in helping residents in the hardest hit areas, including saving stranded flood victims in Louisiana and Mississippi.

When disaster strikes, ham networks spring into action. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service.

On Monday, Aug. 29, a call for help involving a combination of cell telephone calls and amateur radio led to the rescue of 15 people stranded by floodwaters on the roof of a house in New Orleans. Unable to get through an overloaded 911 system, one of those stranded called a relative in Baton Rouge. That person called another relative, who called the local American Red Cross.

Using that Red Cross chapter's amateur radio station, Ben Joplin, WB5VST, was able to relay a request for help on the SATERN network via Russ Fillinger, W7LXR, in Oregon, and Rick Cain, W7KB, in Utah back to Louisiana, where emergency personnel were alerted. They rescued the 15 people and got them to a shelter.

Such rescues were repeated over and over again. Another ham was part of the mix that same Monday when he heard over the same Salvation Army emergency network of a family of five trapped in an attic in Diamond Head, La. The family used a cell phone to call out. Bob Rathbone, AG4ZG, in Tampa, says he checked the address on a map and determined it was in an area struck by a storm surge.

He called the Coast Guard search-and-rescue station in Clearwater, explained the situation and relayed the information. At this point, the Coast Guard office in New Orleans was out of commission. An hour later he received a return call from the South Haven Sheriff's Department in Louisiana, which informed him a rescue operation was under way.

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**Brownwood Amateur Radio Club**

**Monthly Meetings**

**American Red Cross Building**

**600 E. Adams, Brownwood**

**3rd Monday of Each Month**

**SERVING YOUR**

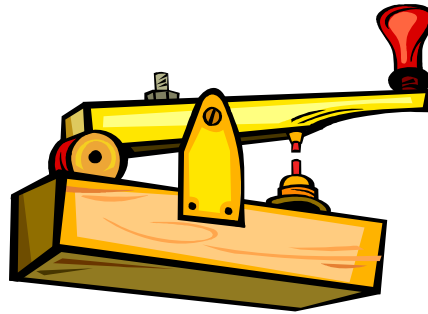
**COMMUNITY**

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How is Ham Radio different from any other radio?

Isn't it just old guys doing telegraph?



Well, it just might be, but it could also be a lot like talking on a cell-phone or text-messaging. And, once the equipment is purchased, you can use it *for free*.

***When all else fails.*** This illustrates what happens when there is a disaster. Everything quits, and Ham Radio **STARTS**.

**Interested?** You can find out more information at

[www.k5bwd.org](http://www.k5bwd.org)

This web site has links to other sites with endless information on radio. Also, there are people in this area who want to help you. They are motivated by the desire to provide reliable communications in times of emergency (*and also have fun!*).

Regular opportunities to listen to some of what we do can be found on a regular scanner tuned to **146.940 MHz** on **Sunday and Tuesday evenings at 9:00 p.m.**

**During an emergency, this frequency will be used. The type of emergency could include local weather alerts, flooding, fires, or tornadoes.**

Contact Ray Schulze, president of local Brownwood Amateur Radio Club at (325) 646-9344 for licensing information.

The ARRL, American Radio Relay League, is the national organization that represents amateur radio interests. Find links to the ARRL at our web site, [k5bwd.org](http://k5bwd.org).

The Amateur Radio Service, sometimes called “Ham Radio”, is overseen by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), a part of the Federal Government. The FCC issues three classes of license to people who can pass tests for each class with increasing difficulty and increasing privileges, too.

All 2-way radios allow the user to communicate with other radios. Ham radio differ thus:

1. They allow for more flexibility than the typical frequency arrangement of dedicated channels. This flexibility allows “hams” to tailor their usage to their need. This means more users.
2. They can be used over longer distances than most other stand-alone radios.
3. They can work when all other “radios” and radio systems, including phones, are out of order. This means they are perfect for disasters like Hurricanes (Katrina), fires (Cross Plains), floods (Stamford), and terrorism (9-11-01).