

# Meridian Amateur Radio Club

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*Meridian, MS, 2003/06/28-29* -- Members of the Meridian Amateur Radio Club (MARC) will put their emergency communication skills to the test when they participate in "Field Day" June 28 and 29. The annual preparedness exercise brings together Amateur Radio operators from throughout North and South America who are committed to assisting their communities in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The first Field Day was held in 1933 and is now sponsored by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the national association for Amateur Radio.

Amateur Radio is a lot of fun, but the serious side can't be stressed enough. We can be a vital communications role during emergencies, and events such as Field Day ensure that we're ready to handle any type of disaster. Field Day is designed to test operators' abilities to set up and operate stations in the field under emergency conditions, such as the loss of commercial electricity.

During the weekend, radio operators try to contact as many other Field Day stations as possible, simulating the fast on-air skills needed to assist town officials and served agencies during an emergency. Approximately 35,000 Amateur Radio operators across the country participated in last year's event.

Ham radio operators typically help with communication during weather-related emergencies such as the devastating tornadoes in the Midwest earlier this spring. But, the need for their services doesn't stop there. A federal grant awarded for emergency communications training in 2002 emphasizes support for ham radio's role in homeland defense.

MARC will set up its Field Day station at Bonita Lakes Pavilion 2 and will be operating from 1 PM on June 28 to 1 PM on June 29. We hope that the public will come out and see firsthand what this event--and Amateur Radio--is all about.

Today there are nearly 700,000 Amateur Radio operators in the United States and more than 2.5 million worldwide. Information on how to become involved in Amateur Radio is available from ARRL -- the national association for Amateur Radio, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111 or by calling 1-800-32-NEW HAM. Visit ARRL on the Web at [www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org).