

## FIELD DAY

Much of this article was taken from a Waller County Texas ARES training document, used with permission of Christine Smith – N5CAS, modified by Earl Pack – AE5PA.

Field Day is an annual event that encourages emergency communication preparedness of amateur radio operators. The first ARRL Field Day was held in 1933. Today it is the largest emergency preparedness exercise in the United States, with over 30,000 participants. Radio communication equipment is deployed in a wide range of setups from; operations under a tent in remote areas, operations in public parks to get the public interested, to operating in an Emergency Operation Center. Emergency and alternative power sources are generally used.

Field Day is not an ARES event, but it is a good time to make sure your “ready kit” is prepared, and get some experience transmitting on HF with all sorts of conditions and lots of QRM (interference). It may also be an opportunity to see and try out digital modes, tune up your skills with CW, and depending on the group’s or club’s set up there may be some other contact opportunities such as the Space Station, etc.

The ARRL wants us to use Field Day to spread the word of amateur radio by inviting special guests, groups (such as scouts), etc. and to publicize the event through the media to get the word out.

Field Day is sponsored by the ARRL and is not a contest either. The ARRL describes the object as: “To work as many stations as possible on any and all amateur bands (excluding the 60, 30, 17, and 12-meter bands) and in doing so to learn to operate in abnormal situations in less than optimal conditions. A premium is placed on developing skills to meet the challenges of emergency preparedness as well as to acquaint the general public with the capabilities of Amateur Radio.”

“Field Day is for all amateurs in the areas covered by the ARRL/RAC (RAC – Radio Amateurs of Canada) Field Organizations and countries within IARU Region 2. Stations residing in other regions may be contacted for credit, but are not eligible to submit entries.”

“Field Day is always the fourth full weekend of June, beginning at 1800 UTC (Noon) Saturday and ending at 2100 UTC (3pm) Sunday. **Field Day will be held June 22-23, 2013.**”

“Field Day entries are classified according to the maximum number of simultaneously transmitted signals, followed by a designator of the nature of their individual or group participation.”  
In a little plainer English, Field Day reporting is grouped into classes. These classes will represent the type of station (mobile, battery power station, home station on commercial power, an EOC, etc.), and the number of transmitters. Scoring is based on a combination of items, just as when operating in a contest.

“Stations in ARRL / RAC sections will exchange their Field Day operating Class and ARRL / RAC section. Example: a three transmitter class A station in Connecticut which also has a GOTA station and one VHF station would send "3A CT" on CW or "3 Alpha Connecticut" on phone. DX stations send operating class and the term DX (i.e. 2A DX).”

A “Class A” station is described as “Club or a non-club group with three or more persons set up specifically for Field Day. Such stations must be located in places that are not regular station locations and must not use facilities installed for permanent station use, or use any structure installed permanently for Field Day use. Stations must operate under one call sign (except if a dedicated GOTA station is allowed which must be operated under a call sign as provided in the rules), and under the control of a single licensee or trustee for the entry. All equipment (including antennas) must lie within a circle whose diameter does not exceed 300 meters (1000 feet). All contacts must be made with transmitter(s) and receiver(s) operating independent of commercial power mains. Entrants whom for any reason operate a transmitter or receiver from a commercial main for one or more contacts will be listed separately.”

The word GOTA stands for Get On The Air, and has special provisions in the rules. Non-licensed folks, or those whose license class does not normally allow transmission on certain bands are allowed to participate with the purpose to try to maximize participation and interest.

You can refer to the ARRL web site for all the specific classes, rules and scoring information.

As mentioned at the beginning, this is not an ARES event by any means, and if you don't get involved in the set-up and tear-down it really won't be much training experience for any possible deployment. But I believe the communications experience itself would be good for those of you not real familiar with bad band conditions, also getting to see and operate other models of equipment than what you might have at home such as transceivers, antenna tuners, etc.

There will be many Field Day setups in the Houston and surrounding areas this year and I encourage you to visit and participate in the event.