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# Invisible airwaves crackle with life



**Ed Stuckey adjusts his headphones before listening to communications via ham radio at his Post Falls home on Wednesday.**

By BRIAN WALKER/Staff Writer | Posted 3 days ago

**POST FALLS** — Ed Stuckey has been hamming it up for more than 60 years.

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When the Post Falls man was 6, his dad bought home a ham radio that didn't work.

"We fooled around with it for a few weeks on the kitchen table and finally got it to work," Stuckey said. "That's where my interest started."

Stuckey earned his ham radio operator license at 14 and ever since, hasn't stopped communicating with other operators from around the world.

"We like talking to people far away," the 73-year-old said. "That's always a thrill. I personally enjoy building friends."

But amateur radio is far from being just a hobby.

It can be a resource during emergencies, especially if there are Internet or phone outages, and for communication during major events.

The Kootenai Amateur Radio Society will hold a free field day and international preparedness exercise from Saturday at 11 a.m. to Sunday at 11 a.m. at Majestic Park in Rathdrum. The public is welcome to observe the exercise and ask questions.

Stuckey's radio skills were put to the test in southern California in 1994 during the Northridge earthquake when he assisted with communication.

"A good part of metro Los Angeles was without power for four or five days," he said. "Nobody imagined that something like that would happen."

Stuckey was among the local hams who participated in the recent Cascadia Rising training event. Ham radio operators have also assisted with large community events such as the Ironman triathlon.

Until about five years ago, police and fire had their own radio systems and amateur radio served as the bridge as needed between the departments during emergencies. But, when the departments got on the same page, the need for ham radio was eliminated in that capacity.

"However, we still have the capability of long-distance communication and that is something we pride ourselves on," Stuckey said. "Almost every week I talk to an emergency operations center in Boise on short-wave radio."

Stuckey has communicated verbally, through Morse code or through international ham radio lingo called Q signals with people from around the world. He's received "QSL cards" — postcards — from others.

"I worked extensively with a guy from Bavaria last year as people like to say they've talked to someone in all of the American states and Idaho was a fairly rare one to him," Stuckey said. "It is easy talking to people in Europe and we also make a lot of contacts in Japan. There are absolute radio nuts in Japan."

Stuckey estimates there are about 500 local ham radio operators, but perhaps 100 of them are active with the hobby. Some starter radios cost \$40 and tests for licenses cost \$15, so it's an affordable activity, he said.

Stuckey is as mesmerized by ham radio today as he was when he and his father got one to work years ago.

"It's magic," he said. "It's a thrill for me every day when I get on the air."

