

Amateur radio operators to practice emergency skills

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Tom Melnick, otherwise known on air by call letters N8LY, can't wait for the Livonia Amateur Radio Club to join with the Ford Amateur Radio League for Field Day which continues to 2 p.m. Sunday, June 29, behind Livonia Fire Station No. 6. The weekend of drills train licensed radio operators to handle critical emergency communications.

Temporary stations began operating 2 p.m. Saturday at field day locations including Plymouth Township, Garden City and Southfield.

"We hope to get the community to stop by to learn about the formal plans the City of Livonia has to deal with emergency situations such as tornadoes, power outages," said Melnick, vice-president of LARC. "The main purpose is to help us prepare for natural disasters. There's a formal protocol for transmitting emergency communications. If not there would just be mass chaos."

"Three temporary operator stations were designed to get us out of our normal operating environment. We won't be using electricity but generators and solar equipment."

Licensed amateur operators take shifts around the clock. A Gota (get on the air) station allows people without licenses to see what it's all about.

"We're also going to have training sessions for how to handle emergency communications," said



John Mathey, K8AZT (right), operates a CW (Continuous Wave Morse code) station with assistance from Ray Jenks, W8SXK.

FIELD DAY

What: Livonia Amateur Radio Club with the Ford Amateur Radio League participate in a nationwide field day to train operators for emergency communications

When: Continues to 2 p.m. Sunday, June 29

Where: Behind Livonia Fire Station No. 6, 37876 Plymouth Road, east of Newburgh

Information: Call (248) 474-6367 or e-mail tomj@melnick.com

Melnick, who with other operators will be participating in the national event sponsored by American Radio Relay League.

"We'll be practicing our skills with people from Alaska, Hawaii for when there are no cell phones, no Internet," said Sharon Keller,

they relied on amateur radio operators," said Keller. "They can come out and see for themselves and it's free, get a peek at how to get on."

"It's for everybody to learn about amateur radio."

John Mathey, call letters K8AZT, has been an amateur radio operator since 1961. He's

organizing this year's event.

"I was about 13 or 14 and liked the adventure of being able to communicate with different people throughout the world. It still hasn't lost its intrigue," said Mathey, who originally was a member of the Ford club but after retiring from the company joined LARC which

is closer to his Livonia home. "For me my real joy is communicating via Morse code. Anybody can sit back and talk on a telephone or type on a computer. Many other people enjoy different aspects of amateur radio, trying to contact as many distant stations in different countries as possible."