

Field Day is an opportunity to pack a lot of Amateur Radio into one weekend -- an opportunity that has become more valuable as our world has gotten busier and operating from home has become more difficult, either for lack of time or because of antenna limitations. FD gives us a chance literally to "head for the hills," preferably as part of a group; it's more fun to share the experience with others, and more rewarding to learn antenna and operating lore from one another. The operating format is to make quick contacts, exchanging your number of transmitters, operating category and ARRL section with other stations. Each station can be contacted once per band (except 60, 30, 17 and 12 meters, which are off limits) and mode (CW, phone, and digital). CW and digital contacts are worth twice as many points as phone, so there is an incentive to be able to do more than just talk (not that good phone operating is easy -- picture an Air Traffic Controller at Atlanta Airport!).

While the FD focus is on setting up temporary portable stations operating on emergency power, stay-at-homes and mobiles also can participate. Since 2003 there has been a special category for stations operating from established Emergency Operations Centers. The goal is to show that we can communicate with one another, *no matter what*, without the need for *any* infrastructure. This is a capability that we tend to take for granted, but that is increasingly rare -- and increasingly valuable -- as the world becomes ever more dependent on complex telecommunications systems to cope with daily life. Cell phones are ubiquitous these days, and it's natural to rely on them -- but what do we do when they don't work? Most people have no answer to that question. As radio amateurs, we do -- but only if we keep our batteries charged, our equipment ready, and our operating skills honed.

The biggest change in the rules is that it will be easier this year to earn Get-On-The-Air (GOTA) bonus points. The purpose of the GOTA station is to encourage Novices, Technicians and prospective hams under the direct supervision of a properly licensed control operator, as well as inactive hams, to get acquainted or reacquainted with HF operating. Up to 500 QSOs can be counted from this station, plus 20 bonus points for each 20 contacts made by an eligible operator (up to a maximum of 100 per operator). The bonus points double if your group provides a full-time "GOTA Coach"; see the official rules for details.

Field Day is *not* about taking risks. A need for improvisation is likely to crop up at the most carefully planned event, but safety always comes first -- especially when erecting antennas and operating generators. Always be mindful of the safety not only of your participants, but of any visitors to your site as well.

From the article [**It Seems to Us: The Field Day Bug**](#)

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June 1, 2007