

Amateur radio operators host field day at Bowen's

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Submitted photo

Shawn Donley of Huntingtown sets up radio antennas on the Bowen's Grocery tower during the American Radio Relay League's Field Day exercise on June 28. Donley was among other members of the Calvert Amateur Radio Association at the event.

Amateur Radio Association gathered at Bowen's Grocery in Huntingtown, to participate in the American Radio Relay League's annual Field Day exercise on June 28.

During this exercise, thousands of ham radio operators across North America leave their home stations behind and go out into the community to operate free of the power grid, simulating emergency conditions, according to a release.

During the event, the hams were able to establish reliable communications across the U.S. and on into Canada using a simple wire antenna and less than 100 watts of power.

Don Kirby of North Beach has been a licensed ham for 26 years and acquired his interest in amateur radio from his father who, although never licensed himself, followed developments in radio technology and encouraged Don to get involved.

Kirby, a veteran of the Howard County Police Department when it was made up of just nine men, has always looked for ways to serve the community and believes that being prepared to act in times of emergency is not an option.

"Cell phones can not be relied on during a disaster situation," Kirby said. "When the power goes out or the cellular

system is overloaded or shut down, amateur radio can still get through."

Dennis Bowling of Owings is president of CARA and has also been appointed by the ARRL to be the Calvert County Emergency Coordinator. In that capacity he directs the activities of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service. Bowling's interest in amateur radio grew out of his experiences with the Navy.

"CARA is the oldest ham club in Calvert County and has a long history of involvement in providing communications support," Bowling said. "Calvert teams, aside from their services in the county, have been called on in the past to assist with the tornadoes in La Plata and the attack on the Pentagon on [Sept. 11, 2001]."

Shawn Donley of Huntingtown led the team erecting the antennas in Bowen's parking lot.

Donley has been a ham for 44 years and credits his involvement in amateur radio with leading him to a career in national defense as an electronics engineer.

Knowledge of Morse code is no longer required to get licensed but Donley still prefers to communicate with a key instead of a microphone.

Donley noted that in bad conditions a Morse operator is much more likely to get through when conditions are bad.

"Besides, I find the use of a key to be a more relaxing expe-

rience," Donley said. "It's pleasant to be able to communicate and have a conversation without having to talk."

Additional information about the Calvert Amateur Radio Association and links to other organizations involved can be found at the club's Website, www.k3cal.org.