

Field Day Prep Kickoff Program 2020

My name is Laura K4CNY, and I am excited to be the newly-appointed Field Day Coordinator for this year. I was appointed two days ago, so I'm still trying to catch up, but I know I'll get there soon.

Before I get too far into this, I'd like to thank Anita for taking over as Programs Coordinator. I only agreed to do this after she agreed to take the huge job of programs coordinator off my shoulders. She's already been helping me behind-the-scenes, so I have no doubt she'll do a great job.

For those who are unfamiliar, Field Day is, first and foremost, an emergency communications simulation. The premise is that there has been some disaster that knocked out all conventional communication methods—so we can't communicate using cell phones or the internet. We have 24 hours to set up towers, antennas, and stations. We then prove the strength of our setups and the skills of our operators by contacting as many other teams as we can in 24 hours. Our club, like most clubs, goes a step further by taking ourselves off the electric grid. We have to run our radios using only generators, solar, or other forms of emergency power. It's a lot of work, but it's also a LOT of fun.

This is no small operation. Last year, we made over 4,000 contacts and scored 14,000 points. We came in first place in the country for our division. We beat Palo Alto, California's team by a mere 500 points, so if we're going to defend our 1st place finish, we have no room for error. So I'm asking all of you to join us this year. If you participated last year, please join us again. If you've never participated in Field Day before, now's your chance. If you're a new ham, there is a particularly important role for you. More on that in a minute.

Please mark your calendars! Field Day is the 4th full weekend in June. This year, that is June 27-28. We begin operating at 1:00PM on Saturday, and stop at precisely 12:59:59 on Sunday. Please also mark your calendar for Friday, June 26, which is when we'll be doing our setup. The most critical part of setup is erecting the towers, which requires a lot of manpower and teamwork. We could always use a few more sets of hands.

My objective as Field Day Coordinator is, simply, "Don't break anything." I don't plan on making any ground-breaking changes to how we run things. I'll be putting out an e-mail soon to all of last year's station managers to ask them to return. Mark N4BCD is in the process of getting me the infamous "LIST," and I should have a better idea of what role everyone played last year and what roles I'll need to fill once I've gotten that. Last year, we had 64 official participants from our club. We need at least that many to come back this year.

For the newbies, our team is classified as "4A." "Four" means that we have up to four stations transmitting at the same time. "A" means that we're a club station, operating off the electrical grid. While we have two voice stations and two morse code stations, we have a fifth HF station that can operate without affecting our class designation: this is called the GOTA station, which stands for "GET ON THE AIR." The GOTA station's purpose is to inspire unlicensed people, new hams (as in, those who have become hams since the last field day), and inactive hams to get more involved in amateur radio. Any of those three groups of people can make contacts from the GOTA station and earn points for the team. For every 20 contacts you make, we get an extra 20 bonus points. Without getting too technical, the GOTA station is also ripe with opportunities for point multipliers. With the way we run our GOTA station, someone who makes 20 contacts can earn our club 100 points. Do

that five times and you have the difference between our first-place finish and Palo Alto's second-place finish.

This leads me to this year's biggest rule change. Last year, the GOTA station was limited to making 500 contacts. This year, the limit has been bumped up to 1,000 contacts. That's 42 contacts per hour, even overnight, to hit that limit. That's a lot. There might as well not be a limit at all. And those contacts can only be made by unlicensed, inactive, or new hams.

I'm assuming that everyone listening to this program is licensed and active, so new hams, I'm talking to you now. We need you. And there aren't that many of you. I've asked Anita to get me a list of all the hams in our club who have been licensed since July 1, 2019—the day after last year's Field Day. Be expecting an e-mail from me! My very first Field Day was two weeks after I became licensed and I logged over 100 contacts. And assuming Todd agrees to run the GOTA station again, he's an even better coach than what I had. You don't need much background knowledge to catch up, though I do have a program in the works about how to run a station on Field Day. Attending that program, hopefully, won't hurt.

Okay, now I'm talking to everybody again. We've got 99 days to get ready (not that I'm counting). Although not a ton of prep work has been done, I think we're in good shape. My predecessors have left me amazing notes, including feedback from last year's Field Day. Again, I don't plan on making many changes to how we ran things last year. We had some minor issues which I'll be working to address this year, but nothing major. That said, I expect a bit of progress to happen while all of us are socially distancing. Until the courts open back up, I don't have much else to do.

If you want to get ready for Field Day right now, get on the air. A lot of us have a lot of free time lately, so this is a great opportunity to work on listening, especially to call signs when the signals are bad. This is also a great opportunity to transmit and get honest feedback on how you sound. The key to getting contacts is to hear well and to be heard well. For bonus points, this is a great time to work on Morse Code, the CW station managers are always looking for new recruits. Plus CW contacts are worth twice as much as voice contacts.

There are two time-sensitive issues right now. The first is Field Day T-shirts. The ARRL released the t-shirt design today. It looks great! It has a camper on the front, and the back it says "Radio on tour" with every single ARRL section listed. They're available through ARRL for \$17.95 plus shipping. Shipping on a single shirt is \$7.50, so you may be interested in combining your order with several others. I would love for HARC to take orders for Field Day tshirts, but unfortunately the club's bylaws prevent HARC from being involved in the sale of merchandise. The T-shirts always sell out fairly quickly, so you'll want to make your order in the next couple weeks. If you're interested in any other Field Day swag, the ARRL says they'll be releasing their full line of Field Day merchandise in April.

The other time-sensitive issue is feedback from last year. Since I haven't done much prep work yet, it's early enough to make some changes. I've reviewed Craig's feedback notes from last year, and I don't have anything to add to that list from my own observations. Nevertheless, there may be something we can do to improve that I don't yet know about. So long as the battery holds out on my HT, I'll be staying on the air for a little while afterwards to talk about plans.

Of course, I have to address the elephant in the room, and that's the possibility that Aunt Rona will make an appearance and mess things up. Don't worry, I'm keeping that possibility in the back of my

mind. God willing, things will calm down a bit by late June, but even if we are still in a state of emergency, I'm fairly confident the ARRL won't cancel Field Day altogether. After all, this is an emergency communications simulation, I'd hate for it to get cancelled over an emergency. Though I am planning for the possibility that the ARRL or governmental authorities will require us to make some major changes, such as minimizing the number of people in the trailers or putting limits on how many people can be on the "field" at once. But one of the hallmarks of this club has been its flexibility when problems arise—like last year's record heat, a windstorm that took out a tower and a tent, and nearly two hours of thunderstorms during peak operating time. If we have to make adjustments for the Corona Virus, I have utmost confidence that we will make those adjustments and get the job done anyway.

As one last reminder, Field Day is June 27-28, with setup on the 26th. And that's the end of my prepared presentation. Any questions, comments, or feedback?