



Branch Signals

March 2012

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Branch Signals is published monthly by the Branch County Amateur Radio Club. This publication is posted to our website, www.branchcountyarc.com, but can be conveniently emailed to you as well. To subscribe, email the editor, Justin Lopshire, at skywave21@hotmail.com.

Greetings to all!

Well, another month has passed in 2012 and we find ourselves with spring just around the corner, so the Severe Weather Season will be here before we know it. The past week has brought an early start to the season with all the destruction in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Alabama and other areas not so reported in the news. My thoughts and prayers go to those that have been affected in those areas.

With that said, the Branch County Amateur Radio Club, along with the Office of Emergency Management, hosted our Skywarn Training on February 28th in Coldwater. We had two sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The presentation from the NWS IWX

office was informative, and one of the best I have attended. My thanks to those that attended either or both sessions.

The BCARC ARES/RACES members also participated in the Michigan District 5 Hospital Net, that is held on the first Wednesday of every month, and the monthly siren testing held on the first Saturday of the month. While we have volunteers that step up to help out with these when asked, there will always be a need and a place for help.

If you have been listening to the BCARC 2M repeater in the last week, we have gone to Condition Blue twice, due to weather situations that might affect us here in Branch County. We have four levels of conditional readiness in anticipation of any imminent weather situations. These condi-



tions have been revised and will be available soon.

Also, mark your calendars for Saturday, May 12. The BCARC has been asked to assist the 101 Lakes Bike Run as it will again go through Branch County from Indiana into Michigan along Southern Road, and back down into Indiana. The final configuration has

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Notes from the President

Justin Lopshire, KD8JEL

Happy March!

This month is all about transitioning from the wintry and icy conditions of the past three months, to the warmer weather and beautiful flowers and budding trees of the next two or so months. Along with warmer weather and the annual green-up come the inevitable days with threats of severe weather. Of course, most of us know what we need to do in order to keep ourselves and our communities safe during inclement weather by reporting any severe weather conditions to either the Net Control Station on the BCARC 2M Skywarn Net, by calling 911, or directly to the National Weather Service. However, if you happen to be volunteering your time as a storm spotter, there is one major component of your equip-



ment that you should have checked over very thoroughly before you head out into the stormy action.

On Thursday, March 1, as I was pulling into my parking spot at work, the upper ball joint on my passenger side of my car gave up the ghost, rendering my car useless. Although my first thoughts about this situation were focused more on how I was going to get

everything fixed, and back on the road in reasonable time, I looked back at this scenario in a much different light. How would I, as a storm spotter, react to this situation if my car's upper ball joint, or any other part of a vehicle that is required for safe usage, failed while in the danger zone for any severe storm?

While we can always be trained to be better storm spotters, always remember to use your best judgment when deciding to go out storm spotting. Although I don't necessarily recommend using your nice Lincoln or Cadillac to storm spot, I also wouldn't recommend a rust bucket that could fall apart on you at any moment. It could be the best decision you ever make!

See you at the next meeting!

Club Calendar

March

3, 10, 17, 24 & 31 -Club Breakfast, 8:30-10AM, Stoagies Family Room Café, 91 East Chicago St., Coldwater

3-Monthly Siren Test, 1PM, throughout Coldwater

6, 13 & 27-BCARC Emergency Net, 7PM, 147.300+, 100Hz PL, & 443.300+, 123Hz PL

6-BCARC Board Meeting, 7PM, Coldwater Bob Evans Restaurant

20-BCARC Meeting, 7PM, basement of Branch County 911 Building, 141 East Chicago Rd., Coldwater

Local Hams Attend Leadership Workshop in Ann Arbor

On Saturday, March 3rd, Coldwater residents Larry Camp, WB8R, and Justin Lopshire, KD8JEL, attended the first-ever Ham Radio Leadership Workshop, held at the Washtenaw Red Cross Building on Packard Road in Ann Arbor.

Representatives from a half a dozen clubs from throughout Southern Lower Michigan were present at this workshop, which covered a multitude of topics, including membership and communication skills.

One of the high points of the day was actually completed before Camp and Lopshire left Cold-

water. Workshop coordinator, Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, sent out a survey for all in attendance to fill out. The survey allowed attendees to accurately gauge where they felt their club stood on several topics, including membership, administration, and communications.

It was suggested to those in attendance that they could get further input from the club members who could not attend the day-long workshop by having copies of the survey available to anybody who wants to complete and turn in their results to their respective club leaders.

As a result, the BCARC is planning on having copies of this survey available to anybody who would like to fill this information out, and turn it back in at the next club meeting.

Overall, it was a very informative day, and many things were learned by those in attendance.



Romanchik is the author of several Ham Radio study guides, and also has his own website, which can be found at www.kb6nu.com, or by scanning the QR Code below.



Spotter Training

If you missed the Spotter Training on Tuesday, February 28th, you still have a few chances to attend the session before the season wraps up later this month.

Williams County, Ohio will be holding their session on Wednesday, March 21st, at 7PM, at the Montpelier Fire Department, at 107 South Monroe Street, and St. Joseph County, Michigan will hold their session on Thursday, March 29th, at the Fabius and Park Townships Fire Department, at 15149 Broadway Road, in Three Rivers.

Weather Siren Volunteers Needed for Monthly Exercise

On the first Saturday of the month, at 1PM, Branch County 911 sends out the signal to all the county's sirens in every city and village to test their operational capabilities.

In Coldwater alone, there are five sirens that stand ready in the event of a weather emergency, such as a tornado, or other severe weather situations that could put the city's population in jeopardy.

These sirens are located at the corner of Western Avenue and Farm Lane, near the West Side Shell gas station, at Grand and Hanchett Streets, just north of

downtown, at the intersection of South Clay and Industrial Avenue, on Vans Avenue, just north of Jefferson Elementary School, and at the corner of South Willowbrook Road and East Chicago Street, adjacent to Interstate 69.

Branch County EC, Jan Hayden, is always in need of volunteers to

help provide this necessary public service, so the city's law enforcement personnel can continue their top-notch services to the community.

If you would like to volunteer, call or email Jan, or see him at the next club meeting.

BCARC Net

CALLING ALL HAMS!

The BCARC would love you to check in to the weekly Branch County Emergency Net, Tuesday nights at 1900 hours on the WD8KAF repeaters, starting on the 2 Meter machine, and moving over to the 440 machine when prompted by Net Control. If you live outside of the county, and you haven't checked into our nets lately, feel free to pop in whenever you have some free time, and say hello!

Birthday Club

Calling all readers of *Branch Signals!*

We are currently looking for brave individuals to occupy this portion of the newsletter! Just send your date of birth to editor, Justin Lopshire, at sky-wave21@hotmail.com, and we'll make sure to let the rest of our readers know when you're getting ready to blow out another candle on your birthday cake!

Dozens Upgrade

TEST SESSION RESULTS IN PILE-UP!

The recent decision by the FCC to drop the Morse code requirement from amateur testing resulted in an over-the-top test session at the Branch County Communications Center on Saturday, February 24th. The examiners were tipped off that there would be a sizeable group coming up from the Angola area where a General class had just ended. Inquiries about the testing were also received from as far away as Goshen. It was decided early on that a session should be held as close as possible to the date when the code requirement would be dropped. That way, those holding soon-to-expire CSCEs could be accommodated. Judging from the effort it was a good plan. home new privileges in- clans, twenty one new tras. Cities represented Bronson, Union City, Sturgis and Charlotte in Fremont, Bristol, Pleasant Lake, Howe, Warsaw, Goshen, and Hudson, Indiana, and Montpelier, Ohio. Assisting Larry Camp, WB8R, with the session were Tom Twite, KBCHS, Dan Sprow, KC8RYF, Bill Slade, WD8MGF, Jim Voss, W8SST, Bruce Wilson, WB8ZSK and Arnie Hayward, NS8T. This was, by far, the largest test session the County has seen since local testing was begun several years ago. The photos below show both rooms in the lower level of the Branch County Communications Center filled with applicants taking tests. (Photos courtesy of WB8R)



From the March, 2007 issue of *Branch Signals*

This Month in BCARC History



In the March, 2007 issue of *Branch Signals*, we featured a story on the FCC's decision to drop the Morse Code requirement. The result-an "Over the Top Test Session", on Saturday, February 24th.

Did you know that the club website, branch-countyarc.com, has archived newsletters, dated back to 2002? We also have older newsletters we plan to archive at a later date.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

If you haven't already done so, please be sure to renew your Club Membership for 2012! It only costs \$15 to join, which allows you to have club privileges, and opportunities to vote at Club Meetings! For more information, see Bill Kubiak, KB8VWI, at the next Club meeting.

Upcoming Meeting Programs

March's monthly meeting will feature a homebrew 10M antenna! Join us on Tuesday, March 20th, at 7PM, for the monthly Club Meeting, and stay to listen to our special speakers, Carl (K9LA) and Vicky (AE9YL) Leutzelschwab, from Fort Wayne! Carl is one of the forefront leaders in understanding HF and VHF propagation throughout the world. DON'T MISS THIS PROGRAM!

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not been finalized for the route through Michigan yet. I will have a sign-up sheet available for you to volunteer at our next club meeting on March 20th.

I would like to remind all that every Tuesday evening, except for the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm is the Branch County ARES/RACES Net. It is a good place to meet and talk for a bit every week.

We will always need more people that are willing to give some of their time to be of assistance for their fellow neighbors and citizens. We have a core group of well-trained individual volunteers that stand ready to help when the call arises. No matter how busy it gets, there will be a place for you!

I hope to hear you on the air!

73's!!

Jan, KD8CYW

Jan is the Emergency Coordinator/ RACES Officer for Branch County. Jan can be reached via phone, at (517) 812-9009, or by email, at kd8cyw@arrl.net.



BREAKFAST!
Join us every Saturday morning, from 8:30-10AM, at Stoagie's Family Room Café, at the corner of East Chicago and Jefferson Street in Coldwater, for some great food and fellowship!

