

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



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RADIO REPEATER INSTALLED AT SRS TO IMPROVE AREA EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

AIKEN, S.C., (April 4) In a cooperative effort between the Department of Energy, Westinghouse Savannah River Company and local amateur radio operators, an amateur radio repeater was placed in operation at the Savannah River Site on March 25, 2002.

With an idea to enhance the coverage of area emergency communications, a group of site employees proposed using excess radio equipment to assist community amateur radio operators. These SRS employees double as amateur radio operators (HAMS) away from work, and knew there was inadequate radio coverage between counties surrounding the Savannah River Site. The group obtained licensing for the repeater, modified the equipment to operate on the new frequencies, and currently provides operational control and maintenance of the system. The result is maintained communications between portable and mobile radio operators within a 30 to 40 mile radius of the SRS. Amateur radio operators can find the repeater on 145.45 MHz with an access tone of 123 Hz.

Federally licensed amateur radio operators provide uncompensated man-hours of communications support to local, state, and federal agencies and other response organizations during emergencies. Providing emergency communications is one of the primary reasons that the Federal Communications Commission validates amateur radio. Due to communication barriers after the events of September 11, HAMS went on the air within minutes and were vital to relief efforts conducted in the first few weeks. The new repeater at SRS will enhance the ability of local amateur radio operators to assist in severe storm spotting, hurricane relief coordination and emergency incident monitoring.

(more)

CSRA emergency management organizations maintain working partnerships with local amateur radio operators that have the ability to immediately establish local and long-distance communications systems. According to Bob Steadman, Senior Emergency Preparedness Specialist for WSRC, “HAM operators are an important resource to the emergency management community. The addition of this repeater at SRS provides a ‘shot in the arm’ to our volunteers who give so selflessly of their time and provides a critical element of the emergency service infrastructure.”

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