

Public Relations Strategies for Field Day

Sean Kutzko, KX9X ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager



Field Day is Amateur Radio's open house. Showing the public who we are and what assets we bring to our communities helps keep Amateur Radio visible, which is important to the long-term sustainability of our service and hobby.

By the time your club is setting up the antennas, your PR and outreach strategy should have been in operation for quite some time. Experience has taught us that promoting your Field Day effort is a task that should be assigned to a specific person, just as you would have a person responsible for the generator or captain of a specific station. If your club has a Public Information Officer, or *PIO*, this task is right up their alley. If you don't have one, find a club member who is articulate, outgoing and comfortable talking with strangers to be your club's spokesperson. Depending on the size of your Field Day effort, it may be helpful to have additional PR volunteers, who agree to be on hand to talk with visitors. Reach out to schools, churches, other civic groups (Scouts, 4-H, etc) and invite them to come visit and learn.

ARRL has given clubs a way to promote Field Day to your community and earn your club up to 500 additional points for your club's score. Take advantage of these bonus points!

- 1) Set up in a public location: Lots of clubs like to set up away from high-traffic areas, like a hilltop or a campground. By setting up in a parking lot of a shopping mall or community center, you increase Amateur radio's visibility to your community. Reward: 100 points.
- 2) Spread the word: Advise your local newspapers and TV and radio stations of your plans. Your club's Public Information Officer (PIO) should have a list of media contacts in your area already developed. Issuing a press release to professional media draws the public to your Field Day site and keeps Amateur Radio in the public eye. A sample press release and tips for press release success are included.
- Don't forget social media! Keep your club's FaceBook page active with updates, photos and information on how your Field Day is going. Use Twitter to tweet your experiences to your followers and include the hash tag #ARRLFD to keep your club visible on the national level. And be sure to build your social media network with local media outlets, reporters, bloggers, and other community VIPs. Reward: 100 points.
- 3) Create and staff a welcome table: A formal welcome table complete with an engaging greeter and brochures about Amateur Radio helps visitors to your site feel more involved. Provide tour guides to help steer your visitors through your site and explain what your visitors will see and hear. Include a signup sheet for visitors to provide contact information, so your club can follow up with those who want to learn more about Amateur Radio. Reward: 100 points.
- 4) Get your local elected officials to visit: Making our state, county and local elected officials aware of how Amateur Radio can benefit your community is a critical outreach goal. Extend the invitation to all your elected governmental representatives; if you invite them and they show up, everybody benefits! Reward: 100 points.
- 5) Build relationships with served agencies: Most ham radio clubs involved with public service either want to build relationships with their local served agencies or maintain them. Instead of going to their office and giving a lecture about what Amateur Radio is, invite them to come see and experience your group in action. Reward: 100 points.

Your efforts to promote Field Day could have a much greater effect than merely boosting your score by 500 points. If done properly, you can raise awareness about Amateur Radio within your community, which could have an impact on relationships with your local first responders, open minds of city council members on issues of antenna restrictions, and a host of other benefits. Do your best to showcase Amateur Radio; it can make a world of difference!

PUBLICITY TIP SHEET

-Ideas to help you promote Amateur Radio Week and Field Day-

1. Retype the enclosed news release onto your club letterhead. Be sure to fill in your club's name and contact in the appropriate blanks. Feel free to lift any text from this release and add it to one you've already created.
2. Mail, email or fax the news releases to the city editor of your local paper, radio and television stations. Follow up with a telephone call within a few days to see that it was received and offer any additional information. When making follow-up calls, first ask the reporter if he or she is on deadline and if there would be a better time to call back.
3. Field Day may be a training exercise that the media will enjoy, but talk about all aspects of what Amateur Radio is: Public Service, a hands-on way to learn science, and a great time.
4. Avoid Amateur Radio jargon in any press materials and in conversations or interviews with media representatives.
5. Designate someone who will be able to greet media, talk about Amateur Radio and explain what is happening at your Field Day event. Be sure the person you pick is your most articulate spokesperson and is appropriately dressed. Remember that appearance is credibility.
6. Utilize all that social media has to offer. If your club doesn't have a Facebook page or Twitter account, get one now. Find a club member to be your social media content developer. "Friend" or "follow" as many local media representatives as you can. Provide regular content to your social media pages, so your club doesn't appear to be stagnant. Push your press release via your social media outlets, and invite local journalists via social media to visit your Field Day site.
6. Take a lot of good action photos of your Field Day event. If you are interested in submitting your pictures for possible use in *QST* or elsewhere, be sure to use a good camera and use high resolution .jpg. Avoid taking shots of people just standing about or backshots of people on a radio. Get faces. Get smiles! Get pictures that show movement and action in them. Post your story and photos to the Field Day Soapbox at www.arrl.org/soapbox.
7. Give the enclosed backgrounders to reporters looking for more information or use them to help you write up your own publicity materials.
8. Post colorful, easy-to-read fliers in prominent places: libraries, supermarkets, schools, etc.
9. Invite your mayor or other local official to your Field Day site. Get photos!
10. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper and invite readers to visit your Field Day site and learn more about Amateur Radio.
11. Order brochures for non-hams to learn more at your Field Day site. Brochures from ARRL are free, but you must cover shipping charges. www.arrl.org/shop/Brochures-Handouts-and-Exhibit-Supplies

Sample Field Day Press Release (Use club letterhead. Keep to a single page)

Contact:

[LOCAL CONTACT's NAME] [LOCAL CONTACT's TITLE, if any]

[EMAIL]

[AREA CODE & PHONE]

Amateur Radio "Field Day" June 27 – 28 Demonstrates Science, Skill, and Service

[date]

Members of the _____ [club name] _____ will be participating in the national Amateur Radio Field Day exercise, June 27 – 28 at _____ [Location] _____. Since 1933, ham radio operators across North America have established temporary ham radio stations in public locations during Field Day to showcase the science and skill of Amateur Radio. This event is open to the public and all are encouraged to attend.

For over 100 years, Amateur Radio — sometimes called ham radio — has allowed people from all walks of life to experiment with electronics and communications techniques, as well as provide a free public service to their communities during a disaster, all without needing a cell phone or the Internet. Field Day demonstrates ham radio's ability to work reliably under any conditions from almost any location and create an independent communications network. Over 45,000 people from thousands of locations participated in Field Day in 2014.

"It's easy for anyone to pick up a computer or smartphone, connect to the Internet and communicate, with no knowledge of how the devices function or connect to each other," said Sean Kutzko of the American Radio Relay League, the national association for Amateur Radio. "But if there's an interruption of service or you're out of range of a cell tower, you have no way to communicate. Ham radio functions completely independent of the Internet or cell phone infrastructure, can interface with tablets or smartphones, and can be set up almost anywhere in minutes. That's the beauty of Amateur Radio during a communications outage."

"Hams can literally throw a wire in a tree for an antenna, connect it to a battery-powered transmitter and communicate halfway around the world," Kutzko added. "Hams do this by using a layer of Earth's atmosphere as a sort of mirror for radio waves. In today's electronic do-it-yourself (DIY) environment, ham radio remains one of the best ways for people to learn about electronics, physics, meteorology, and numerous other scientific disciplines, and is a huge asset to any community during disasters if the standard communication infrastructure goes down."

Anyone may become a licensed Amateur Radio operator. There are over 725,000 licensed hams in the United States, as young as 5 and as old as 100. And with clubs such as _____ [name of your club] _____, it's easy for anybody to get involved right here in _____ [name of your community] _____.

For more information about Field Day, contact _____ [your club's Field Day contact info] _____ or visit www.arrl.org/what-is-ham-radio.

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The Four Steps Toward Successful Field Day News Releases

By Jim Mulvey, KS1A

When last year's local club's Field Day publicity didn't make it into the newspaper, the Publicity Chairman couldn't understand why! After all, he wrote a news release and mailed it with plenty of time to spare. Still, it was passed by. Why? Because there are very specific steps you must follow to ensure that:

1.The right person actually reads your release. (Most are thrown out after a quick look.)

2.They print it.

Step 1. Know what you're up against.

First, the old days of the Spartan "just the facts" news release are over. At one time, all you needed to do was a straightforward "who, what, where, when and why" in the first paragraph with no editorializing. It's still being taught that way in journalism school, but it's not the way it's done in the real world!

Step 2. Understand that the biggest problem is having your release tossed in the trash.

At every media outlet (newspapers, television, and radio stations) there is one person who opens the news release mail. They can get a ton of releases every week; they are gathered up and opened by hand one-by-one, and unfortunately, the person must make a quick decision as to the importance of each one.

You must make sure the release is of interest to the readers. **If your town paper is the Billerica News, then make sure that "Billerica Radio Amateurs" are mentioned prominently!** You must catch the person's attention with the first couple of lines in your release or out it goes! Worse, the person who opens the release may make a decision based upon what your envelope looks like. If it's very amateurish-looking, you may not even get a serious first glance. When writing the release, walk the fine line between making it exciting and keeping it factual.

Step 3. Delivering your release to its target.

We've included a sample news release for you to "customize" for local consumption. A good way to get it thrown away is to just drop it in an envelope and mail to your media outlet. That's not enough! Call the station or newspaper and ask for the city editor or assignment editor (for radio and TV). Get a name. Then, ask for the fax number or direct email address.

Fax it to them! The fax is the fastest way to cut through the protective layers a company uses against their telephone and mail.

While each outlet has their own preferences for receiving things, a fax will generally get through more often than an email. Send your release a week in advance.

Step 4. The Closer.

Include a contact telephone number. We've actually had newspapers call us back and ask to do a full story on the club! Getting publicity is more of an art than a science. It's important to remember that just writing and sending it isn't enough. Follow the steps, sound friendly but confident, don't try to come off as if you're promoting something as important as a medical breakthrough. Be sure to mention that the site looks great for cameras and photographers. Give them the name of a contact person and best time to show up. Follow through and you just may score with every release you send.

Field Day PR - Before, During and After

Before:

- 1) Create a list of media contacts in your area. Include phone numbers and email addresses. Connect with them on Facebook and Twitter.
- 2) Bring up the need for PR at your club's Field Day planning meeting. Begin recruiting volunteers for the info booth at your site.
- 3) Send out initial press releases and invitations to officials no later than May 15; earlier if possible. Begin sending out regular updates via your social media accounts.
- 4) Create a schedule of who will man your information table and list what their duties are.
- 5) Follow up with press releases one week after you send them.
- 6) If you don't receive any replies to invitations by June 1, make a second inquiry.

During:

- 1) Make one more call to the media if time allows.
- 2) Keep your social media stream active with photos, posts and invitations for the public to come visit.
- 2) Greet media representative(s). Get their business card.
- 3) Have printed fact sheets or backgrounders available for media to take with them.
- 4) Don't interrupt or interject during media interaction unless absolutely necessary.
- 5) Be sure media representative has accurate spellings of names, titles and call signs.

After :

- 1) Thank media representative(s) if appropriate.
- 2) Be sure to get ample copies of coverage.
- 3) Share coverage with participants, club members and the ARRL. Post on your club's Facebook page.
- 4) Look for "secondary exposure" opportunities.

Sample Field Day invitation letter to elected representatives or officials from served agencies

(copy this on your club letterhead, if you have some)

[Name of invitee]

[Title of invitee]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

[Date]

Dear [Name of invitee],

As **your title** of **your club's name**, I would like to extend an invitation for you to meet with the Amateur Radio operators of your community as we participate in the national Field Day event, **date/time** at **location**.

Amateur Radio operators provide a critical public service for our community; during times of disaster, we are able to provide reliable communications when the normal infrastructure is offline. Licensed by the Federal Communications Commission and trained in the art and science of radio communication and basic electronics theory, we own and maintain our own communications equipment and are prohibited by federal law from receiving payment for our services. ARRL, our national organization, has built relationships with several served agencies including FEMA, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and many others.

This public service is easily extended during non-emergency civic events, such as parades, marathons, and street festivals.

Field Day is our chance to show the science, service and skill we can offer to our community free of charge. We would love the opportunity to show you our capabilities in person.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

Your Name

Your Title

Sample Proclamation

While there is no bonus for having an official proclamation issued by state or local authorities, it is always a good way to stir up interest and public awareness.

On occasion clubs will seek to have the local town or city mayor/officials proclaim an "Amateur Radio Week.." While there is no bonus for such a proclamation, it is good recognition for the club and amateur radio. *The following is a rough draft of language for a proclamation. Modify it to fit your local city or regional leadership.*

Whereas, Amateur Radio operators are celebrating over a century of the miracle of the human voice broadcast over the airwaves; and

Whereas, Amateur Radio has continued to provide a bridge between peoples, societies and countries by creating friendships and the sharing of ideas; and

Whereas, Amateur Radio Operators have also provided countless hours of community services both in emergencies and to other local organizations throughout these decades; and

Whereas, these Amateur Radio services are provided wholly uncompensated; and

Whereas, the State also recognizes the services Amateur Radio's people also provide to our many Emergency Response organizations, including _____ add local and gov't served agencies _____; and

Whereas, these same individuals have further demonstrated their value in public assistance by providing free radio communications for local parades, bike-a-thons, walk-a-thons, fairs and other charitable public events; and

Whereas, the ___state/city___ of _____ recognizes and appreciates the diligence of these "hams" who also serve as weather spotters in the Skywarn program of the US Government Weather Bureau; and

Whereas, the ARRL is the leading organization for Amateur Radio in the USA; and

Whereas, the ARRL Amateur Radio Field Day exercise will take place on June 27-28, 2015 and is a 24 hour emergency preparedness exercise and demonstration of the Radio Amateurs' skills and readiness to provide self-supporting communications without further infrastructure being required; now

Therefore, I ___name___, _____ title _____ of the ___place___, do hereby officially recognize and designate June 21-27 as

Amateur Radio Week

In the ___place___

Signed _____

Title _____

Seal

