



Amateur radio operators Scott Mentzer (N0QE) and Mike Albers (K0FJ) of Colby (above) were among those who gathered at the Goodland National Weather Service office on Saturday for the 13th

Annual Skywarn Recognition event. Other hams making contacts were Nathan Reitchcheck (KD0GLA) (bottom right) and Robert Chapman (KD0MVB) (top right).

Photos by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News



Amateur radio operators work through snow

Amateur radio operators from the area gathered Friday and through the snow on Saturday at the National Weather Service office in Goodland for the 13th Annual Skywarn Recognition Day.

The program — originated by the Goodland National Weather Service office — honors the amateur radio operators who help as storm spotters and provide communications in emergencies.

This year the snow storm and six and one-half inches of snow helped and hindered the hams, said Tom Betz (K0JED). He said it was nice to have a warm place to play on the airwaves, but the snow did keep a few of the hams from Colby and Stratton, Colo., who have helped in previous years from being able to attend.

The 24-hour contest is co-sponsored by the American Radio Relay League and the National Weather Service, and the radio operators work as a team to contact other hams across the world throughout the event.

Members of the Sherman County Amateur Radio Enthusiasts Club and Trojan Amateur Radio Club of Thomas County set up radios and antennas at the weather service office, and for most of the 24-hour

contest, two different radio systems, a computer based system and two other digital radio system were making contacts around the country.

Among the possible stations hams were trying to contact as many of the more than 100 weather offices who were participating in the Skywarn program. Wednesday Scott Mentzer (N0QE), Meteorologist in charge, said the hams had contacted 61 weather offices and made contacts in 47 states including Hawaii and Alaska. He said the official count for the event was 616 contacts. (States the hams missed included Delaware, Vermont and New Hampshire.)

Included in the contacts made using the computer Echolink program included the National Hurricane Center in Florida using a relay through the National Weather Service office in Boston. The radio log included a contact to Faversham, England and one in Estonia. Among the other contacts Mentzer said were to special event stations at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, before the 70th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Wednesday, and the battleship USS Texas, celebrating 100 years, at the San Jacinto State Historic Site near Houston.

The hams were using two high

frequency radios to work the 10, 15, 20, 40 and 80 meter bands. Most of the contacts were made on the 20 meter band on Saturday. Colby ham Bob McLemore (WY0I) made a lot of the hf contacts on Saturday morning.

The Goodland weather station call sign is WX0GLD, and the call could be heard throughout the event period.

Mentzer said the group was glad they broke the 600 contact level, and said those who participated had a good time. He said the radio bands were not great late on Friday night, and few contacts were made. Less than 200 contacts were made overnight. Things really got going early Saturday with hams handling almost continuous contacts known as pile-ups with many stations calling at the same time to make contact with WX0GLD.

Event coordinators David Floyd (N5DBZ) and Al Pietrycha (KB0ZXY) who work at the Goodland weather office were involved in the contacts on Friday night and Saturday.

Betz, with the help of wife, Ava (KD0HDX) who helped with the log, made contacts with a many other weather stations using the Echolink program and being "net

control" of a Skywarn conference on Echolink for the first hour of the event on Friday.

Pietrycha worked weather stations around the country using the Internet Relay Linking Program that allows a ham using 2 meters to bring up a link in another town, state or country and make contact with other hams.

Additional contacts were made by Mike Albers (K0FJ) from Colby, on a win-link digital system that helped bring the total to 616 contacts.

Colby ham Nathan Reitchcheck (KC0GLA) drove over on Friday to help set up the radios and antennas. He spent the night with his parents in Goodland and was back out to help on Saturday.

Goodland ham Robert Chapman (KD0MVB) braved the snow on Saturday and did his turn making contacts. Colby ham Bruce Frahm (K0BJ) who is ARRL second vice president, came over on Friday to help with the setup, but did not come back on Saturday because of the snow.

Other hams taking part in this year's program included Deb Mentzer (KC0TES) and Pam Murray (KD0IVH) who work at the national weather service and drove in through the snow from north of

town to spend several hours making contacts before driving back home through the snow.

Mentzer got the Skywarn recognition program started 13 years ago. His idea was to recognize the valuable contributions storm spotters make to the National Weather Service.

"Since many of the storm spotters were hams," he said, "it seemed like a natural fit for the recognition to be centered on Amateur Radio.

Hams from Goodland, Stratton and Colby run a daily volunteer hazardous weather net at 11 a.m. (noon in Colby) on 2 meters (KS0GLD 147.030 in Goodland and NW0K 146.82 in Colby). The weather briefing collects reports from the hams and gives a hazardous weather outlook for the next seven days provided through the National Weather Service. The 2 meter repeaters in Goodland and Colby are used for storm spotter communications when hazardous weather approaches.

The SCARE club meets at 6 p.m. the first Wednesday of every other month at Gambino's. The club has a Yahoo group and a Facebook page under KS0GLD. The radio club participates in the annual ARRL Field Day the last weekend in June

and has had a special event station at Flatlander Fall Festival the last couple of years. The hams have provided support for the GAC Marathon and the Flatlander 5K fun run.

The seeds for Amateur Radio were planted in the 1890s, when Guglielmo Marconi began his experiments in wireless telegraphy, said the ARRL web site. The United States government began licensing Amateur Radio operators in 1912.

The ARRL lists 45 hams in Sherman County and 42 in Thomas County, but that does not include the hams who travel through on I-70 or work in northwest Kansas.

By 1914, there were thousands of Amateur Radio operators — hams — in the United States. Hiram Percy Maxim, a leading Hartford, Conn., inventor and industrialist, saw the need for an organization to band together this fledgling group of radio experimenters. In May 1914 Maxim founded the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) to meet that need.

Today ARRL, with approximately 156,000 members, is the largest organization of radio amateurs in the United States.

Better Business Bureau target of scams

Better Business Bureau is issuing an urgent SCAM alert cautioning businesses and consumers about an e-mail that appears to be from BBB, with the subject line "Complaint

from your customers."

This e-mail is fraudulent said officials from the BBB of Kansas office in Wichita. Ignore its contents and delete it immediately. If you

have already clicked on a link in the e-mail, run a full virus scan of your computer.

The e-mails have return addresses BBB does not use (one example is riskmanager@bbb.org) and it is signed with the address of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, the national office of the BBB system.

The e-mail contains a link to a non-BBB web site. Do NOT click on the link.

BBB is working with law enforcement to determine its source and stop the fraudulent campaign.

Please note all complaints from the BBB of Kansas are 5 digit case numbers.

Please forward the emails to phishing@council.bbb.org.

Better Business Bureau of Kansas Incorporated, 345 Riverview Ste 720, Wichita, KS 67203, (316) 263-8576 or check the web site at www.kansasplains.bbb.org

corrections

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Sherman County Senior Citizens

Mr. Biermann and the USD 352 Board of Education cordially invite you to attend our Holiday Dinner on December 14, 2011 at GHS Gym.

11 a.m.: Entertainment by GHS and GJHS students
12 noon: Dinner at Goodland High School

The members of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCCLA), National Honor Society (NHS), and G-Club, will service as the hosts and hostesses.

Please RSVP before December 9th by calling 890-5656. If you need transportation, please call. We will also deliver meals to those who are not able to leave their homes. Enter through the south doors on 13th Street and remember: Valet parking will be available.

